

Report of the A & S Senate Promotion and Tenure Committee
August 2007
Prepared by Joanne Davila, Chair PTC

Committee:

- Joanne Davila, Chair – Psychology (Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- Lisa Diedrich (Humanities and Fine Arts) – non-tenured member
- Clare Grey – Chemistry (Natural Sciences; Fall semester only)
- Manuel Lerdau – Ecology and Evolution (Natural Sciences; Fall semester only)
- Timothy Mount – Music (Humanities and Fine Arts)
- Jacqueline Reich – European Languages (Humanities and Fine Arts)
- Michael Schwartz – Sociology (Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- Vitaly Citovsky – Biochemistry (Natural Sciences) – temporary member for spring semester replacing Lerdau
- Barry McCoy – Physics (Natural Sciences) – temporary member for spring semester replacing Grey who was on sabbatical

Organization and functioning:

The committee met regularly, typically bi-weekly, during the 2006-2007 academic year, with excellent attendance. All committee members are dedicated and hard working. They take their position seriously and behave in a professional, ethical manner. The committee functions very well as a group, demonstrating cohesion and respect for all members. The committee also met once during the 2006 summer session and three times during the 2007 summer session. Summer meetings have become increasingly necessary to deal with new hires whose appointments begin in September.

Philosophy and process:

The PTC plays an important role in the College of Arts and Sciences as an advisory committee to the Dean and as a means for providing quality control for the faculty. The faculty members who make up the committee are critical to its functioning and success and it is important to continue to elect strong members to serve on the committee.

The PTC has maintained a strong level of continuity in process with prior years. We continue to adhere strongly to the Policies of the Board of Trustees, and to focus decisions on scholarship, teaching, and service. We recognize that every case is different and make certain that we take into account diversity across departments and types of scholarly achievements.

In making decisions, the main question that we focus on is whether candidates' scholarship is having an impact on their field. Our ability to assess this relies on the clarity with which this is presented in the dossier, and we rely heavily on the views expressed in outside letters and in the chair's letters. A few comments about each are in order. Regarding outside letters, those that come from individuals who do not have a close professional relationship with the candidate are essential, as they are likely to be least biased by personal connections. In addition, although the

PTC provides guidelines for the minimal number and type of letters, cases with only the minimum sometimes are harder to evaluate. It is critical that the chair's letters express and discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of the case, particularly those pointed out by outside letter writers. Providing a clear rationale for the departmental vote is also extremely important. If there were "no" votes or abstentions, it is important to clarify the reasons for such votes. Chair's letters that simply reiterate or quote from outside letters, or that present a run-down of the faculty discussion of the case, are least helpful to the PTC and are a disservice to the candidate. Unfortunately, many chairs' letters continue to be written in this manner.

Regarding the assessment of scholarly ability for promotion to Full Professor, the PTC feels that promotion should not be awarded just for significant administrative or other accomplishments, but should be awarded only to those who show true excellence and a strong reputation in creative and scholarly activities. However, teaching and service do matter, and weight is placed on the extent to which candidates for full professor have shown initiative in contributing to the future of their department and their field.

Caseload and actions:

From 5/1/06 through 8/31/07, the PTC acted on 25 cases. Of these, 16 were cases for promotion with tenure, 1 was a case for promotion to full professor, and 8 were new appointments (2 to Associate, 6 to Full, all with tenure).

Of the promotion cases acted on (excluding the new appointments), the departments were in favor of promotion in 15 cases and the PTC agreed with the departmental recommendation in all cases except for two (for one the PTC voted against promotion, for the other the PTC had a split vote). In the one case in which the department was not in favor of promotion, the PTC concurred.

Of the 18 cases that have been acted on by the Dean, he has agreed with the PTC in all cases (and supported the candidate with the split vote). All of those cases progressed to the Provost and President, and both have agreed with the prior recommendations (yielding promotion in all cases except for the two for which the PTC voted against). The remainder of the cases is in progress.

Other:

1. The PTC prepared an amendment to the PTC guidelines that would require all formal written documents (e.g., sub-committee reports, the Dean's pre-tenure review letter) to be included in promotion and tenure dossiers. This amendment was discussed, voted on, and denied at the final A & S Senate meeting in April 2006. Note that it is still the position of the PTC that all formal written documents must be provided if requested by the PTC, Dean, Provost, or President.

2. The PTC, in collaboration with the Dean's office, prepared an amendment to the PTC guidelines that would revise deadlines for submission of tenure and promotion cases in order to place all assistant professors on the same tenure clock and to provide more time for review. This amendment was presented to the Senate in April 2006 and approved. Departments were alerted to the change by the Dean's office. The new guidelines are:

September 15 is the deadline for receipt by the Dean's office of all cases involving promotion to full professor. May 15 is the deadline for receipt by the Dean's office of all cases in which the final term appointment (see section 1.2) expires at the end of a fall semester. January 15 is the deadline for receipt by the Dean's office of all other cases. These deadlines reflect the time needed for files to be vetted by the Dean's office, in accordance with section 2.5.8 of these guidelines, revised (as necessary) by the submitting department, and forwarded to the PTC. Departments and Programs have the obligation to observe these deadlines. Only in the case of competitive offers will the Committee consider extensions of the deadlines. New appointments are not subject to the deadlines for internal cases.

3. The PTC prepared an amendment to the PTC guidelines that would increase the number of letters from scholars who are not suggested by the candidate. This amendment was presented to the Senate in April 2007 and approved. Departments were alerted to the change in April 2007. The new guidelines are:

2.4.5.1 This division of the file should contain all solicited recommendations (referees, faculty and students) other than those of supervisors of the candidate. It should contain substantive written evaluations from at least seven authorities from outside the University in all cases of promotion to higher rank or continuing appointment or both. At least five of the letters should be from scholars who are not current or former collaborators, departmental colleagues, nor members of the candidate's graduate department during the time he or she was a graduate student or recommended by the candidate. Each outside letter in the file should have attached to it a statement identifying the writer, explaining why she or he has been chosen to evaluate the case, and indicating the relationship, if any, with the candidate if that is not stated in the letter of reference. These letters of evaluation should ordinarily not be more than two years old. All letters written in a language other than English must be accompanied by a translation.

2.4.5.2 The candidate may suggest a list of no more than five and no less than three referees from which the department will choose at least two. At least five other referees are to be chosen independently by the department.

4. In October 2006, the PTC and Senate discussed the recommendation of Peter Koch that the PTC moves to an electronic dossier system. It was agreed that the PTC and Prof. Koch would explore this possibility over time. This is in progress.

5. In December 2006, the PTC Chair attended the Chair's meeting and discussed the following issues with the chairs: (1) appropriate contents of the chair's letter; (2) need for clarity with regard to the number of letters solicited and received; (3) minimum number of letters sufficient for each file. It was this discussion that led, in part, to the amendment to increase the number of letters.

6. In spring 2006, the PTC was contacted by members of library science to initiate discussions about whether library files could be evaluated through the A & S PTC. Discussions are currently in progress.