

# **Maximizing the Success of T&P Files from Your Unit: Advice to Unit T&P Chairs April 26, 2011**

Prepared by the University Committee on Tenure & Promotion (UCTP)

## **Criteria**

Be sure that the **correct** criteria are used for each candidate, and that the criteria indicate they have been approved by the UCTP. The Faculty Manual specifies that:

- For tenure, faculty members have the option of using the criteria that were in effect at the time they were hired or the criteria in effect at the time of application for tenure.
- For promotion beyond the probationary period, the criteria to be used are those in effect at the time promotion is sought.
- Faculty hired into the tenure track prior to January 1, 1995, may choose to be considered under the pre-1995 criteria under which they were hired.

The latest UCTP-approved criteria are on the Faculty Senate web site

## **Letters from External Referees**

The unit must obtain letters from at least five external referees evaluating the candidate's research record. As a general rule, referees should be accomplished faculty members whose rank is equal to or higher than that for which the candidate is being considered. Except in unusual situations, they should be chosen from a national or international rather than a regional base. If an expert reviewer is used who does not meet these standards, the reason for using this reviewer should be addressed in, for example, the chair's letter.

- A majority of the referees must be chosen by the unit. Referees suggested by the candidate must be so indicated in the file; it should be noted that some faculty or administrators who review the file may give less weight to letters from referees selected by the candidate.
- Persons with close personal or professional ties to the candidate should not be used as referees. Examples include: the candidate's dissertation adviser, co-authors, former professors, classmates, or colleagues with whom the candidate served at other institutions.
- A one-page summary of the CV or a brief biographical outline for each referee should be included in the file. A full CV placed after each letter makes it difficult for persons reviewing the file to find the referees' letters.<sup>1</sup>
- Faculty and administrators reviewing the file, after it leaves the unit, will often focus on any negative comments in the referees' letters. It is important that voting members of the

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<sup>1</sup> If brief bios are not available, it is preferable to gather all CV's at the end of the section, perhaps separated by colored paper.

faculty and administrators in the unit explain or counter any such comments which they feel inaccurately portray the candidate's record or accomplishments.

- Letters requesting an evaluation should not ask the referee to assess the strengths and *weaknesses*, since some referees may search for such weaknesses.
- Referees should be sent a copy of the unit criteria and should be asked to assess the candidate with specific reference to those criteria.

### **Documentation of Teaching**

Documentation of the candidate's teaching must include a narrative summary of the teaching evaluations, prepared and signed by a senior faculty member. This summary should reflect both peer and student evaluations.

- If numerical ratings are used, make sure that the meaning of the numbers is clear. This is especially important if your student evaluation form has some questions in which a higher score is better, and others in which a lower score is better.
- When a candidate's ratings are compared with some other group, that group should be clearly identified – e.g., the unit average, the unit average for undergraduate courses, the unit average for all sections of the same course, etc.
- If it is felt that the student evaluations do not accurately portray the quality of the candidate's teaching, this should be fully explained in the teaching summary.
- The summary should provide information about the typical teaching load in the unit. If the candidate's teaching load deviates significantly from that which is typical, an explanation should be given.
- In order to facilitate a meaningful assessment of the candidate's record in supervising PhD candidates, please be sure that the file contains information about the number of PhD's typically graduated by the unit. If the candidate's supervision of PhD's is less than might be expected, an explanation should be given. In some units it is unusual for assistant professors to have PhD students; if that is the case in your unit, say so.

### **Unit Voting on the File**

The file **must** be voted on at the unit level by at least 5 faculty. If your unit has fewer than 5 eligible faculty, or if less than 5 will be able to vote, you must recruit appropriate faculty from other units to make up a voting total of 5.

### **Vote Justifications**

The importance of thorough and substantive vote justifications cannot be over-emphasized. Voting faculty should be reminded that even if the unit unanimously supports a file, other reviewers of the file may not.

- Vote justifications should make specific reference to the unit criteria, should use the same terminology in the criteria, (e.g. excellent, good, etc.), and should directly address anything that might be perceived as a weakness in the file (such as poor student evaluations, a negative statement in a referee's letter, etc.).
- Vote justifications should also explain any cultural issues related to your discipline that might affect how items in the file are viewed. For example, is collaborative work valued in

the discipline? Is research funding expected, and is it easy or hard to get? Do grants tend to be large or small?

- In some disciplines, it is usual for the corresponding author to be the last author, while in others he/she may be the first author. In some disciplines, authors are often listed alphabetically. In some fields sole authored papers are the norm while in others, they are comparatively rare. This should be stated in vote justifications.

The above matters should also be addressed in administrators' letters concerning the file.

### **Organization of the File**

If you are submitting a paper file, please see that tabs are used to identify the material in each section. The tabs should contain descriptive words, in addition to the section numbers. The Provost's Office has a model file with such tabs.

### **Further information**

Faculty Manual [http://www.sc.edu/policies/facman/Faculty\\_Manual\\_Columbia.pdf](http://www.sc.edu/policies/facman/Faculty_Manual_Columbia.pdf)

USC T&P web site <http://www.sc.edu/tenure/>

UCTP Guide to Criteria and Procedures (Goldenrod Manual)  
<http://www.sc.edu/provost/forms/goldenrod.pdf>

Current criteria: <http://www.sc.edu/tenure/unitcriteria.shtml> (The current criteria may not apply to you)

### **Contact**

Audrey Korsgaard: [korsgaard@moore.sc.edu](mailto:korsgaard@moore.sc.edu) , 803 777 5967  
(2010-2011 Chair, UCTP)

Mitchell Yell: [myell@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:myell@mailbox.sc.edu), 803 777 5279  
(2011-2012 Chair, UCTP)