

Maximizing the Success of T&P Files from Your Unit: Advice to Unit T&P Chairs

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

Criteria

Be sure that the **correct** criteria are used for each candidate. Make certain that the criteria used have been approved by the UCTP. The Faculty Manual **requires** that:

- For tenure, the criteria in effect when the candidate was hired **must** be used.
- For promotion, independent of tenure, the criteria in effect at the time promotion is sought **must** be used.
- Except that faculty hired into the tenure track prior to January 1, 1995, may choose to be considered under pre-1995 criteria.

Suggestion: Make sure that new faculty obtain the criteria under which they are 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 from peer or aspirant institutions 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 regional base. If an expert reviewer is used who is not at a peer/aspirant institution, the reason for using this reviewer should be addressed in, for example, the chair's letter.

- At least 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.¹
- 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 faculty and administrators in the unit explain or counter any such

¹ 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.

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 are sent a copy of the criteria and should be asked to assess the candidate with 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.

- 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 appears unanimous in support of a file, that situation could change after the file leaves the unit.

- Vote justifications should make specific reference to the unit criteria, should use the correct terminology (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

To assist reviewers in finding information in the 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/>)

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

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

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

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