

Colorado State University
College of Business
Promotion & Tenure Committee Best Practices¹

This document represents a collective effort to improve promotion and tenure (P&T) processes within the College of Business. It leverages the collective experiences of department chairs and P&T chairs. Considerable guidance regarding P&T processes is provided elsewhere; the current document is not intended to replace or summarize other guidance, but to be complementary. Finally, this document should be revised as members of the College encounter new P&T process problems/challenges and form best practices.

Annual Progress toward Tenure Memos and Mid-term Reviews

Toward the conclusion of each academic year and until they go up for promotion (e.g., years 1 through 4 of the standard 6 year process), assistant professors must receive feedback from the P&T Committee in either the form of an annual progress toward tenure memo or a mid-term review. Mid-term reviews involve a more in-depth assessment, should be preceded with consultation with the Dean regarding tenure expectations in the College, and are forwarded from the Dean's Office to the Provost's Office. This feedback (whether an annual progress memo or mid-term review) should be funneled through the department chair who is also encouraged to provide feedback (at the same time) and required to forward the reports/reviews to the Dean's Office. While the chair of the P&T committee normally take the lead in assembling the annual memos and the mid-term reviews, all committee members should provide input/feedback and agree on the final version to be forwarded to the department chair.

Mid-term and annual progress toward tenure communications should be carefully worded to provide feedback and direction without crossing the line toward suggesting an exact formula. For example, a committee could give the direction to publish one more paper, but this paper (and others) will be judged in-depth on a variety of dimensions (by a variety of individuals) during the actual promotion process; thus, the advice of publishing one more paper could be misleading and damaging. Annual feedback can very effectively focus on the strengths of one's current record and where incremental effort should be placed, thereby staying away from providing a numeric formula.

Avoid Informal Conversations about Promotion Decisions

Broad and general discussions about promotion standards appropriately take place outside of formal P&T committee deliberations. However, department chairs and members of P&T committees should be very cautious in having informal conversations with faculty about whether or not they are in good shape for being promoted or similarly in discussing what it would take for them to be promoted. Note that these conversations occur formally via the annual processes noted above, and informal conversations (based on cursory information) in the interim, may have little value. Advancing in rank involves external

¹ These best practices focus on concerns regarding the promotion processes for tenure track/tenured faculty. However, many of the principles are also applicable to contract/continuing faculty promotions.

reviewers, several faculty members, the department chair, the Dean of the college, and Provost all giving in-depth consideration of the candidate's record. Ultimately, committee's deliberations are shaped by *in-depth* consideration of the faculty member's contributions as well as the perspectives offered by the external reviewers. With so many individuals involved in the actual decision-making, and the need for *in-depth* analysis, it is inappropriate to preempt that process with individual opinions or proclamations. Avoiding such informal conversations will enhance the professionalism of the process, help preserve department relationships, and protect candidates. Mentors and department colleagues can offer a great deal of value to junior faculty without providing potentially invalid formulas for promotion.

Confidentiality of P&T Committee Deliberations

All P&T committee conversations should be confidential. Committee chairs and department chairs should repeatedly emphasize that P&T conversations and decision-making must be held in confidence (despite the close relationships among members of the committee and those outside of the committee). Even positive committee discussions regarding candidates and their progress toward tenure should not be informally communicated. Nothing that is stated during committee meetings should be repeated or discussed outside of the meeting, with the exception of committee members speaking with each other in an attempt to gain greater understanding. Treating committee deliberations in this manner will greatly enhance the professionalism associated with the process, help preserve relationships within the department, and protect candidates against receiving inconsistent information. Committee reports/recommendations reflect the deliberations, and therefore meeting minutes are unnecessary. Rather, the chair of the committee takes notes during the meeting to ensure that the initial draft of the report/recommendation accurately reflects the views of the committee.

To help preserve confidentiality of the voting process, when feasible, committee members should not reveal how they are going to vote. Voting must take place via secret ballots that do not require hand writing (and uniform pencils/pens can be used to further ensure anonymity). Delay voting until all members are completely ready to vote. Vote only once. Do not change votes.

Equitable Treatment of all Candidates

Committee chairs should emphasize the equitable treatment of candidates. Committee members should not allow social biases to enter into the evaluation process. Furthermore, personal preferences for certain methods, topics, or approaches to research should not enter into the evaluation process. As stated in the Provost's 2010 guidelines:

Occasionally some of the faculty members in the department have serious conflicts of interest with respect to the case (e.g., a relative or a past formal advisor) and in these cases discussions should be had with the Chair and/or Dean that may lead to a recusal. It is of paramount importance in these steps that our faculty candidates have solid assurance of fairness and an expectation of balance in considering clear outlier opinions. Absent this, our commitment to the primacy of the faculty's decision comes with a responsibility to provide good-faith peer

assessments based on the factual written record and not to abstain from making recommendations in difficult and/or contentious cases.

External Reviewers

Guidance regarding the selection of external reviewers is provided elsewhere. We summarize this guidance below and illuminate related best practices:

- Minimum of 5 external reviews are required
- The external reviewer grid must be used in tracking the selection of external reviewers and the completion of reviews
- Majority of the external reviewers must not have been recommended by the candidate
- Reviewers that were recommended by both the candidate and the chair or committee members should be denoted as a reviewer recommended by the candidate
- The list of potential reviewers from the candidate should be long enough so that confidentiality of a source is maintained but not so long that the candidate's list includes all possible experts
- External reviewers should be distinguished scholars from peer and aspirational universities
- External reviewers must be at or above the rank to which the candidate aspires
- Candidates may not have access to the external reviews
- While there is variation across disciplines, a greater number of potential external reviewers may need to be approached in order to obtain the recommended 5-7 external reviews
- External reviewers should not have any conflicts of interests -- make sure selected evaluators are not former co-authors or collaborators, former professors, etc.
- The selection of external reviewers should be collaborative with all committee agreeing on the final list
- Normally P&T committee chairs complete the process of requesting reviews, but this process can also be completed by the department chair
- Care should be taken such that a modest number of these requests are from the candidate's list of suggested reviewers
- Prior to sending a formal request to external reviewers, the P&T Chair (or department chair) should contact the potential reviewer to inquire as to whether the individual is willing to complete the review and has no conflict of interest
- Members of the P&T committee must not enter into informal conversations with reviewers about the candidate. If an inquiry is made to a committee member by an external reviewer, the P&T chair must be consulted
- University letter templates should be utilized in completing the process of requesting external reviews. P&T committees have identified the need to make small adjustments to these letters including providing clarity that in evaluating the record of a candidate for promotion to full professor, emphasis should be placed on contributions since being promoted to associate professor.
- The materials submitted to external reviewers should include: (1) candidate vita; (2) exemplary manuscripts/articles provided by the candidate; and (3) the candidate's personal statement.

- External review letters should be sent to the Department Chair or Committee Chair. Only the P&T committee and administrators directly responsible for making recommendations and decisions will have access to the letter
- Note that in forming their recommendation, P&T committees, department chairs, and the Dean are not permitted to directly quote the external reviews

Keeping the Dossier Secure and Confidential

Department chairs, P&T chair, and committee members may want to scan (into pdf format) and distribute candidate dossiers to committee members. In scanning the dossier, *do not include the external reviews*. To ensure confidentiality of the external reviews, the chair of the P&T committee should either have one master copy of the letters that is circulated to members of the committee or create paper copies to be returned to the P&T chair who will shred the copies.

Addressing Minority and Majority Perspectives in the Recommendation Letter

When voting is not unanimous, the *Faculty Manual* states: “The recommendation shall include a vote summary and a statement of reasons representing the majority and minority points of view”. In completing the process of forming the recommendation that includes both majority and minority perspectives, great care should be taken such that the candidate does not become aware of members of the committee that did and did not support promotion. Committee members must agree to not discuss the vote or any other component of the committee’s deliberations with the candidate.