


MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 28, 2024
TO: Deans, Associate Deans for Faculty, Chairs, and Directors
FROM: John Bertot
Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs 
SUBJECT: Promotion and Tenure (APT) Considerations and Deliberations

As the AY2023-2024 promotion and tenure review cycle comes to a close, and the AY2024-2025 review cycle begins, it is useful to remind those involved in the APT process of our collective responsibilities to candidates, the University, and to the State of Maryland regarding the conduct of APT reviews. Please share this memo with your College APT Committee Chairs, Department APT Committee Chairs, and faculty members serving on APT Review Committees.

Chairs of first-level APT Review Committees are responsible for ensuring that voting faculty members are aware of the contents of this memo, University APT policy, University procedures and guidelines, and the unit's approved guidelines and criteria for promotion and tenure. I would draw particular attention to pages two and three of this memorandum which discuss the conduct of APT reviews more specifically.

The deliberation and decision on promotion and tenure cases is important to the individual faculty member and vital to the University's pursuit of excellence. The overriding criterion in decisions about promotion and tenure is whether the decision is in the best interest of the University, the University System of Maryland, and the state of Maryland. Tenure and/or promotion decisions are not about the attainment of a minimum threshold by candidates, but rather are forward-looking and focused on continued excellence.

In the case of promotion to Associate Professor with tenure, the University assesses whether candidates have demonstrated the potential to become leaders in their field, in their unit, at the University, and in the community. In weighing the promotion to Full Professor, the University evaluates whether candidates have fulfilled that potential and will continue to be engaged contributors to the University's mission. Whether reviewing candidates for promotion to associate professor with tenure or for promotion to full professor, the University considers the record of candidates as documented in their review materials at the time of review to assess future trajectory and makes inferences about what candidates are likely to accomplish in the future based on how candidates have performed in the past.

Please note that guidance issued by the Office of Faculty Affairs in April 2022 regarding the contextualization of the COVID-19 pandemic regarding candidate records remains in effect, and may be found at <https://faculty.umd.edu/covid/covid-impacts>.

The University is committed to ensuring a fair and impartial treatment of candidates throughout the promotion and tenure review process. Several key elements contribute to the integrity of the decision-making process:

- 1. Following the University's APT Guidelines and Policy, as well as established and approved unit procedures;**
- 2. Ensuring an independent review of each candidate based on unit criteria and the University's expectations for excellence;**
- 3. Maintaining confidentiality with respect to discussions and contents of current and past decision-making meetings;**
- 4. Avoiding conflicts of interest throughout the review process; and,**
- 5. Paying careful attention to evaluative statements and avoiding discussion of topics that may introduce bias into APT considerations.**

Following the University's APT Guidelines and Policy, as well as established and approved unit procedures

Administrators should familiarize themselves with the University's [APT Policy](#), the most recent University [APT Guidelines](#), and the unit criteria **prior to initiating APT cases**. Administrators of the APT process are responsible for ensuring the integrity of unit level APT deliberations and procedures. Administrators must follow the University's APT Policy and Guidelines throughout the entire process, and ensure adherence to approved unit level criteria and guidelines.

Ensuring an independent review of each candidate based on unit criteria and the University's expectations for excellence

Using the unit's approved criteria, or approved modified tenure criteria if applicable, tenure and/or promotion reviews for each candidate must be conducted independently without comparison to current or past candidates.

Maintaining confidentiality with respect to discussions and contents of current and past decision-making meetings

The confidentiality of APT deliberations is essential to the integrity of the review process, and applies to current and past APT deliberations. APT Committee members and/or administrators should not discuss candidate cases outside of scheduled APT meetings, or with individuals outside the candidate's tenure and/or promotion review

process. ***Under no circumstances should anyone involved with the APT review of a candidate discuss the content and/or process details of the deliberations with the candidate.*** More specifically, there should be no sharing of information with candidates under review other than at the prescribed times in the review process (e.g., to provide candidates with the opportunity to review materials such as the summary statement of achievements and reputation of publication outlets as required by University policy and procedures, or the candidate notification letters from the chair or dean). In addition, APT meetings may not be recorded or captured (e.g., photographs, screen captures) in any way. Further, cases that were reviewed previously or that will be reviewed in the future should not be discussed during another candidate's review.

Suspected breaches of confidentiality should be brought to the attention of the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs who will review and make a determination in the matter. ***APT committee members who are found to have breached the confidentiality requirements for APT deliberations and processes will not be able to participate further in APT cases for the remainder of the academic year, at a minimum.***

Avoiding conflicts of interest throughout the review process

APT Committee members should take precautions to avoid any conflicts of interest with candidates under review. [Conflicts of interest](#) can include, but are not limited to, personal relationships with a candidate (e.g., family member, spouse, or partner either within or outside the unit conducting the review), having served as the candidate's doctoral or post-doctoral advisor, and/or having significant collaborations with the candidate (e.g., co-authorship on recent publications, PI/co-PI on current or recent grants). When such conflicts arise, eligible voting faculty members should recuse themselves from the review process and their votes recorded as a mandatory abstention.

Paying careful attention to evaluative statements and avoiding discussion of topics that may introduce bias into APT considerations

Evaluation of candidates may not be based on identity attributes such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or other protected personal characteristics. In addition, neither a candidate's part-time status nor any extension of the mandatory tenure review year authorized pursuant to University policy may be held against the candidate. Candidates who have availed themselves of such policies shall be evaluated according to the same criteria applicable to other candidates.

As a reminder, our tenure process is an "up or out" process, and candidates who elect to seek a tenure review prior to their mandatory review year are not eligible to seek a second tenure review should tenure be denied, unless they elect to withdraw during the review and prior to a final decision on tenure.

Eligible voting faculty members involved in APT deliberations have two pathways to raise objections if they perceive that the deliberations about candidates for promotion have been conducted inequitably or contained procedural violations: (1) within the decision meeting itself, or (2) through confidential discussions with the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, who will investigate and make a final determination in the matter. Such discussions with the Associate Provost do not constitute a violation of the confidentiality of the review meeting and are authorized by the University Policy. Violations of APT policies and procedures during the review process may result in the need for corrective action by the Office of Faculty Affairs to ensure the integrity of the promotion and tenure process and fairness to the candidate(s) under review.

Candidates or APT review committee members who choose to file a complaint with another University office (e.g., the Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct, Faculty Ombudsperson) regarding an APT review may not have the same complaint reviewed by the Office of Faculty Affairs or another University office.

The Office of Faculty Affairs is available to consult with eligible voting faculty members and administrators throughout the APT process when questions or concerns arise. Finally, please note that each Spring, the Office of Faculty Affairs offers APT workshops for APT administrators and committee members. I encourage you to attend these workshops as a means through which to stay current with APT review matters.