


MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 18, 2023
Updated July 24, 2023

TO: Deans, Associate Deans for Faculty, Chairs, and Directors

FROM: John Bertot
Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs 

SUBJECT: Promotion and Tenure Considerations and Deliberations

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.

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 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. While the entire record of accomplishments is considered for promotion to full professor reviews, the faculty member accomplishments since tenure are particularly important to informing trajectory.

As we emerge collectively from the COVID-19 pandemic, the University recognizes the impact of the pandemic on our faculty members. While some faculty members have had their careers accelerated due to the pandemic, or perhaps pursued new lines of inquiry

only made possible due to the pandemic, others have faced both personal and/or professional challenges that have altered their anticipated trajectory. As such, our inferences about a candidate's potential could be based on different, or less, information than in the past, and our traditional milestones and markers may not fully reflect a faculty member's potential contributions. While our focus on demonstrated and future excellence in research, scholarship, creative work, teaching, mentoring, service, and extension activities remains, units will need to exercise judgment in assessing faculty performance and trajectory, balancing unit criteria and any personal and professional impacts of the pandemic faced by their faculty members.

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 for the 2023-2024 cycle:

- **Optional Candidate COVID-19 Impact Statement.** The optional Candidate COVID-19 Impact Statement enables faculty members to articulate the personal and/or professional impacts of the pandemic on their faculty activities. If provided, the Candidate COVID Impact Statement statements will remain internal to University promotion and review processes. Details are available [here](#).
- **Field Impact Statement.** Academic units (departments, schools within colleges, and non-departmentalized colleges or schools) must develop a Field Impact Statement for inclusion in promotion dossiers. The Field Impact Statement is designed to provide additional important context that informs review processes in light of unit evaluative criteria and expectations. Field Impact Statements will remain internal to University promotion and review processes. Details are available [here](#).
- **University COVID-19 Actions Timeline.** The University took a number of actions related to campus operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic between March 2020 and June 2021. While these actions served to ensure the health and safety of our faculty, staff, and students, the measures also impacted the ability of faculty members to engage in their expected responsibilities. This timeline of University actions should be included in the materials sent to external evaluators. Details are available [here](#).
- **Unit Head and Promotion and Review Committee Guidance.** This document offers unit heads as well as promotion and/or review committees guidance on the conduct of promotion review processes given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Details are available [here](#).
- **Modifications to External Letter Request.** The external letter review request language acknowledges the COVID-19 pandemic, and references and includes the University's COVID-19 Actions Timeline.

The University is committed to ensuring the fair and impartial treatment of candidates throughout the promotion and tenure review process. Five key elements contribute to the fairness 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 (or modified tenure criteria, if applicable) and the University's expectations for excellence;**
- 3) **Maintaining confidentiality with respect to discussions and contents of current and past decision-making meetings;**
- 4) **Paying careful attention to evaluative statements; and**
- 5) **Avoiding discussion of topics that are irrelevant to APT criteria or that introduce bias into APT considerations.**

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. 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 and are not comparative across current or past candidates.

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, nor should previously reviewed candidate cases be discussed during another candidate's review.

Administrators should familiarize themselves with the University's APT Policy, the most recent University APT Guidelines, and unit criteria **prior to initiating APT cases**. Chairs of APT Committees are responsible for ensuring adherence to University and unit policies, procedures, and guidelines. It is essential that candidate and unit materials adhere to University requirements so as to ensure the completeness of dossiers and consistency in the review process.

Note the following required elements and/or procedures in particular as articulated in the University's APT Guidelines:

- 1) Using the revised required external evaluator letter request templates to solicit external evaluator letters. Changes to the letter request template **must be approved** by the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs;
- 2) Including a CV signed by the candidate that is in the required University CV format;
- 3) Including required peer evaluations of teaching;
- 4) Including a candidate Personal Statement that is **no more than five (5)**

pages; and

- 5) Ensuring that candidates **review and certify review** of selected elements within the dossier (e.g., unit APT criteria, sample e-mail and external evaluator letter request, Field Impact Statement, Summary Statement of Professional Achievements, Reputation of Publication Outlets, student and peer evaluation of teaching, and record of mentoring/advising/ research supervision). This sign-off may be streamlined with use of a Candidate Verification Page.

Evaluation of candidates may not be based on identity factors 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 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. Further, candidates who elected to invoke the University's COVID-19 pandemic tenure delay(s), but choose to come up for tenure at what would have been their normal mandatory review year, may do so without additional considerations associated with "early tenure."

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 the matter and seek resolution. 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.

The Office of Faculty Affairs is available to consult with faculty members and administrators throughout the APT process when questions or concerns arise.