Administering the APT Process

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Agenda

1. General Considerations
2. Reminder: Process
3. Expectations of APT Committees, Chairs, Deans
4. Teaching Portfolios
5. What We See/What Can Happen
6. COVID-19 and Flexibility/Support
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Tenure is

• Earned based on demonstrated **excellence** in research, teaching, and service

• Granted by an academic institution to those who demonstrate a capacity for a lifetime of scholarship, teaching, and service

• A commitment by the University and State of Maryland to continuously support faculty for the next few decades
Tenure is not

• Just about the candidate. It’s also about the
  ○ Department, College, University, USM, and State of Maryland
Defining Excellence

• You (i.e., your department) are the experts in your area
• You (i.e., your department) establish the criteria for excellence in that area, answering the question:
  o What does excellence in...
    ▪ Research
    ▪ Teaching
    ▪ Service
  Look like in your field/unit?
  How is excellence measured?

• You and your department colleagues are responsible for **articulating** and **demonstrating** how the candidate(s) has achieved “excellence”
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The APT Process

April/May 2020

You
- CV
- Personal Statement

Dept
- Letters
- Evaluative Report
- Vote

Chair
- Letter
- Vote

College
- Report
- Vote

Dean
- Letter
- Vote

Campus
- Evaluative Report
- Vote

Provost
- Vote

President
- Final Decision

May 2021
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You Need to Know

• USM Policy
• UMD Policy and Guidelines
  o Modified COVID Guidelines
• Departmental Criteria
  o Secondary unit if joint appointment
  o Modified tenure criteria, if applicable
• Process
  o Department
  o College
  o Campus
• Culture
• Why a particular candidate was hired
• What the expectations are/were for the candidate
The APT Committees

• Seek to understand the candidate and their work in your unit

• The most important thing a dossier does is tell a story, in particular the candidate’s story

• It is a narrative with several layers and parts*
  
  o Told by 3 different committees (Department, College, Campus) and 3 different university officers (Chair, Dean, Provost)
  o The goal and hope is that the compilation does justice to the case
  o [Ultimately, it is the President who has the most information in the decision to grant tenure]

* There may be more layers if there is a joint appointment
Committees, APT Chairs, Chairs

• Lower level committees (Department) emphasize
  o Field and departmental expectations (metrics, criteria, definitions of excellence)
  o Field and department assessments and evaluation
  o Technical aspects of a case (reports, letters, external evaluator selection criteria)

• Higher level committees (College, University) focus on a professional evaluation of quality and impact indicators
  o By the department (guided by written criteria)
  o By external evaluators
Committees, APT Chairs, Chairs

• Administrators should ensure:
  o A clear, accurate, and concise presentation in the dossier
  o Departmental, College, and University processes are followed
  o Established criteria are applied

→ If something doesn’t look right to you, others further up will notice too

• General rule: avoid non-conventional practices and expectations
  o These can and often do cause potential harm to candidates

• When in doubt, call OFA
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Teaching Portfolios

• Required with 2015 APT revisions
• Are the candidate’s to create and assemble
• Are an excellent opportunity to expand on the candidate’s instructional contributions
  o Course creation/design/redesign
  o Mentoring
  o Pedagogy, Philosophy
Teaching Portfolios

• Encourage candidates to view their teaching portfolios an opportunity
• It is one of the few components of the overall dossier that they control
• TLTC – excellent resources, workshops, guidance
  ○ [https://tltc.umd.edu/portfolios](https://tltc.umd.edu/portfolios)
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What We See

• The use of non-standard/recommended external letter writer request letters
  o Without expected question for evaluators to answer or missing key elements (i.e., tenure delay language)
  o **If modified, need to have reviewed by OFA; should also discuss with the Dean if in a departmentalized college**

• Solicitation of external letters from multiple associate professors, typically without rationale for doing so
  o Policy says associate professors are OK
  o Practice and expectations are that letter writers should be full professors or equivalent
What We See

• Discussion of personnel matters irrelevant to the deliberations (and in some cases that should be handled through other processes/policies that ensure due process for all parties)

• Inappropriate communication with candidates about their cases during the APT process

• Different processes for different candidates seeking promotion/tenure in the same unit at the same time (typically due to different procedures adopted by record preparation committees)

• Missing elements to dossiers

• Different data (i.e., publication counts) in different parts of the dossier (Summary Statement of Achievements, Committee Reports)

• Different vote counts (in Committee Reports and on the transmittal form)
What We See

• Not providing the candidate the requisite time to review and sign off on materials – or not providing them to candidates at all

• Personal statements that are too long (5 page max)

• The wrong person’s materials submitted:
  o In parts of main dossier
  o Wrong teaching portfolio/supplemental materials

• Emeritus faculty (now at another university) as external letter writers
  o They still hold appointments here

• **We urge you to adopt a thorough review process to ensure the dossier’s accuracy**
  o Not doing so can cause delays at the campus level while we sort all this out
Please...

- Familiarize yourself with the standard dossier ahead of time
- Review the guidelines – they undergo periodic updates
- **Don’t send forward problematic dossiers** (procedure, due process)
  - If you think there is a problem, other levels will too
  - Don’t be afraid to ask questions of lower levels or even send dossier back
    - If you don’t, others may, causing delays and other issues
Please...

• Quality control
  - Someone needs to ensure that the dossiers get to us
    - On time
    - Clean
Things To Think About

• Set and manage candidate expectations – this is a year long process
• Don’t delay: your delay causes delays throughout the process
  o Your delays become our delays
  o Lack of quality control forces the Campus APT Committee to clean things up
  o Sometimes the campus level can’t fix the problems that should have been resolved earlier
  o At best, this can cause delays in notifying candidates
  o At worst....
    ▪ Don’t ask the Campus APT Committee or Provost to resolve problems
Things That Should Be Avoided

• Ignoring the guidelines
  o Length of personal statements (5 pages max)
  o Not using recommended external evaluator letter request
  o Using collaborators as external evaluators

• Not adhering to standard unit procedures
  o It may be useful to assemble the APT committee ahead of time to get ready
  o Avoid “rogue” processes

• Cutting corners (higher committees will notice)
• Creating a problem for the candidate
Things That Should Be Avoided

• Not selecting substantive external letter writers
  o Peer institutions or highly regarded Departments/Units, entities (Labs)
  o Letter writers who are appropriate to the candidate’s area
  o Full professors/equivalent – or strong rationale for other choice
  o Follow rules regarding collaborators

• Learn how to interpret letters
  o Particularly if they contain negative comments or raise concerns
Things That Should Be Avoided

• Assuming that others understand candidate’s research/field

• Ignoring/downplaying the negative reactions from evaluators or faculty at your level
  o Peer judgment is critical to the process
  o Don’t dismiss the evaluators you have chosen
  o Don’t dismiss the faculty at your level who disagree with promoting the candidate

• Bottom line: Ensure a rigorous and fair process, arguing points as needed
What We Can (and will) Do

• Ask questions of lower levels
• Bring unit representatives forward to Campus APT Committee
• **Send dossiers back for reconsideration**

• [Appeals]
  ▪ Many of the issues we see are either procedural or due process violations – and appealable
Parting Comments

• Fields change
  o Review departmental APT guidelines and procedures periodically
  o If co-authorship is on the rise, learn how to assess this
  o If large-scale teams are used, find ways to determine and demonstrate the individual candidate’s contributions
  o If forms of scholarship are evolving, learn how to assess this

• Provide context
  o Help others better understand the candidate’s record

• Avoid harming candidates for issues that they did not create
  o Choice of external letter writers
  o Errors in dossiers (e.g., Departmental reports, Chair letters)
Parting Comments

• Issues on the horizon
  o Open Access publications
  o “Predatory” journals and conferences

  o https://libguides.ucd.ie/publishing/predatory
  o https://thinkchecksubmit.org/
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APT and COVID-19

• We recognize the disruption that COVID-19 is causing to both instruction and research
• We all need to be flexible and understanding of the circumstances and the impact on faculty and the APT process
• We have issued guidance for meeting modifications due to COVID
APT and COVID-19

• Course Evaluations for Spring 2020
  o Not to be used in APT evaluations
  o Faculty can elect to include in their teaching portfolios should they wish

• COVID-19-related tenure delay of one year
  o June 1, 2020: mandatory review year 2020-2021
  o June 1, 2021: mandatory review year beyond 2020-2021

  o Those who miss the window or realize impacts later can request tenure delays for personal/professional reasons as per policy
In Conclusion

• Communicate with
  o Faculty Affairs
  o Unit staff preparing dossiers for transmission
  o Others as necessary
  to ensure that all runs smoothly

• When in doubt, ask OFA
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