

Report to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Retention, Promotion and Tenure Committee

From: John Charles and Virginia Torczon, Co-chairs of RPT 2012-2013

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Committee Members 2012-2013: John Charles, Daniel Cristol, George Greenia, Pamela Hunt, Simon Joyce (spring semester), Deborah Morse (fall semester), and Virginia Torczon

This report covers the activities of the Committee in 2012-2013.

The Advisory Committee on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure consists of six members elected by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and charged with reviewing recommendations made by Arts and Sciences departments and programs concerning the retention, promotion, and/or tenure of members of the home departments. The Committee's recommendations are forwarded to the Dean of the Faculty. Retention (interim review) cases usually come to the Committee only when a department or program recommends against retention or the Dean disagrees with a department or program recommendation. When a member of the Committee had a conflict of interest in the case of a candidate (such as a member of the same department), the Committee member was replaced for that discussion and decision by a recent past member of the Committee from the same Area.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Committee reviewed fifteen departmental recommendations for tenure and appointment to Associate Professor. Of these fifteen cases, the Committee forwarded to the Dean twelve positive recommendations and two negative recommendations; the vote by members of the Committee split evenly in one case. The Dean agreed with the Committee's recommendations in thirteen of the cases. In one case, the Dean concurred with the recommendation of the department and the chair and did not endorse tenure. In the case where the vote of the Committee was split evenly, the Dean concurred with the recommendation of the department and the chair and endorsed tenure. The Provost concurred with fourteen of the Dean's recommendations. In one case, the Provost decided for tenure, against the recommendations of both the Dean and the majority of the members of the Committee.

One of the two negative cases was sent to Procedural Review. Upon their recommendation, the Provost instructed the Dean and the Committee to reconsider the case, including in their renewed deliberations an article accepted for publication after the initial recommendations had been made. Upon reconsideration, the vote by members of the Committee split evenly. The Dean concurred with the recommendation of the department and the chair and endorsed tenure. The Provost decided against tenure.

The Committee also reviewed five departmental recommendations for promotion to Professor. All but one received positive endorsements from the Committee. The Dean recommended promotion to Professor in all five cases and the Provost concurred.

All departments provided the dossiers of candidates electronically, using a secure Blackboard site. The Committee finds this to be an efficient format. An ongoing concern is that each report of the Committee is made available to the candidate, a change in protocol introduced with the move to the electronic submission of dossiers. The Committee strongly recommends that this change in protocol be reversed.

A second issue of concern was that not all letters from chairs provide sufficient context to help those outside of the department assess the candidate's portfolio during the review process, particularly in those difficult cases where the vote of the faculty in the home department was split or evidence in the portfolio appeared contradictory. Such shortcomings are of sufficient concern that the Provost's Office organized the *Workshop on Effective Letters for Candidates*, held Wednesday, November 7, 2012. As a former chair and a current co-chair of RPT, Deborah Morse and Virginia Torczon served as invited participants.

A third issue of concern was that in multiple cases, external letters were included in dossiers from reviewers who were not deemed to satisfy the "arms-length" criterion laid out in the Dean's memo on Arts and Sciences Procedures on Tenure, Promotion and Interim Review Processes, dated October 2, 2012. In all but one of these instances, there was a sufficient number of letters from reviewers who satisfied the arms-length criterion (the minimum number of solicited external letters is four) to allow deliberations to proceed. In one instance, the department was instructed by the Dean and the Provost to solicit additional letters of recommendation. In none of these instances was the Dean's or Provost's Offices consulted in advance of the department's decision to solicit letters from these external reviewers.

A fourth, and ongoing, issue of concern is that dossiers for faculty either who hold joint appointments or who are active participants in interdisciplinary programs do not always contain letters or other useful feedback from all relevant parties. For instance, letters of support from program directors are not always included. Faculty members affiliated with a program in which the candidate is active, but who do not reside in the candidate's home department, often are not solicited for independent feedback. Such omissions make it difficult for members of the RPT to properly evaluate governance outside of the candidate's home department, which may constitute a significant percentage of their service to the College.