

Report to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Retention, Promotion, and Tenure

From: Pamela Hunt and Simon Joyce, Co-chairs of RPT 2014-2015

Date: June 1, 2015

Committee Members 2014-15: Carl Carlson (spring semester), Michael Deschenes, Pamela Hunt, Simon Joyce, Henry Krakauer (fall semester), John Oakley, J. C. Poutsma

This report covers the activities of the Committee in 2014-15.

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 past member of the Committee, typically from the same Area. The RPT wants to record its thanks for all the former Committee members who agreed to serve as replacements during the past year.

During the 2014-15 academic year, the Committee reviewed twelve departmental recommendations for tenure and appointment to Associate Professor, and one recommendation for tenure with an appointment to Professor. The Committee forwarded to the Dean positive recommendations for all thirteen. The Dean agreed with the Committee's recommendations in all cases. The Provost concurred with all of the Dean's recommendations.

The Committee also reviewed sixteen departmental recommendations for promotion to Professor, including three that were recommended under Item 32 of the Arts and Sciences Procedures on Tenure, Promotion, and the Interim Review Process, which stipulates that a faculty member can be considered for promotion with a modest record of scholarship and exemplary teaching and service over a long period (typically 15 years). Of these sixteen cases, the Committee forwarded to the Dean fourteen positive recommendations and two negative recommendations. The Dean agreed with the Committee's recommendations in all cases. In one case, the Provost decided for promotion, against the recommendation of both the Dean and the majority of the members of the RPT Committee.

In last year's report, the Committee reported an improvement in the preparation of electronic dossiers on Blackboard (which is still a relatively new process) as well as in the selection of external reviewers who were truly arm's length. During 2014-15, we again had several incomplete dossiers and had to spend time requesting missing documents before we could complete our reviews. This had an effect of delaying and compressing what was already a tight review schedule, especially in the spring semester.

A second issue of concern was the timetable itself. Because of the timing of the Board of Visitors' meetings, the committee had to review sixteen promotion dossiers before Spring Break, which proved to be a very difficult task made harder by missing documents and extended deadlines. It may be that it is exceptional for the committee to be forwarded so many promotion recommendations in one year—the most of any of the past ten years (and twice the average number of 8 cases per year), and more than the previous three years combined; if it is not, the Faculty may need to rethink the deadlines for completed dossiers to be uploaded to Blackboard.

A third issue of concern is Item 32, which proved difficult to interpret, especially for external reviewers. Terms like "modest" and "exemplary" are vaguely worded, as is the direction that external reviewers "may be provided with a copy of [the relevant] paragraph to clarify that they are being asked to review a candidate for promotion under special circumstances." The Committee recommends that the policy changes so that external reviewers must be sent the wording of Item 32, and further suggests that the Faculty might want to reconsider how it expects external reviews to be conducted in these circumstances.

A *Best Practices for RPT* (BPRPT) ad hoc committee was formed this year. The committee consists of two members each of the RPT, the FAC, and the CCPD. This committee is currently: (a) combining the Dean's and Provost's memos on Retention, Promotion and Interim Review procedures into one document, (b) clarifying the materials that are required in the dossiers, including for Item 32 cases, (c) writing new instructions for compiling the dossier on Blackboard, and (d) making several recommendations for improving the quality of the dossiers. The document will be sent to the RPT, the FAC and the CCPD in the fall of 2015 for review and comments, and then forwarded to the Dean for approval.