

Report to the Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Committee for Retention, Promotion, and Tenure

From: Michael Tierney and Susan Webster, Co-Chairs of RPT for 2017-18

Date: May 15, 2018

Committee members for 2017-18: Lizabeth Allison, Leisa Meyer, Jeff Nelson, Anne Rasmussen, Michael Tierney (Co-Chair), and Susan Webster (Co-Chair).

This report summarizes the activities of the Committee on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) for the academic year of 2017-18. The RPT serves in an advisory capacity to the Dean of Arts & Sciences. It is comprised of six members who are elected by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences and is charged with reviewing recommendations made by departments and programs of that academic unit concerning the retention, tenure, or promotion of members of those departments and/or programs. The committee's recommendations are forwarded to the Dean of Arts & Sciences who then forwards his/her recommendation to the Provost. Retention (interim review) cases usually come to RPT only when a department or program recommends against retention, or when the Dean disagrees with the decision of the department/program. No such retention cases were handled by RPT during 2017-18, although a large number of tenure and promotion cases were submitted for review. During such reviews, the maintenance of objectivity is crucial; thus, when a member of the committee had a conflict of interest in the case of a particular candidate – such as being a member of the same department/program – the committee member was replaced for that discussion and decision by a past member of RPT who represented the same academic area, i.e. Area I (humanities), II (social sciences), or III (exact sciences). The RPT expresses its gratitude to Professors Christopher Abelt, John Charles, Daniel Cristol, Michael Deschenes, Joan Gavalier, Will Hausman, Chris Howard, Pam Hunt, Simon Joyce, Deborah Morse, Susan Peterson, Robert Pike, and JC Poutsma, each of whom generously agreed to serve as substitutes during the past academic year.

In the fall of 2017, the committee reviewed nineteen candidates for tenure, three of which were for external senior hires with tenure at the Associate Professor level. The remaining sixteen cases were Assistant Professors at William & Mary who submitted dossiers for tenure and promotion. Of the nineteen candidates, eighteen were ultimately granted tenure this year. One case is still on appeal and is pending as of May 10, 2018. The RPT ultimately forwarded eighteen unanimous (6-0) positive recommendations and one split vote (4 in favor and 2 against) positive recommendation to the Dean. The Dean agreed with all but one of the RPT's positive recommendations. In the one case of disagreement with the RPT, the Dean explained her negative recommendation by referencing elements of the record that may not have been available to all participants in the prior levels of the tenure review process. The Provost endorsed all nineteen positive recommendations and overruled the Dean in the single case where the Dean made a negative recommendation. As a result, nineteen candidates were

presented to the Board of Visitors with positive recommendations from the Provost. As is the custom, the BOV receives only the recommendation from the Provost and does not see the recommendation from the Dean. The Board voted positively on eighteen of the cases and granted tenure to eighteen of the nineteen candidates. However, in what may be the first time in the recent history of the university, the Board of Visitors voted against awarding tenure to one of the candidates who was recommended by the Provost. That candidate has appealed the case and it is unresolved at the time of this report.

In the spring of 2017, the committee reviewed eight internal cases for promotion to the rank of Full Professor. It also reviewed one case of an external candidate who was hired in the spring. The RPT forwarded nine unanimous positive recommendations to the Dean. Both the Dean and Provost made similar recommendations in all cases. All nine candidates received endorsement from the Board of Visitors and were promoted to the rank of Full Professor. In the one case of an external candidate, the Board agreed that the candidate should also be granted tenure at William & Mary.

Although 2017-18 was marked by improvements in the quality and thoroughness of dossiers assembled and electronically submitted to the RPT Blackboard site for review, the RPT still received several incomplete or disorganized dossiers. In several cases, the RPT had to ask for required information that was missing from the dossier. The most common omissions were: (1) clear written documentation from a publisher that a book or article was forthcoming; (2) department or program personnel policies; and 3) an explicit discussion of the second method of teaching evaluation. Some departments continue to use the evaluation of syllabi and course materials as this second method. The RPT recommends that these departments include a section in their Departmental Report that describes the results of such evaluations in detail, particularly in regard to the timing of the review and the members of the review committee. Despite these omissions or mistakes, the quality of the dossiers has improved in comparison to previous years.

The three guiding documents for the preparation of a dossier continue to be the departmental/program personnel policies, the Dean's memo on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure, and the Faculty Handbook. The RPT Committee urges each Department Chair, Program Director, and tenure or promotion candidate to read thoroughly each of these documents before assembling dossiers for the 2018-2019 academic year.