

Report to the Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Committee for Retention, Promotion, and Tenure

From: Leisa Meyer, Chair of RPT for 2018-19

Date: July 9, 2019

Committee members for 2018-19: John Gilmore, Heather Macdonald (replacing Lizabeth Allison), Christopher MacGowan, Leisa Meyer (chair), Jeffrey Nelson, Anne Rasmussen.

This report summarizes the activities of the Committee on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) for the academic year of 2018-19. 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 2018-19. 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, Francie Cate-Arries, Michael Deschenes, Joan Gavaler, JC Poutsma, and Michael Tierney, each of whom generously agreed to serve as substitutes (several doing so multiple times) during the past academic year.

In the fall of 2018, the committee reviewed seven internal candidates for tenure. Of the seven candidates, all seven were granted tenure this year. The RPT ultimately forwarded seven unanimous (6-0) positive recommendations to the Dean. The Dean agreed with all of the RPT's positive recommendations. As a result, seven 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 all of the cases and granted tenure to all seven candidates.

In the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019, the committee reviewed twelve internal cases for promotion to the rank of Full Professor. The RPT forwarded twelve unanimous positive recommendations to the Dean. Both the Dean and Provost made similar recommendations in all cases. All twelve candidates received endorsement from the Board of Visitors and were promoted to the rank of Full Professor.

Although 2018-19 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 a number of incomplete or disorganized dossiers. In seven 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; (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. (4) Missing “arms length” requests in solicitation letters to external reviewers or missing “arms length” statements from external reviewers in their evaluations. (5) Incomplete tables documenting teaching performance: As stated in the Dean’s instructions and RPT memo departments and/or programs should provide the RPT with a table that includes: each course section offered, the term the course was offered, the Instructor effectiveness mean (not median) for the candidate, the instructor effectiveness mean for the department (during the same term). The “rate this course” is sometimes included by departments or programs but is not required. All numbers should be 3 digits- so not rounded up; eg. 3.67 not 3.7.

The RPT forwarded each request for additional documentation to Kathy Morgan in the dean’s office. Ms. Morgan as a result will be creating a check list for each item required in tenure and promotion dossiers and the process will not be able to move forward until the relevant parties in each department have submitted these required items. Our hope is that in the future (next year) these most commonly occurring dossier errors will be completely eliminated.

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.

The 2018-19 RPT also recommended to Dean Conley that the “does not meet”/“meets”/“exceeds” concluding assessment for each category of evaluation (teaching, research, service/governance) and the final decision be replaced by “does not meet”/“meets.” There is no requirement in the Dean’s RPT memo or the Faculty Handbook that the RPT use three versus two evaluation standards. Dean Conley consulted with Provost Halleran and both approved the move to “meets” or “does not meet” as the RPT assessment rubric beginning in the 2019-2020 academic year.