

Report to the Faculty of Arts & Sciences from the Committee for Retention, Promotion, and Tenure

From: Jeffrey Nelson, Chair of RPT for 2019-20

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Committee members for 2019-20: Christopher Del Negro, John Gilmore, Lu Ann Homza, Christopher MacGowan, Jeffrey Nelson (chair), Anne Rasmussen.

This report summarizes the activities of the A&S Committee on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) for the 2019-20 academic year. RPT serves in an advisory capacity to the Dean of Arts & Sciences. Six faculty members who are elected by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences comprise RPT, which 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 their recommendation to the Provost. During such reviews, maintaining 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). RPT expresses its gratitude to Professors Michael Deschenes, Christopher Abelt, Lizabeth Allison, Suzanne Raitt, Joan Gravaler, Leisa Meyer, and Daniel Cristol, each of whom generously agreed to serve as substitute committee members during the 2019-20 academic year.

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 2019-20.

In the fall of 2019, the committee reviewed ten internal candidates for tenure. RPT ultimately forwarded nine unanimous (6-0) positive recommendations and one split-vote (4-2) positive recommendation to the Dean. The Dean and Provost made similar positive recommendations in all cases. All ten candidates received endorsement from the Board of Visitors and were granted tenure.

In the fall of 2019 and spring of 2020, the committee reviewed three cases for tenure of advanced hires. RPT forwarded three unanimous positive recommendations to the Dean. Both the Dean and Provost made similar recommendations in two cases, while the third case is still in review as of this writing. Both candidates received endorsement from the Board of Visitors and were granted tenure.

In the fall of 2019 and spring of 2020, the committee reviewed eight internal cases for promotion of Associate Professors to the rank of Professor. RPT forwarded eight unanimous positive recommendations to the Dean. Both the Dean and Provost made similar positive

recommendations in all cases. All eight candidates received endorsement from the Board of Visitors and were promoted to the rank of Professor.

In 2019-20 RPT Committee, based on prior agreement from Dean Conley and Provost Halleran, moved away from a “does not meet”/“meets”/“exceeds” concluding assessment for each category of evaluation (scholarship/teaching/service) and moved to “meets”/“does not meet” as the RPT assessment rubric.

Although 2019-20 was marked by some improvements in the quality and thoroughness of dossiers assembled and electronically submitted to the RPT Blackboard site for review, in the majority of cases RPT still received incomplete or disorganized dossiers. In 11 of 20 cases, RPT had to ask for required information that was missing from the dossier. The RPT forwarded each request for additional documentation to Kathy Morgan in the dean’s office who worked with the department/program to complete the dossier. The most common problems were:

- (1) Issues related the selection of at-arms-length reviewers (esp. rank and former colleagues),
- (2) Missing documentation from the solicitation of the at-arms-length reviewers including an example email with the specified words asking for an at-arms-length statement,
- (3) Missing external reviewer at-arms-length statements,
- (4) Missing explicit evaluative discussion of the second method of teaching evaluation. RPT expects the departments to include documentation of such evaluations and to devote a section in their Departmental Report to describing the results of such evaluations in detail,
- (5) Unexplained gaps in teaching records (which are typically due to a form of leave). The required summary table of student evaluation “Overall Teaching Effectiveness” scores is the most straightforward place to denote such leaves, and
- (6) Many dossiers continue to omit their departmental/program standards.
- (7) A number of instances where the table of contents, which is primarily meant as a form of dossier quality control via affirmed inspection, were missing, unsigned, undated, or, were clearly submitted without actually checking the contents before signing.

As an aid for this process the RPT Chair produced an annotated copy of the Dean’s Memo on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure that outline these and other frequent issues in dossiers. This was initially presented during the 2020 A&S Pre-Tenure Forum.

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 candidate to read thoroughly each of these documents before assembling dossiers and selecting external reviewers for the 2020-2021 academic year.