

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

From: John B. Gilmour, Co-Chair of RPT for 2020-21

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Committee members for 2020-21: John Gilmour (co-chair), Christopher MacGowan (co-chair, fall semester), Lu Ann Homza, Christopher Del Negro, Vassiliki Panoussi, Rex Kincaid, and Simon Joyce (replacing MacGowan in Spring semester). This report summarizes the activities of the Committee on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) for the academic year of 2020-21.

The Advisory Committee on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (hereafter RPT) serves as an advisor to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences. It is comprised of six members, two from each of the three Areas, who are elected by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences. The committee is charged with reviewing recommendations made by departments and programs concerning the retention, tenure, or promotion of faculty members of A&S departments and programs. Members of the committee review the dossiers submitted for each candidate, write a report summarizing the candidate's record in scholarship, teaching, and service, and make recommendations. The committee's recommendations are forwarded to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences, who then forwards her or his recommendation to the Provost.

Maintaining objectivity is crucial in all RPT activities. When a case before the committee involves a conflict of interest for a member – such as being a member of the same department/program – the committee member with a conflict is recused and replaced by a past member of RPT who represented the same academic Area. We are grateful to Professors Pamela Hunt, Simon Joyce, J.C. Poutsma, Anne Rasmussen, Michael Tierney, Heather Macdonald, Leisa Meyer, Jeffrey Nelson, and Lizabeth Allison, each of whom generously agreed to serve as substitutes (some doing so multiple times) during the past academic year. Simon Joyce deserves particular thanks because he served as a substitute twice in the fall and then replaced Chris MacGowan for the Spring Semester when Chris went on leave.

In the fall of 2020, the committee reviewed 13 internal and 3 external candidates for tenure. RPT voted to recommend tenure for all 16 of these cases. The RPT ultimately forwarded 16 positive recommendations to the Dean, except that one of these recommendations involved the Dean herself, and that went directly to the Provost.

The Dean agreed with all of the RPT's positive recommendations. As a result, 16 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 16 candidates.

In the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021, the committee reviewed 8 internal cases for promotion to the rank of Professor. In 7 cases the committee recommended promotion to Professor, and in 1 case the committee recommended against promotion. The Dean and Provost endorsed the RPT

recommendations in all cases. All 7 candidates received endorsement from the Board of Visitors and were promoted to the rank of Professor.

Members of RPT have become aware of a problem with the handling of “retention” cases. In this context, retention means the mid-probationary review for tenure eligible faculty at which point they are either “retained” until they come up for tenure review, or are terminated. For many years, retention cases have not been referred to RPT for review, even though the A&S Bylaws state that this is a responsibility of the committee. The relevant sentence of the bylaws reads: “The RPT committee shall review all recommendations made by departments in Arts & Sciences concerning the retention, promotion, or tenure of members of these departments.” No retention cases were brought to RPT this year, or, apparently, for quite a few prior years. The most recent RPT annual report that mentions retention cases was 2005.

The members of RPT recommend creating a process for involving RPT in the retention process. We do not believe it is necessary or desirable for RPT to review all retention decisions, most of which are uncontroversial. We do, however, recommend that cases in which a department recommends against retention be referred to RPT for review. In addition, we need a new process for involving RPT in cases in which the dean is likely to disagree with a departmental positive recommendation.