

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

From: Lu Ann Homza & Christopher A. Del Negro, co-Chairs for 2021-2022

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The members of the Retention, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) committee for 2021-2022 included: Christopher Del Negro (co-Chair), Lu Ann Homza (co-Chair), Rex Kincaid, Robin Looft-Wilson, Christopher MacGowan (Fall 2021), Vassiliki Panoussi, and Kim Wheatley (Spring 2022).

The RPT committee serves as an advisor to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences. The committee consists of six members, two members from each of the three disciplinary Areas, who are elected by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences. RPT reviews tenure and promotion dossiers assembled by personnel committees of constituent Arts & Sciences departments, where in some cases the personnel committees and dossiers span departments and interdepartmental programs. RPT committee members review the completed dossiers submitted for each candidate, discuss the dossier as a committee, and evaluate and vote on whether the candidate's scholarship, teaching, and service meet (or do not meet) the university's standards for tenure or promotion. Finally, the committee writes a report on each tenure and promotion case, which summarizes its evaluation and vote for the Dean.

When a case before the RPT committee involves a conflict of interest for any member – for instance when a committee member shares the same tenure home department – then the committee member in conflict is replaced with a former RPT committee member from the same disciplinary Area. This year's RPT committee is grateful for the renewed service of Heather Macdonald, Joan Gavaler, Lizbeth Allison, John Gilmore, Anne Rasmussen, and Simon Joyce. The RPT committee particularly thanks Christopher MacGowan, who served during the entire Fall 2021 semester.

The RPT committee reviewed 13 tenure cases in Fall 2021. All 13 candidates were internal. The committee voted unanimously 6-0 to recommend tenure in 11 cases. There was a 3-3 split vote in 2 cases. Ultimately 12 of the 13 cases received the endorsement of the Board of Visitors and those candidates were awarded tenure and promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.

The RPT committee reviewed 14 promotion cases in Fall 2021 and early Spring 2022. All 14 candidates were internal. The committee voted unanimously 6-0 in favor of promotion in 13 cases. There was a 5-1 split vote in 1 case. Ultimately all 14 cases received the endorsement of the Board of Visitors and those candidates were promoted to the rank of Professor.

In Fall 2021 the RPT committee was delayed by the lack of an Area I seat on the committee. In the first instance, an elected member of the committee resigned at the start of the semester as the committee's work was getting started. In the second instance, a new Area I member was elected – and remained willing to serve – but was nevertheless ineligible due to rank (associate professors are not eligible to adjudicate promotion cases). These problems delayed the committee's evaluation of the tenure dossiers, which compressed the review schedule toward the latter half of the Fall semester, and thus increased the workload during each week. Going forward, the RPT committee recommends that the

Dean and the Nominations & Elections committee take whatever steps are necessary to ensure a stable committee membership roster before the Fall semester begins. Otherwise, the review and evaluation duties can begin to encroach on other faculty duties, i.e., scholarship and teaching.

The dossiers of the tenure and promotion cases were generally complete and of high overall quality. However, some problems remain which hinder the RPT committee from expeditiously reviewing and evaluating tenure and promotion dossiers. Below we identify the problems and recommend solutions:

- **External letter writer who was not at “arm’s length”:** There were several instances in which an external letter of evaluation was not entirely clear to have been at “arm’s length”. For example, the candidate and the letter writer attended the same graduate program at the same time, or the letter writer is a faculty member at the institution where the candidate obtained their Ph.D. Those instances may represent conflicts of interest, and in those cases the RPT committee consulted the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences to rule on the admissibility of the external letters. The RPT committee’s recommendation is to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. In no circumstances should a letter writer be a faculty member at the Ph.D.-granting institution of the candidate being considered for tenure or promotion because the success of the tenure or promotion case would affect the reputation of the Ph.D.-granting institution. If candidates attended the same graduate program, and overlapped in time, then the external letter must clarify the extent and nature of any interactions between the letter writer and the candidate to ensure that there is no conflict or apparent conflict due to friendship or professional ties.
- **Original documents of peer evaluation of teaching were missing:** In several cases, the personnel committee’s report referred to teaching evaluations performed by faculty in the candidate’s department or program, but the original reports were not included in the dossier. The RPT committee needs to read and evaluate those firsthand reports; the personnel committee’s secondhand assessment of those reports is insufficient. The RPT committee’s recommendation is to include all first-hand peer reports of teaching in the dossier, as well as the personnel committee’s conclusions based on those reports.
- **Inconsistent nomenclature of classes:** The classes taught by the candidate were often referred to either by the name of the class or by the four-letter department moniker and three-digit course number, but seldom by both. This inconsistency pervaded candidates’ personal narrative statements, the Chairs’ letters, and the personnel committees’ reports. The inconsistency in nomenclature makes it difficult for the RPT to track and count classes across documents in the dossier. The RPT committee recommends that each reference to a class contain all the information: course name, four-letter department or program moniker, as well as three-digit course number.
- **Copies and provenance of peer-reviewed publications:** In some instances, candidates’ dossiers referred to “accepted” or “in press” publications, but the dossiers contained incomplete information about the stage of publication. Sometimes as well there were MS Word files included in the dossier rather than PDF copies of published works in some stage of publication, i.e., galley prints or copy-edited preprints. The RPT committee recommends that the candidate include the most updated version of accepted or in-press works that demonstrate that the work is indeed accepted for publication and on its

way to widespread dissemination. If there is some valid reason that a galley print is not yet available, RPT recommends that a letter from the personnel committee or department head explain why such a version is not available. Whenever possible, documentation should be included from the publisher which attests the stage of publication if the final-form published work is not yet available.

The three guiding documents for dossier preparation include *i)* the Dean's memo on Retention, Promotion, and Tenure, *ii)* the Faculty Handbook, and *iii)* the approved personnel policies for the department and/or program in which the candidate serves. The RPT committee urges department chairs and program directors to review these documents carefully for candidates in 2022-2023 and to consider implementing the recommendations above.