

**To:** The Faculty of A&S

**Date:** November 19, 2015

**From:** Terry Meyers, Chancellor Professor of English

**Subject:** The Faculty Handbook and Standards for Tenure and Promotion

At the December 1 Faculty meeting, questions will be posed to the Provost and the Dean concerning reports in recent years that they and RPT have invoked standards variously described along the lines of “university standards,” “Arts and Sciences standards,” or “Humanities standards” in cases concerning tenure and promotion.

I provide below an analysis of the Faculty Handbook’s sections on standards that may be useful; I also include a motion that I anticipate making at the meeting.

The Faculty Handbook is the controlling authority on standards and procedures concerning Faculty at the College, in effect our Constitution. It is precise and clear on standards affecting faculty tenure and promotion and how they are to be applied; we stand out among universities in our transparency and in our protection of candidates’ rights, things that have been useful in recruiting and retaining faculty.

The wording of Section III. C. is central (emphasis added; all citations are to the text of the Handbook, on line, as revised April 2015):

#### **C. PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF FACULTY**

The College recognizes the fundamental principle that both colleagues and administrative officers should evaluate faculty members. Deans, chairs, and, when appropriate, program directors, shall conduct periodic evaluations of all faculty members in the program, department or school, regardless of rank. The procedures and standards for evaluation followed by each school, department or program shall be adopted by majority vote of that unit; they are subject to the approval by the appropriate Dean and by the Provost, and they must be approved by the Procedural Review Committee for consistency with College policies. Procedures become effective when ratified by the Committee on Personnel Policy of the College. The standards shall be applied in a manner that fosters each program’s, department’s or school’s mission and serves to maintain the overall quality of the faculty.

#### **Due Process**

By delivery of a copy of this *Faculty Handbook* with their initial appointment contract, faculty members will be advised of the criteria and procedures generally employed in evaluations across the College; they will also receive a written copy of the procedures and of any special criteria adopted by the faculty member's program, department or school. Faculty members shall be advised in writing by the appropriate administrative officer when evaluations of their performance are to be conducted, they shall be afforded reasonable opportunity to present in writing, and, if the unit’s procedures allow, in person, all relevant information; they shall have timely access to their personnel records as required by law; they shall be afforded an opportunity to respond to any material considered; and they shall receive a written copy of all formal evaluations, another copy of

which shall be placed in their personnel files.

### **1. Tenure-eligible and Tenured Faculty**

Though specific procedures and standards among the several faculties of the College vary, the criteria for retention, tenure, promotion, and annual merit evaluation of tenure-eligible and tenured faculty members throughout the College shall include: possession of the professional education, experience, and degrees appropriate or necessary for their duties; conscientious and effective teaching with proper command of the material of their fields, and helpfulness to their students; significant contributions to their fields through research and scholarly or creative activity, and through professional service; and responsible participation in College governance. Further criteria and procedures specific to the type of review are set forth in Section III.C.1.a. b., and c. below.

(p. 27)

Just to underline the obvious. Standards vary by unit, as one might expect at a university with professional schools and a liberal arts core that includes departments some of which are purely undergraduate, and others of which offer Masters degrees and Doctorates. Although there are standards at the university level, they are defined broadly (e.g. “significant contributions to [the candidates’] fields”).

And each unit, whether a school, department, or program, is to articulate and adopt standards appropriate to its mission; those standards are reviewed for approval by the Procedural Review Committee and the Personnel Policy Committee.

As all who have served on those committees and others who may have inquired know, standards across Arts and Sciences departments and programs do vary, though all meet the broadly defined university standards above; they all are consistent with College policies.

It is worth noting the Handbook’s emphasis on the primacy of the home unit and its standards as reviewed and approved (p. 27, above). That primacy (and the implicit variation among units) is further emphasized in the wording of the Handbook concerning standards and procedures for tenure and/or promotion:

#### **(B) Procedures and Criteria for Tenure Review and Promotion to Associate Professor**

Tenure and promotion reviews shall be conducted in accordance with the general criteria delineated in III.C.1., with the procedures delineated in III.C.1.b., and with the standards and procedures adopted by a majority vote of the faculty member’s program, department, and/or school (and approved by the Procedural Review Committee and the Personnel Policy Committee). (p. 32; emphasis added)

Reviews for promotion to professor shall be conducted in accordance with the general categories delineated in III.C.1., with the procedures delineated in III.C.1.b, and with the standards and procedures adopted by the faculty member’s program, department, and/or school.

(p. 33; emphasis added)

Worth emphasizing here again is that the review at each level (by the Department, RPT, Dean, and Provost) is governed by the “standards and procedures adopted by the faculty member’s program, department, and/or school” as reviewed and approved by the PRC and the PPC.

No other standards, such as university, A&S, or Humanities standards, are mentioned.

Where those might come from is difficult to say, as indeed it is difficult to say what they might be since they appear to be unwritten and inaccessible. They have never been reviewed or approved by the PRC or the PPC.

My understanding is that the one authority cited for invoking such standards is this sentence: “The standards shall be applied in a manner that fosters each program’s, department’s or school’s mission and serves to maintain the overall quality of the faculty” (p. 27).

But any such claim seriously distorts the sentence, for “The standards” in context clearly refers directly and only to “the standards” in the previous sentence, one back, where the standards are those adopted by the candidate’s unit and approved by the PRC and the PPC.

Clearly too the sentence points not to the creation of standards but to the application of approved standards—they are to be applied rigorously in a manner that does not enable marginal candidates that might weaken a unit’s mission or lessen its quality to pass muster.

Any standards applied that are not a unit’s as formally adopted and approved are improper, and explicitly forbidden, as the Handbook makes clear in several places having to do with possible appeals on the basis of “failure to follow procedure”: proper procedure requires

that there be adequate deliberation by the department and administration over the import of the evidence in the light of the relevant standards; that irrelevant and improper standards be excluded from consideration.(p. 42; emphasis added; similar wording on pp. 83, 88)

Note again the emphasis on “relevant standards,” clearly those of each unit as adopted and approved.

The upshot of all this is that there is no basis whatsoever in the Handbook for university standards (apart from the broadly worded ones), A&S standards, or Humanities standards unless they have been formally adopted and approved.

None have been.

One last note: it is possible that a faculty committee, the Dean, or the Provost might find a department's or program's approved standards deficient in some way. But if so, their recourse is to work with the department or program to change the standards. They have no mandate to substitute or overlay other, unapproved standards; indeed the Handbook makes it clear that if they do so, those are improper or irrelevant standards.

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At the December 1 meeting of the Faculty, I expect to make the following motion:

Resolved, that the Faculty of Arts and Sciences asks the Faculty Affairs Committee to report to the Faculty at its February 2016 meeting and to clarify and affirm in a Faculty resolution what standards alone are proper for consideration in tenure and promotion cases.