

To: Vice Chancellors Ratliff-Crain, Schrunk Ericksen, and Hoffman  
Twin Cities Associate Deans for Faculty Affairs  
Twin Cities Chairs and Heads

From: Rebecca Ropers, Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs

Re: Promotion and Tenure Process Guidance

Date: May 3, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

I write to thank you for the outstanding work that you have done to facilitate the thoughtful review of faculty colleagues during the 20-21 promotion and tenure cycle. Done well, this review process gives us an opportunity to familiarize ourselves more deeply with our colleagues' accomplishments and affirm the strength of the faculty across the system. Each year, I am humbled as I learn of the many ways faculty contribute to students, their fields of study, arts and other creative organizations, the University, and our larger community. I thank you for your nurturing of our colleagues and the substantial effort that goes into the review process.

After reviewing the dossiers submitted to the Provost this year, I want to offer some feedback and suggestions as you begin to think about next year's review cycle. I am happy to answer questions that you have about any aspect of this guidance. We have discussed this with vice chancellors and associate deans for faculty, so feel free to consult with those people as well.

### **Evaluation of Teaching**

In the last few years, the Women's Faculty Cabinet, faculty governance bodies, and others have advocated for more holistic approaches to the evaluation of teaching. Toward that end, please consider the following:

- As per our policy on the [Evaluation of Teaching](#), peer reviews of teaching are required evidence in the assessment of faculty members' teaching. If peer reviews are not submitted in promotion and tenure dossiers in the next review cycle, I will be asking units to provide additional evidence of candidates' teaching. Please see existing resources for [information on how to conduct peer reviews of teachings](#) (PRTs). This guide on how to establish a departmental system of [peer review of teaching](#) may also be helpful. Staff at the Center for Educational Innovation can assist in establishing a PRT process and supporting instructor development. However, because of their developmental role, they cannot be peer reviewers in formal promotion processes.
- [Student Ratings of Teaching](#) (SRT) results should be used in accordance with best practice, so as to mitigate bias and strengthen the validity of SRTs as an assessment tool. Evaluators should avoid making judgments based on small differences in SRT mean scores. Likert scale, categorical data do not translate well into means and small differences may be attributable to bias or other factors. Additionally, evaluators should note that SRT results measure students' perceptions of a class rather than an instructor's subject matter knowledge or student learning. Review this guide on [using SRT results to evaluate teaching](#) for more information.

- If your unit uses the University-wide SRT, items have been vetted to mitigate bias. However, if your unit uses a different tool, please consider adopting the University's SRT survey or conducting an independent review to ensure best practice related to the questions. For example, asking students to assess instructor knowledge is typically inappropriate since students are not in a position to make that assessment.

### **External Reviews**

External reviews play a critical part in our review process. Please consider the following as you solicit reviews.

- Our policy requires that a minimum of four arms-length letters are submitted with each dossier. To minimize service expectations for ourselves and our colleagues, please consider how many letters your unit needs to make a reasonable judgment in the review process. In general, I have found that including more than seven letters provides little additional value to the process, though there may be circumstances where that is warranted (such as with an interdisciplinary scholar, for example).
- In the dossier, please make clear the relationship between the reviewer and the candidate.
- Please do not ask external reviewers to compare the candidate to others in the field. Faculty members have different experiences during their probationary period, and comparing faculty without knowing of those experiences can lead to an unfair process. Please focus on the individual's accomplishments and contributions to the field as they relate to the 7.12 statement.
- Please do not ask reviewers to comment on whether or not the candidate would likely be tenured at their institution, as institutional expectations vary greatly.
- Please do not ask reviewers to comment on teaching unless evidence is provided for them to assess. If teaching evidence is submitted, make sure to include evidence beyond SRTs.

To assist in soliciting reviews, we have drafted [guidance](#) for you to help you write these requests.

### **Role of Advising**

Please consider whether advising is considered as part of a faculty member's service or teaching contributions. Section 7.11 Subsection 4 of the *Faculty Tenure Policy* states:

*"Teaching" is not limited to classroom instruction. It includes extension and outreach education, and other forms of communicating knowledge to both registered University students and persons in the extended community, as well as supervising, mentoring, and advising students.*

Unless your 7.12 indicates otherwise, please include evidence related to student advising as part of your evaluation of teaching.

### **Observations of Effective Practice**

- While dossiers must include narratives addressing research, teaching and outreach contributions, we do not require that faculty submit a separate statement for each area. Combined narratives (typically ranging from 3-8 pages) that 1) detail the percentage of time allocated to each area, 2) demonstrate accomplishments in each area, and 3) explain the impact of the work are acceptable.

- Many of you either have, or are in the process of developing, evaluation criteria to assess faculty members' contributions to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in the University, their disciplines, or in our broader community. This work can contribute to effectiveness and impact in teaching, research and service. Please make sure that your unit has a way of assessing and valuing contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion. If you need to revise your 7.12 to better assess: 1) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, 2) Professional Ethics and Respectful Culture, 3) Interdisciplinary Work and Team Science, 4) Public Engagement; 5) Extension, 6) Technology Transfer and Entrepreneurship, and 7) International Engagement, please see this [guidance](#).

### **Policy Reminders**

Please remember that if the University hires a tenure-track faculty member who has already been on the faculty at another similar institution, Section 5.4 of the *Faculty Tenure Policy* requires that: “*every academic year of such service (not exceeding three) reduces the maximum period of probationary service by one year.*” If the person was at a different type of institution, had a different role, or had a particularly unique transition to the University (i.e., changing departments or research focuses), please communicate with me to request an exception.

### **Impact Statements**

Please consult the [guidance](#) issued earlier this year on how to use impact statements as part of faculty reviews. Impact statements must be invited and, if submitted, considered in both annual review and promotion and tenure review processes.