

Report of the A & S Senate Promotion and Tenure Committee
September 2008
Prepared by Joanne Davila, Chair PTC

Committee:

- Joanne Davila, Chair – Psychology (Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- Ellen Broselow – Linguistics (Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- Clare Grey – Chemistry (Natural Sciences; Spring semester only)
- Barry McCoy – Physics (Natural Sciences) – temporary member for fall semester replacing Grey who was on sabbatical
- Vitaly Citovsky – Biochemistry (Natural Sciences)
- Jacqueline Reich – Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies (Humanities and Fine Arts)
- Peter Manning – English (Humanities and Fine Arts; Fall semester only)
- Eric Haralson – English (Humanities and Fine Arts) – temporary member for spring semester replacing Manning who was on sick leave
- Victoria Hesford – Women’s Studies (Humanities and Fine Arts) – non-tenured member

Organization and functioning:

The committee met regularly, typically bi-weekly, during the 2007-2008 academic year, with excellent attendance. All committee members are dedicated and hard working. They take their position seriously and behave in a professional, ethical manner. The committee functions very well as a group, demonstrating cohesion and respect for all members. The committee also met twice during the 2008 summer session. Summer meetings have become increasingly necessary to deal with new hires whose appointments begin in September.

Philosophy and process:

The PTC plays an important role in the College of Arts and Sciences as an advisory committee to the Dean and as a means for providing quality control for the faculty. The faculty members who make up the committee are critical to its functioning and success and it is important to continue to elect strong members to serve on the committee.

The PTC has maintained a strong level of continuity in process with prior years. We continue to adhere strongly to the Policies of the Board of Trustees, and to focus decisions on scholarship, teaching, and service. We recognize that every case is different and make certain that we take into account diversity across departments and types of scholarly achievements.

In making decisions, the main question that we focus on is whether the candidate’s scholarship is having an impact on their field. Our ability to assess this relies on the clarity with which this is presented in the dossier, and we rely heavily on the views expressed in outside letters and in the chair’s letters. A few comments about each are in order. Regarding outside letters, those that come from individuals who do not have a close professional relationship with the candidate are essential, as they are likely to be least biased by personal connections. Regarding the chair’s

letters, it is critical that they express and discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of the case, particularly those pointed out by outside letter writers. Providing a clear rationale for the departmental vote is also extremely important. If there were “no” votes or abstentions, it is important to clarify the reasons for such votes. Chair’s letters that simply reiterate or quote from outside letters, or that present a run-down of the faculty discussion of the case are least helpful to the PTC and are a disservice to the candidate. Unfortunately, many chairs’ letters continue to be written in this manner.

Regarding the assessment of scholarly ability for promotion to Full Professor, the PTC feels that promotion should not be awarded just for significant administrative or other accomplishments, but should be awarded only to those who show true excellence and a strong reputation in creative and scholarly activities. However, teaching and service do matter, and weight is placed on the extent to which candidates for full professor have shown initiative in contributing to the future of their department and their field.

Caseload and actions:

From 9/20/07 through 9/1/08, the PTC acted on 29 cases. Of these, 16 were cases for promotion with tenure, 11 were cases for promotion to full professor, and 2 were new appointments (to Full with tenure).

Of the promotion cases acted on (excluding the new appointments; $n = 27$), the departments were in favor of promotion in 25 cases and the PTC agreed with the departmental recommendation in all but one case. In the one case in which the department was not in favor of promotion, the PTC concurred. There is one case that is currently still in progress.

Of the 22 cases that have been acted on by the Dean, he has agreed with the PTC in all cases. Thirteen of those cases progressed to the Provost and President, and both have agreed with the prior recommendations (yielding promotion in all cases except for the two for which the PTC voted against). Five cases have progressed to the Provost, who has agreed with the prior recommendations. The remainder of the cases are in progress.

Other:

1. The PTC prepared an amendment to the PTC guidelines that would further specify what is expected for teaching observations in the dossier. This amendment was discussed, voted on, and approved at the final A & S Senate meeting in April 2008. Changes to the PTC guidelines have been made and are in effect.

2. In spring 2006, the PTC was contacted by members of library science to initiate discussion about whether library files could be evaluated through the A & S PTC. This discussion continued through the 2007/2008 academic year, with a number of meetings of the PTC and the library faculty. The library faculty is taking under consideration whether they would like to have their files go through this PTC.

3. The PTC, in collaboration with Pamela Thompson and Dean Staros, decided that it would only review new hires at the Associate and Full level where tenure was being offered.