

Promotion and Tenure Committee  
Written report  
November 5, 2007 Faculty Meeting

The PAT committee has met 5 times since the last faculty meeting.

The Committee has begun consideration of cases for promotion and tenure.

The Committee has also spent significant time considering two issues, creation of a minimum time requirement at the Associate Professor rank prior to seeking promotion to Full Professor and procedures for evaluation of Chairs and Directors seeking promotion. The Committee seeks to clarify the status of these considerations in this report. The Committee emphasizes that there are no formal proposals to the faculty at this time, and proposals will be brought to the faculty meeting for consideration before any changes will be made.

The Committee requested opinions from the faculty on adding a requirement that faculty serve for a minimum number of years at the rank of Associate Professor prior to seeking promotion. The Committee also suggested that the minimum number of years at the rank of Associate Professor be four. In our original discussion of this proposal, the Committee agreed that this policy would apply to faculty who were promoted to Associate on campus, but would not constrain the ability of the Provost to negotiate this requirement with faculty being hired at the rank of Associate. The PAT committee appreciates all of the comments that were received from faculty. Responses ranged from support for the PAT proposal with a suggested minimum of 6 years, to the view that no minimum requirement or recommendation should be added.

At the risk of oversimplifying the arguments presented, we will try to summarize the comments that the Committee has received.

The concerns expressed by those opposed to institution of a time requirement:

- We need to maintain flexibility to recognize “star” faculty.
- A time requirement seems arbitrary and does not consider the different situations for faculty that have received tenure.
- Early promotion is one tool we have to retain excellent faculty.
- This requirement might dissuade junior faculty from becoming fully engaged in leadership and mentoring roles until after tenure
- Senior faculty hires might be dissuaded from joining our faculty if they have an unnecessary wait prior to seeking promotion.
- The PAT Committee has not provided a clear reason/need for this change in policy
- Length of service is not a proxy for leadership.
- This would add an unnecessary burden to those that have demonstrated a national reputation, excellence in teaching and research accomplishments, and a campus role as an exemplary teacher/scholar or teacher/artist prior to obtaining tenure.
- There shouldn't be a recommendation because it would probably become, in practice, a requirement.

The comments by those in support of the institution of a time requirement:

- There should be a standardized “growth” period for each step in advancement.

- It takes time to write additional books and articles, innovate and refine teaching, and serve a term on major committee.
- Those going up for Full Professor need to demonstrate their sustained engagement, achievement, and professional growth

There were a number of respondents who felt that a strong recommendation would be most appropriate. The reasons for suggesting a recommendation rather than a requirement follow.

- It allows flexibility to promote “stars.”
- A faculty member would need several years to establish a commendable record of service above and beyond the level represented at the previous promotion.
- It would be unusual for most people to accrue the kind of record necessary to make the case in less than four years, but I don’t rule out that there could be exceptional and compelling cases.

The Committee will consider the comments from faculty before deciding whether to pursue this idea further. If the Committee decides to follow up with a proposal to the faculty, we will seek further comment and bring a proposal to the full faculty for consideration at a future faculty meeting.

The members of PAT, along with the Provost, have identified a conflict that exists when the Provost writes the evaluation letter for Chairs and Directors seeking promotion. The Provost is charged as the *ex officio* member of PAT to ensure that procedures are carefully followed. If the Provost also is writing the evaluation letter for a faculty member, she should, following regular practice, recuse herself from the meeting. This however, might compromise her important role in ensuring proper procedure. To address this concern, PAT has communicated with Chairs and Directors via their listserv and proposed a particular solution. While the proposal has not received unanimous support, most who have responded believe that the proposal was a reasonable compromise.

The Committee has proposed that a Chair or Director seeking promotion would identify three faculty members that could write the evaluation letter. The candidate for promotion will be expected to name, after receiving their consent, three individuals who the candidate feels would be best suited to write the candidate’s evaluation letter. From that list, the Provost will select one individual who will then write the evaluation letter. The Committee proposes that the evaluator be at least a tenured Associate Professor in the home department or in a closely aligned department, and preferably have experience as chair.

Most of the respondents to our proposal felt comfortable with our proposal. For those who did not like the proposal, it seemed that the Provost was abdicating responsibility for supervising Chairs and Directors. One counterproposal was to have the Provost write a letter addressing the service component and another faculty member would write a letter addressing the scholarship and teaching components. Another respondent felt that the entire letter should be the Provost’s responsibility, or could be addressed by potential changes in the administrative structure. In the future, the Committee will rework this proposal and seek comment from the entire faculty before bringing anything to a faculty meeting. We seek to include the entire faculty in all potential changes with regard to the promotion and tenure process.

Respectfully submitted,

David Bollivar, Chair