Appendix I: Guidelines for the Selection of External Reviewers

In general, an external evaluator may not review a tenure/promotion case if one can reasonably perceive a potential for bias or a conflict of interest (i.e., the reviewer has an identifiable interest in whether the candidate is tenured or promoted). Such potentials for bias or conflicts of interest arise if the reviewer:

- is a current or former close collaborator (co-author or research partner), or former thesis student/advisor/post-doctoral advisor;
- is a current or former close informal mentor;
- is a member of the candidate’s immediate family, or is a business partner of the candidate;
- is currently employed by the same institution, or has an arrangement for future employment or is negotiating for employment at the same institution;
- has a financial interest in the outcome of the tenure or promotion case, or the reviewer’s employer or the organization where the reviewer is an officer, director, trustee, or partner has such an interest.

A disqualifying conflict may exist if a candidate’s case involves an institution or other entity with which the potential reviewer has a connection. Such potentially disqualifying connections include:

- a reviewer’s recent former employer,
- an organization in which the reviewer is an active participant (this does not include professional organizations/societies in which both candidate and reviewer are active members, unless they have worked together in such a way as to indicate the potential for bias on the part of the reviewer)
- an institution at which the reviewer is currently enrolled as a student, or at which he/she serves as a visiting committee member, or
- an entity with which the reviewer has or seeks some other business or financial relationship (excluding the receipt of an honorarium for being a reviewer for said case).

However, the above cases do not necessarily qualify as conflicts of interest. Departmental committees and other bodies judging the tenure or promotion case should consider each reviewer in light of the following:

- Recognizing that academic and professional fields can be more or less small and restricted, and that it is in fact desirable that tenure and promotion candidates have

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established some prominence and corresponding relationships in their fields, professional associations—such as having contributed to the same edited volume or journal special issue, or having presented papers on the same panel at a conference, for example—do not necessarily disqualify a reviewer, unless an identifiable potential for bias or conflict of interest can reasonably be assumed.

- Case reviewers should be from the same field as the candidate, but a diversity of reviewers is also necessary. In other words, reviewers should represent both peers who have no identifiable, close connection with the candidate, and peers who may have some connection, such as those outlined above. Tenure and promotion review committees should then weigh all letters together in considering carefully whether any evaluations are compromised by a potential conflict of interest.

The department (or school) nominating a candidate for tenure or promotion is responsible for evaluating the independence of each reviewer, i.e., why the reviewer is in a position to deliver an objective evaluation. Chairs’ letters and committee reports at the department or school level should make these evaluations of reviewers’ disinterestedness explicit.