

Career, Leadership, & University Excellence (CLUE)

Planning Group on Promotion and Tenure

Executive Summary

December 8, 2011

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Introduction

In Fall, 2009, Provost Susan Phillips formally convened the CLUE Planning Group on Promotion and Tenure and charged it to review the tenure and promotion process at UAlbany and make recommendations for strengthening this aspect of the institution. Our group was comprised of 15 tenured faculty members representing eight of UAlbany's nine schools and colleges. In addition, a representative from the University Faculty Senate's Council on Promotion and Continuing Appointment served as a liaison to the group. The group met regularly from December 2009 to October 2011 to complete its work.

The group focused on understanding the extent of variation in the current processes and procedures for tenure and promotion across campus; the clarity, consistency and communication of expectations, and the level of variation in these expectations across departments and levels of review; and the processes, procedures, and expectations that ideally should exist. The resulting recommendations address the gaps, inconsistencies, and unacceptable levels of variation that we found in various aspects of the tenure and promotion process as it currently exists.

Methods and Data Sources

Four workgroups were formed which focused on (1) promotion from assistant to associate professor; (2) promotion from associate to full professor; (3) comparison to peer institutions; and (4) support needs of candidates, chairs, deans, and tenure review committee members. We utilized a variety of data and information sources, including existing written guidelines and documentation, a survey of 18 peer and aspirational peer institutions, human resources data, information from CPCA representatives, in-depth qualitative interviews with 25 faculty members and 7 Deans, and national publications, reports and resources about best practices.

Overall Findings

Our group concluded that overall, the tenure and promotion process is basically working fairly well, and is, in general, perceived to work fairly well by stakeholders across campus. However, there is significant variation and inconsistency across the campus in some aspects of the process. There are key areas in which changes could significantly enhance and strengthen the tenure and promotion infrastructure for the future.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are categorized according to different aspects of the tenure and promotion process. The highest priority recommendations appear in bold. Discussion of the findings

that support these recommendations, and additional detail for some of the recommendations, appear in the full report.

Administrative Data Collection

- **Enhance Human Resources data system to include date of appointment to each rank, so that time spent at each rank can be determined, and so that administration can more easily and regularly examine data relevant to tenure and promotion.**
- Develop a tracking and reporting system for tenure-related information, such as number of cases reviewed annually and overall success rates, for example.

Assistant to Associate Professor: Enhancing Clarity, Consistency, and Communication of Expectations

- **Revise university guidelines to expand the description of expectations for research, teaching, and service.**
- **Develop a written document in each department that describes expectations for promotion with respect to research, teaching, and service.**
- Hold annual workshops for pre-tenure faculty, sponsored by the Provost's office, that focus on the process and expectations for tenure and promotion.
- Give chairs information and training on best practices for communicating expectations to pre-tenure faculty.

Assistant to Associate Professor: Mentoring

- **Enhance mentoring across campus so that all pre-tenure faculty members have access to effective mentoring.**
- Provide training and preparation for mentors in effective mentoring practices.

Assistant to Associate Professor: Timing of the Review Process

- **Articulate, and adhere to, the timelines and deadlines for the tenure review process.**
- Specify dates for the tenure review process in original employment letter.
- Adjust faculty renewal patterns and timing of pre-tenure reviews so that pre-tenure reviews are conducted at an appropriate time.

Assistant to Associate Professor: Leaves and Tenure Clock Policies

- **Establish a formal family leave policy that is standard, clearly conveyed, understood by administrators, and evenly applied across the board.**
- **Develop and disseminate formal policies and procedures regarding stopping the tenure clock.**
- Develop mechanisms for pre-tenure research leave for all faculty.

- Modify existing leave policies (i.e. the Drescher) so leaves can be awarded in time to be of use in “book” disciplines.
- Explore creative ways to provide release time for faculty in book disciplines, especially if formal research leaves are not available, and service and teaching loads are high.

Associate to Full Professor: Enhancing Clarity of Expectations

- **Prepare and disseminate a “consensus” document that articulates expectations for promotion and what it means to be a full professor at UAlbany.**
- **Encourage departments and/or schools to prepare documents that describe expectations and norms for promotion to full professor.**
- Assemble councils of full professors organized by discipline (one for the natural sciences, one for the social sciences, etc.) to articulate expectations for promotion of associate professors.
- Encourage associate professors to take the initiative to find trusted senior colleagues to learn disciplinary expectations and how to develop one’s portfolio accordingly.

Associate to Full Professor: Career Development for Associate Professors

- **Introduce a formalized review process that provides feedback, goal setting, and direction.**
- **Sponsor workshops or seminar series that review tactics and strategies associate professors can employ to advance their trajectories.**
- Develop suggested milestones as guidelines for mid-career faculty.
- Conduct individualized conversations among senior associate professors with their chairs and/or deans about plans for promotion.

Associate to Full Professor: Reducing Barriers to Promotion

- **Establish a council of senior faculty who can advise or mentor associates, especially for units with few senior faculty of their own.**
- Provide training for chairs in how to have the necessary conversations about moving forward to full professor.
- Encourage/incentivize/communicate the necessity to Deans to make promoting associate professors a priority.

Institutional Definitions of Scholarship

- **Prepare and disseminate a statement from the Provost’s Office which recognizes a broader, and more inclusive definition of scholarship.**
- **Encourage and instruct schools and departments to provide a context for upper levels of review by specifically articulating expectations in their disciplines.**

- Assemble and publicize resources on Provost's website to assist departments and schools who do community-engaged, entrepreneurial, and other 'new' forms of scholarship in assembling tenure and promotion cases.

Guidelines and Dossiers

- **Revise and reissue university-level guidelines.**
- Provide an orientation or handbook for chairs and assistants to chairs/secretaries about the logistics of assembling dossiers.
- Provide sample dossiers for departments to use as examples.

External Reviewers

- **Clarify and publicize the number of external reviewer letters needed. If more than the minimum number of letters is recommended, state this in written guidelines.**
- **Develop clearer guidelines for selecting appropriate external reviewers, based on a uniform conflict of interest definition (one that specifically excludes only those reviewers who have an identifiable interest in whether the candidate is tenured or promoted).**
- Enhance the written guidelines to add more detail about the process departments should follow to select external reviewers and who is appropriate to serve in this role.
- Include in the guidelines a template for departments to follow to describe how external reviewers were chosen and why they are suitable reviewers for the case at hand.

Department Chair's Role

- Provide an orientation to department chairs about their role in the process, including educating upper levels about departmental norms and expectations.

Peer Review of Teaching

- **Provide detailed guidelines for how peer review of teaching should be carried out, documented, and used in the tenure review process.**

Voting Rights

- **Amend Senate Charter to restrict membership of CPCA to tenured, full-time members of the teaching faculty.**
- Initiate a campus-wide discussion about voting practices.

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