

Summary of RTP Q&A Sessions with Provost Jerold Hale

Date: 16-18 September 2019

General Guidance for Candidates for Reappointment, Tenure, or Promotion

- You are required to make a dossier, which includes a completely up-to-date *curriculum vitae*. That CV should show all your degrees, your work experience, and the history of your appointment at UTC. It should also provide citations of research/scholarship/creative activity.
- The dossier should be easily navigable – make it easy for a reader to find what you want them to know about you.
- The dossier should also include an executive summary, which may include a (brief) summary of your annual evaluations at UTC (i.e. EDO ratings).
- The executive summary may be thought of as a biographical sketch which would give an administrator key information for your case for reappointment, tenure, or promotion.
- Your executive summary should be readable by both those within your field (e.g. your RTP Committee, Department Head, external reviewers) and those (likely) from without (e.g. the college-level Tenure & Promotion Committee, Dean, Provost, Chancellor).
- Ask senior faculty in your department to conduct peer reviews of your teaching regularly, especially early in your probationary period. Document your development and progress as a teacher.
- Develop your teaching philosophy document to not just reflect what you try to accomplish when you teach and how you go about it, but also your thoughts about teaching more broadly. There are also additional dimensions to your role as a teacher which do not involve just the time you spend in front of a class. For example, what contacts with your students outside of class are also part of your teaching, and how do those activities reflect your philosophy on teaching?
- Your documentation on service should be more than just a list of committee assignments. Articulate how your service was substantive, valued, and time-consuming. For example, if your colleagues assign you to a hiring committee, they are expressing trust in your judgment for the future of the department. If you serve to referee or edit for a journal, then the colleagues in your field believe you can make sound calls about the rigor of intellectual work within your discipline.
- Plan to work with your RTP Committee to find external reviewers who can speak to the quality of your research/scholarship/creative activity but who are also free of any potential conflicts of interest. Remember that they must be tenured at a comparable institution and appointed at or above the rank you are seeking (in the case of promotion).
- Once a list of potential external reviewers has been developed, avoid any contact with anyone on those lists.
- Look to college or department bylaws on whether teaching and service will be evaluated by external reviewers. The 1 August 2019 version of the UTC Faculty Handbook requires that

research/scholarship/creative activity be reviewed. Colleges/departments have the option of requiring external reviews to cover other areas.

- In all materials submitted for review, strive for accuracy and clarity. For example, the committee should not need to investigate whether a publication was peer-reviewed or not.

General Guidance for RTP Committee, Committee Chairs, Heads, Deans

- Colleges should remember that college-level Tenure & Promotion Committees are required.
- Recall that the qualifications for associate professor are the same as for tenure, so there should be no votes which are split when making these two decisions.
- Appeals now end with the Chancellor and may not be appealed to the Board of Trustees or President.
- Peer reviews of teaching are a required part of our process for tenure. Seek them throughout a candidate's probationary period, as necessary. If consistently positive, and student evaluation of faculty instruction remains positive, then may consider holding less often.

Questions from Candidates for Reappointment, Tenure, or Promotion

- **Can faculty go up for tenure early?**
Yes, explicitly permitted in the UTC Faculty Handbook. However, there are some important details.
 - UT Board of Trustees policy prohibits application for tenure during the first probationary year.
 - Any candidate applying for tenure before the sixth probationary year will be subject to a full UT Board of Trustees review.
 - A negative decision in years 2, 3, or 4 will require the faculty member to wait one full tenure cycle before applying again.
 - If the decision is ultimately negative, the candidate is strongly urged to discuss plans with their RTP Chairperson, Department Head, and possibly even Dean.
 - In any such year when the candidate applies for early tenure, they must also complete a separate reappointment process.
- **Should the dossier be electronic or paper? Should the folder be electronic or paper?**
Look to college and department bylaws for any specific rules. Once the folders make it to Academic Affairs, they will be digitized in Faculty Records, if they are not already digitized, and then retained in that format.
- **Can we expect fair consideration from an external review from a faculty member at an R1 institution?**
Remember that the letter soliciting the review should put your work in context by laying out the expectations for teaching, research, and service at UTC, within your college, and within your department. For example, a copy of the departmental bylaws may prove useful to the external reviewer.
- **What should be in an executive summary for reappointment?**
It should be a document that you are curating on the path toward tenure.
- **How far back should the materials in the dossier go?**
Always look to college and department bylaws for any specific requirements. However, **at a minimum**, it should include everything since your last comprehensive review. For tenure and promotion to associate professor, include everything since initial appointment at UTC. For

promotion to full professor, include at least everything since promotion to associate professor, and possibly include everything since initial appointment at UTC. The UTC Faculty Handbook does require at least six semesters of student ratings of faculty instruction.

- **There was a shift in the handbook from expecting excellence in any of the three areas (teaching, research, service) to prioritizing research. If department expectations have emphasized teaching and service, how does a candidate make a case for promotion or tenure?**

The UTC Faculty Handbook tenure criteria provisions do not prioritize research over the other areas, but rather provide flexibility for colleges and departments to prescribe tenure expectations in which research is emphasized. Cite your college and department bylaws to the extent that they help you make your case. Give the RTP Committee context for why your record appears as it does, citing those governing documents.

- **Is a teaching philosophy required for promotion to full professor? What about the teaching evaluations?**

The handbook suggests that promotion dossiers are “[s]imilar to tenure dossiers”, so best to include those documents. This is reflected on the checklist of items to include in the promotion folder.

- **Would the Provost ever overturn a decision by a department or dean?**

Yes, it is conceivable. In some cases, that would mean that the department or dean failed to follow approved bylaws or the UTC Faculty Handbook, and instead of permitting such an error to go forward, the Provost would be obligated to rule according to those governing documents. In other cases, the Provost may overturn a decision if the Provost independently determines that the department's and/or dean's recommendation is not supported by the candidate's record.

Questions About External Reviews

- **Who determines the standards for the types of institutions from which external reviewers must come?**

Candidates and committees should work together but the committee and department head will have the final word on selection.

- **Is there any concern with selecting a reviewer from an R1 institution?**

Candidate and committee should discuss whether this is appropriate. Also, look to [the comparable and aspirant peer lists](#).

- **What do external reviewers examine?**

By the UTC Faculty Handbook, they are required to examine your research and may optionally review teaching and service, according to department or college bylaws. They generally should not remark upon whether tenure or promotion is appropriate, but reviewers sometimes choose to add such a comment anyway.

- **Any suggestions for finding enough reviewers as required, especially in a department with several candidates seeking promotion or tenure?**

Depend on your fellow colleagues serving on the RTP Committee. May be best to hold an in-person meeting, ask people to bring ideas, and hash it all out face-to-face. Also, the selection of reviewers is a collaboration between the committee and the candidate, so ask the candidate for ideas. Also, be sure to seek more than the minimum of two reviewers in case one or more reviewers does not complete a letter.

- **Are *emeritus* faculty at other institutions eligible to serve as external reviewers?**
Avoid if possible to find alternatives. Reviewers must hold tenure at a comparable institution (per the UTC Faculty Handbook), and *emeritus* faculty have often relinquished tenure.
- **Not all institutions grant tenure to library faculty, and that limits the pool of candidates for external review when a library faculty member applies for tenure or promotion at UTC. Is there flexibility here to select as an external reviewer a library faculty member at another institution where library faculty members cannot be granted tenure?**
No, the UTC Faculty Handbook requires that an external reviewer must hold tenure. There are no exceptions to that requirement.
- **Is there a template letter that is used to solicit external reviews, to ensure that reviewers are made aware of the teaching and service expectations at UTC?**
There is not a university-wide template, but each college offers a template to its departments.
- **Can a tenured faculty member appointed at an institution in another country serve as an external reviewer?**
Provided they are tenured at or above the rank being sought by the candidate, and work in a similar enough field, then they may serve as an external reviewer. In some fields, the best candidates for external review may not be domestic.
- **May a candidate see the external review letters?**
Use caution, as the solicitation letter often offers the external reviewer anonymity to the extent that the university may legally provide it. If there is a request, please notify the supervisor and seek guidance.
- **If a faculty member applies for early promotion or tenure and is unsuccessful, then tries again later, must completely new external reviewers be sought?**
Probably advisable to do so, but you should work with your RTP Committee to make a plan.

Questions About the RTP Committee Process

- **Can RTP Committee meetings be conducted by videoconference?**
Yes, but it raises the question of an anonymous vote, which is required for tenure and promotion decisions.
- **Is an abstention considered a negative vote?**
It depends. Some department bylaws explicitly provide that abstentions will be considered negative votes. Even absent such an explicit provision in department bylaws, an abstention may have the same effect as a negative vote in departments in which a positive recommendation requires a majority of the RTP Committee members to cast "yes" votes and/or where the minimum number of positive votes required for a positive recommendation is not met. In such cases, an abstention (or some abstentions) may deny a faculty member a majority vote, or may deny the minimum number of positives required, as specified in department or college bylaws. Additionally, it should be kept in mind that abstentions are sometimes perceived negatively, especially in cases where a candidate receives a positive recommendation (per departmental bylaws) but with less than half of the committee members voting "yes" due to a number of members casting abstentions.
- **Can letters supporting reappointment, tenure, or promotion give details only on why the recommendation was positive?**

Letters need to exhaustively lay out the case for reappointment, tenure, or promotion, and should be specific. It is important for letters to identify any areas of needed improvement so that candidates can take steps to correct any deficiencies before their tenure review year, and may explain why a vote taken by the committee was not unanimous but was still a positive recommendation.

- **Is collegiality a criterion for reappointment, tenure, or promotion?**

Yes. The UTC Faculty Handbook lists collegiality as a criterion for the ranks of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor (i.e., "have demonstrated ability to relate appropriately to student and professional colleagues"). Also, use the criteria laid out in your department and college bylaws, and note that you stray from those rules at your own risk.