

MEMO FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RANK AND TENURE
PREPARING TENURE AND PROMOTION CASES
September 13, 2001

We have written this memo for two reasons. First, from time to time, the University Committee on Rank and Tenure ["UCRT"] finds it necessary to return a tenure or promotion file to the school or department that initiated it, because the file does not comply with the requirements. Second, persons responsible for preparing tenure and promotion cases in some departments have expressed a wish for more guidance as to how best to comply. This memo is in two parts. The first part addresses steps that should be taken early in the process of considering a promotion or tenure application, to assure that all procedural prerequisites are in order when it is time to submit the school's or department's recommendations to the UCRT. The second part describes the optimum method for compiling the file for submission to the UCRT. The administrative official responsible for preparing promotion or tenure applications should feel free to address any questions they may have about procedures to the Committee, by contacting the Chair of the Committee.

I. EARLY STEPS

The Faculty Handbook (Section IX-I-2-d) directs that there be at least three external evaluators of the candidate's scholarship, and that at least two of these be persons who do not have the type of close association with the candidate that might affect their objectivity. In practice, most schools and departments strive to have at least three such "neutral" evaluators, a choice that we believe is eminently wise. If there are only two neutral reviewers, and their views do not wholly coincide, the candidate's prospects are going to be clouded. Indeed, the UCRT believes that three neutral evaluators should be an absolute mandate, and it plans to recommend that the Faculty Handbook be amended accordingly. Until that is done, the suggestion in this paragraph is merely advisory.]

What makes an evaluator sufficiently neutral?

The Faculty Handbook declares: At least two evaluators should be distinguished scholars who are neither members of the Georgetown faculty nor former teachers, co-workers, or students of the candidate. That is, evaluators should primarily be acquainted with the candidate through his or her published work or other professional accomplishments. [Id.] Independently, the Faculty Handbook requires that the external evaluators be "in a position to give an objective evaluation" (id.)

The UCRT, in practice, has construed "co-worker" to include the co-author of a book, and also to include someone who was on the same faculty as the candidate at another college or university. The UCRT has construed "objective" to implicate other reasons that might affect the evaluator's neutrality: a relative of the candidate, a social friend, etc. In these cases, doubts whether there were the requisite objective evaluations have clouded the Committee's consideration of the candidate's case. Of course, valuable information can be obtained from external evaluators who have been closely associated with the candidate, and the Committee is not suggesting that such evaluations be avoided. But any such evaluations should be in addition to, and not in substitution for, the requisite number of objective evaluations, and should be

clearly designated as such (see below). Based on its experience, the Committee offers these suggestions for assuring that the requisite number of objective evaluations will be contained in the candidate's file:

1. Candidates, when asked to submit their proposals for external evaluators, should be asked to state in writing the details of their relationship with each of the evaluators they propose. (This letter should then be included in the file, as suggested in Part II).
2. The letters to external evaluators (both those recommended by the candidate and those chosen by the academic department or appropriate faculty committee) should contain an explicit request that the evaluator state, in the evaluation letter, his or her relationship to the candidate, including the details of any teacher-student, working, collaborative, or social relationship.
3. The person in the school or department responsible for preparing the file to the UCRT should prepare a letter, and include it in the file, identifying which of the external evaluators is believed to satisfy the objectivity standard. The Faculty Handbook recognizes that there will be rare instances where satisfying the objectivity requirement is not possible: Where a field is so small that this is not feasible, this should be justified in the application. [Id.] When this exceptional circumstance exists, the person in the school or department responsible for preparing the file to the UCRT should prepare a letter, and include it in the file, setting out the efforts made to find objective evaluations, and the reasons why obtaining such was not feasible. [The Committee has on some occasions returned a file to the school or department, because the file lacked such a letter. This has unfortunately delayed final action on the candidate's quest for tenure and/or promotion.]

II. PREPARING THE FILE

We believe that the ideal file would contain the following materials, preferably in the order listed below. The list reflects the "best practices" of some schools and departments. As a general proposition, the file submitted to the Committee should include all materials that were in the file available to the voting faculty members of the appropriate department or school, as well as all materials described below. Any material that became available after the votes in the department or school, and that fits the descriptions below, should be included in the file to the Committee, with a designation that it was not available when such votes were taken.

1. A cover page that identifies the candidate by name, the candidate's date of initial appointment, the candidate's present position, the action sought, the votes of each voting unit in the school and/or department, and the names of the external evaluators (with those judged to meet the "objectivity" criterion so designated). If it is impossible to get all this information on a single page, the "cover" can continue onto a second page.

2. A table of contents, listing all applicable items contained in the file, with the page numbers of each. Sequential page numbering should begin immediately after the table of contents, and should include all documents in the file. [The page numbers can be inserted by hand.] Some departments and schools do not begin numbering until after the candidate's curriculum vitae and/or other materials; this creates unnecessary difficulties for the Committee, and we would be appreciative if a single numbering system applied to all the contents of the file.
3. Documents reflecting the actions taken by the appropriate schools or departments, such as minutes of meetings at which the candidacy was discussed, and/or letters from appropriate Deans, Chairpersons, and/or Committees evaluating the candidate's record of teaching, scholarship and service.
4. The candidate's curriculum vitae, followed by the candidate's personal statement regarding his/her scholarship, teaching and service.
5. Annual faculty evaluations of the candidate for tenure should be provided if the particular school or department compiles such evaluations.
6. Materials demonstrating the applicant's record as a teacher. Information should be provided for each course, each year, taught by the candidate. Where compiled student evaluation data are available, it is sufficient to provide the numerical summary, and it is not necessary to include the individual students' sheets. However, where for whatever reason there are not compiled data, then all of the individual students' narrative evaluations should be included. If these, too, are not available, the file should contain a letter explaining the absence of any student evaluations. Narrative statements by students are not necessary where numerical data are available, but may be included if the school or department considers them informative. The file should also contain, if they exist, written faculty evaluations of the candidate's teaching, including reports of class visits.
7. Copies of the following materials pertaining to the selection and communication with external evaluators:
 - (a) A list of the evaluators proposed by the candidate, together with the candidate's description of his/her relationship to the proposed evaluator.
 - (b) A description of how external evaluators were selected, including a list of the evaluators proposed by the academic department or appropriate faculty committee.
 - (c) A letter by the person preparing the file identifying which of the external evaluators who submitted evaluations are believed to be objective and neutral.
 - (d) If it was impossible to find objective and neutral evaluators, a letter justifying that.

- (e) A brief statement describing the qualifications of the external evaluators.

[Note: items (b) through (e) can be combined in a single letter.]

- (f) Applicants for rank and/or tenure must never be informed of the list of evaluators decided on by the department. To inform the applicant of the evaluators is to compromise the confidentiality of the process. Also, applicants should never be allowed to veto evaluators selected by the department. An applicant can properly inform the department in advance of reasons why a particular scholar might not be a suitable evaluator.
8. A copy of the letter sent to outside evaluators, inviting them to submit evaluations. The Committee prefers that these letters make two explicit requests of the evaluator, in addition to soliciting the evaluation itself:
 - (a) The evaluator should be asked to describe his/her relationship to the candidate, as discussed in Part I above; and
 - (b) The evaluator should be told the applicable criteria for tenure and/or promotion (as applicable), and should be asked to state whether the candidate's scholarship meets those criteria.
 9. A curriculum vitae of each external evaluator may be included in the file, in addition to the description of qualifications described in 7(e) above. However, the Committee prefers that files not be needlessly expanded by inclusion of numerous CVs of vast length. Abbreviated CVs are sufficient.
 10. All letters from external evaluators assessing the quality of the applicant's scholarship. All may require clarification. On the one hand letters from external evaluators that were solicited when a faculty member came up for promotion to Associate Professor should not be included in the file when the faculty member comes up for promotion to Full Professor. On the other hand, if a candidate comes up a second time for tenure or for promotion to a particular rank, all letters received in connection with the first application should be included in the file. External evaluations received in connection with an earlier attempt at tenure or promotion to a particular rank should be included even if the faculty member decided not to finish the process of applying that year. Department chairs should be advised to explain why earlier letters should be discounted, if there is good reason to do so. But the UCRT should make that judgment itself.
 11. If a faculty member has applied for tenure or promotion to a particular rank before, any summaries of the results of the deliberations in a department or campus rank and tenure committee that were submitted to the UCRT before should be included in the file. The Department or Committee should be advised to explain why its decision has changed, if it has, or why the deliberations were tainted, if they were.

12. All other materials that were in the file distributed to the faculty members who voted on the candidacy at the school or department level.
13. Any relevant material (i.e., covered by 1-10 above) that was not available at the time the file was distributed to the faculty members who voted on the candidacy at the school or department level. Under separate cover, two copies should be provided of between three and five of the candidate's publications that the school or department thinks best represent the candidate's scholarly achievement and potential.