

Best practices in evaluating and mentoring tenure-eligible faculty

The Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost recommends that academic colleges convene department chairs and P&T committee chairs annually for college-level discussions about the promotion and tenure review process, and to review best practices, policy changes, and issues of concern. Colleges are further encouraged to hold regular workshops for tenure-eligible faculty and others considering promotion in order to provide guidance and answer questions. The following are some general best practices for use by colleges and departments as they consider evaluation and mentoring of tenure-eligible faculty.

Annual performance evaluation

It is important to document all performance evaluation reviews in writing and to distribute these to faculty. During the evaluation of tenure-eligible faculty for tenure, it is particularly important to review past annual performance evaluations so that the chair knows what messages about performance have been conveyed and how those relate to the findings of the P&T review. If there has been more than one department chair, this is particularly important. Some departments routinely include analysis of annual performance evaluations as part of the department chair's P&T comments.

As the department chair prepares his/her annual performance evaluation of a faculty member, s/he should include commentary on accomplishments, areas that need additional attention, and recommendations. If performance is unsatisfactory, the chair should indicate this and be specific about what performance improvements are needed.

Preliminary Review of Tenure-Eligible faculty

Tenure-eligible faculty undergo a preliminary review by their departments typically in the third year of their appointment. As specified in the *Faculty Handbook* the purpose of this review is “to provide constructive, developmental feedback to probationary faculty regarding progress in meeting departmental criteria for promotion and/or tenure” (5.1.1.3). This peer review also informs the department's decision regarding contract renewal. Tenure-eligible faculty should be mentored from the start of their appointment as to departmental expectations for a successful preliminary review. Faculty should have a clear understanding of the differences between the annual performance evaluation and the preliminary review (which includes peer evaluation and leads to decisions on contract renewal).

Mentoring

Mentoring plays a key role in the success of faculty who are seeking tenure. The department chair and the senior faculty share responsibility for mentoring and for ensuring that new faculty have the information and support they need to succeed.

During the annual performance evaluation, the department chair should check that tenure-eligible faculty are getting appropriate mentoring. The mentor appointed in the first year is expected to continue in that role for several years, ideally until the tenure review. However, sometimes the mentoring relationship does not work out. In these cases, it is the department chair's responsibility to see that a new mentoring relationship is established when necessary.

Position Responsibility Statement (PRS)

The position responsibility statement (PRS) is central to the performance evaluation process. Department chairs should review the expectations articulated in the PRS during annual performance evaluations and work with faculty on any appropriate changes in preparation for P&T review.

While there is no one model for the PRS, it should be written in such a way that it is specific but flexible so that it does not need to be rewritten every year. It should be flexible enough to allow for common changes in faculty responsibilities, e.g., a new course is assigned, faculty buy themselves out of a course assignment, committee service changes, etc.

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