GUIDELINES ON REVIEWER SELECTION AND SOLICITATION FOR EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

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External reviewers provide valuable insight into the work and impact of faculty being reviewed for promotion and/or tenure. Reviewers should comment on merits of the contributions and the relationship to the broader review of scholarship as they impact the areas of teaching, research and service. The value of properly vetted, selected, and informed reviewers is essential for ensuring the best outcome in the larger approval process from primary review to executive review. The integrity of the external review process is reinforced by proper selection and contact of the external reviewers.

Timeline for Identification. For candidates under review for the fall semester, potential reviewers should be identified during the prior spring term. This will allow sufficient time to contact reviewers during the summer before the review begins in the fall.

Potential Reviewers. The primary review of faculty is that occurring in the department. The identification of potential reviewers is the responsibility of the department or program chair (with concurrence with the dean if necessary), or the dean in units without departments. Input should be obtained from the candidate under review and the primary review committee. While candidates should feel free to recommend potential reviewers, they may also identify individuals that should not be included due to professional conflicts or other justifiable rationale that would preclude an objective assessment or review of the candidate’s dossier. Candidates do not approve external reviewers and are not necessarily informed from whom letters have been received. *Candidates do not contact potential reviewers or otherwise interfere with the review process.* The responsibility for determining if a potential reviewer is willing to review the dossier for a candidate resides with the chair, or the designee of the dean of the unit. Informal communication with potential reviewers is encouraged to ensure a higher probability of return of the review.

A sufficient number of reviewers should be solicited to ensure a reasonable number of responses to the request. Typically six reviews received are an ideal number to ensure strong feedback for any promotion case. Variations in number are described in the IUN Promotion and Tenure Guidelines (2011).

Reviewers need to be identified that can give unbiased assessments of a candidate’s work. Reviewers should not have significant or close relationships with the candidate under review. Co-authors, thesis advisors, post-doctoral mentors, faculty from schools that have awarded degrees to the candidate, close or personal friends do not make ideal candidates for external reviews. It does not contribute favorably in the review process if inappropriate reviewers are included in the dossier.

Formal Communication with Reviewers. The template letter for soliciting input from an external reviewer is attached. The letter seeks a review, based on the primary area of the candidate, but encourages review of other aspects of the candidate’s work to the extent possible. The external reviewer is *not* asked to comment on whether the candidate should be promoted (or not), but on the *quality, quantity, and impact of the candidate’s work and scholarship.* Reviewers are encouraged to comment on the quality of journals, publications, or other dissemination outlets used by the candidate and their appropriateness in the candidate’s discipline. For creative activity, comments on the nature of juried shows, performances, exhibitions, etc. are all relevant. Candidates do not contact any proposed or selected external reviewers.

Elements of Dossier sent to External Reviewers. The template letter is usually accompanied by the candidate’s curriculum vitae, narratives on teaching, research, and service, perhaps copies of publications in press (that are not available electronically for the reviewer), or other significant items. Internal reviews of the candidate’s work or letters of support are not included in this dossier. Elaborate or extensive and detailed information will decrease the likelihood of a review, so judgment needs to be exercised by the chair. A copy of approved guidelines and standards for promotion and/or tenure should be enclosed. The same dossier should be sent to all external reviewers. The transmission of dossiers and contact with external reviewers is the responsibility of the dean, department chair, or program director. Again, the candidate does not contact the external reviewers.

Access to Letters from External Reviewers. Faculty have access to external letters of review through the Office of Academic Affairs. Faculty members do not have access while recommendations are in development on committees and with administrators. Requests for dossiers with external letters must be made in writing to the Office of Academic Affairs. Copies will generally be available after the campus process is completed.