



Top Tier Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities
2015 – 2016 Updates

SUMMARY

Policies & Processes 4-3: Tenure and Promotion

(Tom Piechota, Jim Thomson, Kate Korgan, **Monica Lounsbury**, Liam Frink, Alfredo Fernandez Gonzalez, Faculty Senate Rep, Connie Mobley)

- Jim Thomson prepared a review of P&T for the campus (see attached). The following recommendations are being made to the Provost.
 1. Consult with the deans about adding language to college P&T guidelines that underscored the importance of scholarship in considerations for promotion to full professor. For example, “the rank of professor is a mark of distinction that is based primarily on the establishment of a regional, national, or international reputation for one’s research and scholarship.”
 2. Ask all the colleges to collect past data on pre-promotion performance by Assistant and Associate professors, using measures that the colleges (or departments) choose themselves.
 3. Ask the College of Sciences to review and update its T&P guidelines at the college and department level.
 4. Ask the College of Liberal Arts to examine whether more specific guidelines could be developed for departments in the social sciences.
 5. Ask these colleges (Nursing, Allied Health, Hotel and Engineering) to update their P&T guidelines with a view toward making them more specific.

Memo for the Provost

From The Committee dealing with Top Tier Action RSC 4-3 (Tenure and Promotion)

Subject: Guidelines and Practices of UNLV Colleges

The charge to this committee was: “Evaluate how Tenure and Promotion standards reward and recognize all research and creative activity including productivity, grant writing, funded research, publications, doctoral mentorship, post-docs, entrepreneurial activities, commercial research, interdisciplinary research, etc. Review and revise university workload policies to incentive/reward research and creative activities. This policy can then be used as a standard for Colleges to further refine.”

Some members of the committee suspect that tenure decisions at UNLV are not always wise because a relatively high fraction (compared to peer institutions) of associate professors slow down or stop their scholarly activities after achieving tenure. This last point is inferred from the relatively low level of papers per faculty member at UNLV.¹ Perhaps the problem is with the university’s promotion and tenure guidelines: hence this task.

In the committee’s judgment, specific guidelines are preferable to generalities. General language is open to interpretation that can lead to misunderstandings and disputes. Of course, specificity has its own problems: it can stimulate a scorecard mentality and overlook outstanding performance that can’t be easily quantified. Wise leadership should overcome that problem. Although the committee recommends greater specificity, it cannot say that that will help solve the problem identified in the previous paragraph.

To accomplish its task, the committee was to review best practices at peer institutions during this year. UNLV made a request for peer information from the Educational Advisory Board, which it has not yet received. The committee doubts that we will get much useful on this topic from peers: guidelines, at least at a university wide level, are likely to be fairly general. At the same time we thought it would be useful to document where UNLV stands on this topic. To that end Jim Thomson met with the deans of 10 colleges (in one case the executive associate dean) and collected related documents.²

The guiding documents from NSHE and UNLV do not provide much in the way of standards. As everyone reading this knows, for achieving tenure NSHE demands excellent performance in either teaching or research and satisfactory performance in the other (if it is not also excellent). The UNLV Bylaws don’t provide much more. The current documents only demand “satisfactory” performance. The attitude of most deans is that the university should demand excellence in research to achieve the rank of full professor. Two colleges state explicitly that “the rank of professor is a mark of distinction that is based primarily on the establishment of a national or international reputation for one’s research and scholarship.”

The committee considered whether it wanted to recommend to the Provost more specificity in the UNLV Bylaws regarding the role of research, scholarship and creative activity in the decisions to promote to associate and to full professor. The committee felt that this would be more trouble than it would be worth (like poking a hornets’ nest) and that it would be more fruitful to achieve greater specificity inside UNLV. It will

¹ For example, from 2002 through 2012, UNLV had 5.7 papers per faculty member. The numbers at Utah, Colorado-Boulder, Oregon and SDSU were 12.0, 13.4, 7.9 and 7.8 respectively. The numbers refer to articles in journals indexed in the Web of Science. Faculty counts were for 2010.

² He did not meet with the deans of Fine Arts, Medicine and Dentistry.

not be possible, given the wording of the NSHE guideline, to make achievement in research the exclusive criterion for promotion. However, it should be possible for colleges, or departments as appropriate, to adopt language like that at the end of the previous paragraph for both promotions to associate and to full. The committee recommends to the Provost that she consult with the Deans about adding this language to college guidelines, in the event it is not already included.

Given the general nature of the NSHE and UNLV guiding documents, most colleges have sought to add specificity, as in the committee's view they should.

Three colleges (plus their departments) probably should consider developing more specificity around the guidelines, one of which is already doing so. These are Liberal Arts, Sciences and Education, which is revising its guidelines at the time of this writing. In both Liberal Arts and Sciences there are well known rules of thumb – books published by professors in Liberal Arts and money awarded to professors in Sciences, but these are not explicitly documented by the colleges. These are large heterogeneous colleges and it will be hard to add a lot more specificity at the college level, especially for Liberal Arts.

Most departments in Liberal Arts have their own P&T guidelines – usually the achievement of a scholarly monograph or the equivalent in scholarly output. Almost all departments stress that quality is more important than quantity. It is possible that departments in the social sciences could develop more specific guidelines as is done in other colleges at UNLV.

Most departments in Sciences do not have their own guidelines. The notable exception is the School of Life Sciences.

The committee recommends that the Provost ask the College of Sciences to review and update its T&P guidelines at the college and department level and that she ask the College of Liberal Arts to examine whether more specific guidelines could be developed for departments in the social sciences.

The committee also recommends that the Provost review to new guidelines from the College of Education, when they are complete.

Three colleges have quite specific guidelines regarding productivity, grant writing, funded research, and publications, including quantification of the ones that can be quantified. These are Business (which is updating its guidelines), Community Health (has largely completed the update) and the Greenspun School.

The rest have developed descriptive language for these measures of productivity. The Provost should ask these colleges (Nursing, Allied Health, Hotel and Engineering) to update their P&T guidelines with a view toward making them more specific.

Consider these three examples of specific (first) vs descriptive (the next two) guidelines regarding journal articles:

(My paraphrase) Excellent performance will normally include at least 12 peer reviewed publications, including at least 4 as first or corresponding author and at least 4 in journals indexed in the SCI or SSCI

...

“Publication in high quality journals is of utmost importance and carry the greatest weight . . . Quality includes factors such as journal ranking, impact factor, acceptance rate . . .”

“Evidence of high quality scholarship can be documented by utilizing rankings from journal ranking services . . . Typically the ‘excellent’ researcher will have a clear program of scholarship from which the faculty member is gaining recognition for the significant contribution . . .”

One college (Engineering) has both scant and general guidelines but has implemented a specific system in practice by collecting and publishing summary statistics over the last N years for Assistant Professors before achieving tenure and Associate Professors before promotion to full, across a range of measures of both teaching and research performance. These provide clear example of what is expected for promotion and might even be stronger than specific criteria – no one wants to be below average, at least we hope not. This provides a neat way around the debate around specific vs general or descriptive guidelines. Aside from some departments in Liberal Arts (and perhaps Fine Arts) the colleges could implement this. The committee advises the Provost to ask all the colleges to collect past data on pre-promotion performance by Assistant and Associate professors, using measures that the colleges (or departments) choose themselves. Perhaps this step should be taken before the colleges review and update the P&T standards.

The original charge to this committee also included the productivity measures of doctoral mentorship, post-docs, entrepreneurial activities, commercial research, interdisciplinary research, etc. No college includes these. The number of doctorates granted and the number of non-faculty Ph.D. research employees are important metrics for Top Tier. The committee believes that colleges that are revising their guidelines should include doctoral and post-doc mentoring, but that this is not crucial.

Finally, some deans told us that they have difficulty increasing the teaching load of faculty that have obtained tenure but have ceased to be active in research. They encounter resistance from department heads or from the individuals themselves. Of course, there is an obvious answer to this. We believe the Provost’s office has collected data on workloads. The committee would like to work with the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs to review this issue in the coming year.

Summary of Recommendations to the Provost

That she:

Consult with the deans about adding language to college P&T guidelines that underscored the importance of scholarship in considerations for promotion to full professor. For example, “the rank of professor in a mark of distinction that is based primarily on the establishment of a national or international reputation for one’s research and scholarship.”

Ask all the colleges to collect past data on pre-promotion performance by Assistant and Associate professors, using measures that the colleges (or departments) choose themselves.

Ask the College of Sciences to review and update its T&P guidelines at the college and department level.

Ask the College of Liberal Arts to examine whether more specific guidelines could be developed for departments in the social sciences.

Ask these colleges (Nursing, Allied Health, Hotel and Engineering) to update their P&T guidelines with a view toward making them more specific.



TOP TIER RSC WORKING GROUP REPORT

Submitted By:

Jim Thomson Office of President

Name	Department
Role of Research in Tenure and Promotion	RSCA 4-3

Name/Topic of Working Group Goal #

Working Group Members:

Tom Piechota VPR

Name	Department
Jim Thomson	Office of President

Name Department

Kate Korgan Graduate College

Name	Department
Liam Frink	Anthropology

Name Department

Alfredo Fernandez Gonzalez Architecture

Name	Department
Connie Mobley	Dentistry

Name Department

Ngai Pendel Provost

Name	Department
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Name Department

2015-2016 Accomplishments:

After reviewing College and Department T&P guidelines, the committee drafted a memo for the Provost recommending several actions to improve T&P guidelines both in terms of their content and consistency across campus.

Recommendations:

- Consult with the deans about adding language to college P&T guidelines that underscored the importance of scholarship in considerations for promotion to full professor. For example, “the rank of professor in a mark of distinction that is based primarily on the establishment of a national or international reputation for one’s research and scholarship.”
- Ask all the colleges to collect past data on pre-promotion performance by Assistant and Associate professors, using measures that the colleges (or departments) choose themselves.
- Ask the College of Sciences to review and update its T&P guidelines at the college and department level.
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2016-2017 Goals (Where possible, specify who should be responsible for these next year):

Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, assisted by the VPR

Notes, Comments, & Feedback:

The committee should remain intact to assist the Vice Provost and VPR with implementing the recommendations.