Tenure & Promotion Advice for Unit Leaders
Creating/revising unit bylaws/guidelines/standards

Ensuring faculty success and retaining excellent faculty are the primary goals for all academic unit leaders (chairs/directors/supervisors). Below, we provide tips to support unit leaders as they guide their respective units through the tenure and promotion bylaw revision/creation process. The tips below capture recommendations collected from publications on tenure and promotion as well as advice from unit leaders and administrators who facilitate and/or govern the academic process. The Office for Faculty Affairs encourages unit leaders to give full consideration to the information shared.

1. The importance of having clear and transparent tenure and promotion guidelines/standards
   - Provides a standardized process: Clear, written procedures (inclusive of timelines) formalize the unit’s process and ensures that all candidates receive the same information, advice, and preparation about the T&P process.
   - Provides checks & balances: Having policies and guidelines that define faculty roles, assigns oversight, includes timelines, and distinguishes the unit process (by candidate’s discipline, role, year of hire, etc.) enhance transparency and accountability about the T&P process.
   - Identifies and prioritizes major evaluation criteria: Unit standards/guidelines should clearly state the major criteria for tenure and/or promotion, and specify the key elements for which the evaluation will rely. Doing so enables evaluators to apply the criteria directly to the candidate’s dossier. The standards/guidelines should also reference university policies and rules (e.g., tenure flexibility policy, denial/appeal process, work-life policies) and how they apply.

2. Departmental practices to improve T&P processes and procedures.
   - Dissemination: Departmental workshops, administrative meetings (e.g., one-on-ones, annual evaluation meetings), and peer mentoring can keep faculty well-informed of unit procedures and clarify the faculty member’s role. Such
activities disseminate the unit’s expectations and performance requirements and should be conducted often during the candidate’s probationary period. Faculty should receive a copy of the NSHE bylaws and UNLV bylaws, as well as any other related policies or departmental documents that govern the process. And, any advice and/or feedback to the faculty member about his/her progress towards tenure/promotion should be candid and useful towards the candidates’ pursuit of tenure/promotion.

- **Influence of bias on evaluation:** Unit leaders should advise the evaluation committee chair/department evaluators of the impact of bias on evaluation and share strategies to minimize the influence of bias on the review process (e.g., diversifying the evaluation committee, increasing individual awareness of subjectivity to bias and assumptions --see [www.implicit.harvard.edu](http://www.implicit.harvard.edu)), developing clear evaluation criteria, prioritizing criteria above all else, and spending sufficient time evaluating each candidate-- focusing on the candidate as an individual and evaluating the entire portfolio). Some examples of where bias can occur in the review process include course evaluations, publishing venues, letters of support, unsolicited opinions, and group deliberation. Leaders should provide an environment where faculty (candidates and evaluators) can share concerns and raise questions and should provide a structure for addressing such concerns within unit procedures.

- **Assessing past T&P decisions:** Assessment of past evaluations can reflect if the unit has been consistent with expectations as well as the analysis of faculty performance. For example, the composition of faculty dossiers (inclusion of consistent materials), completed evaluation forms, and demographics about successful and unsuccessful candidates can reflect the unit’s practices and inform leader’s decision-making about unit processes, policies, and procedures. Conducting an assessment and sharing the report with the unit articulates a commitment to consistent and fair practices.

3. **The implications on faculty disposition and unit morale.**

- All faculty members should be treated equally. Leaders should not deviate from unit processes and procedures for candidates. Administrative leaders should provide oversight of the unit’s T&P process and hold all faculty (candidates and evaluators) accountable of engaging in fair and honest practices. Experiences, whether positive or negative, during the T&P process
influence faculty disposition about the unit, the unit leader/colleagues, and advancement at the institution, in general. Negative experiences can greatly influence unit trust, engagement, participation, and collaboration, thus dismantling unit agency.

4. **Understand the rights of your faculty.**
   - Every faculty member deserves
     i. Clear expectations about the requirements for tenure and/or promotion, including specific criteria for advancement (with examples that demonstrate the quality and/or quantity)
     ii. Annual evaluations that inform the faculty member of his/her progress towards meeting the requirements for tenure and/or promotion
     iii. Candid discussions about the his/her performance towards meeting unit expectations
     iv. Constructive criticism regarding areas of improvement
     v. Confidentiality observed and maintained from start to finish
     vi. Mentoring for navigating the tenure and/or promotion process
     vii. Guidance for being successful in the discipline to meet unit requirements
     viii. A detailed explanation of the probationary period, inclusive of a discussion about the significance of annual evaluations and the mid-tenure/promotion review process and their impact on achieving tenure and/or promotion
     ix. A detailed explanation of the unit’s/college’s/university’s process for tenure and promotion (inclusive of timelines)

References:


