TO: Deans and Department Heads  
FROM: Mark G. McNamee, Senior Vice President and Provost  
DATE: May 30, 2014  
SUBJECT: Annual Update on Promotion and Tenure Reviews  
CC: University Promotion and Tenure Committee

The University Promotion and Tenure Committee discusses the review process at the end of each year’s deliberations and recommends changes to the process or dossier guidelines for the coming review cycle. This memo summarizes the discussion and changes that emerged from the committee’s final meeting in April. Please share this memo with your college and department promotion and tenure committee members for their further discussion and action, where appropriate. Please also share the memo with any candidates who are being considered for promotion and/or tenure during 2014-15.

During 2013-14, the university committee was impressed with the high caliber of the faculty who were under consideration for promotion and/or tenure. The committee recognized and discussed the wide range and high quality of research and scholarly activities of the faculty, the commitment of the faculty to educating undergraduate and graduate students, and the extensive outreach and service documented in the dossiers. The committee also expressed appreciation for the time and effort expended by department colleagues, department chairs and heads, college representatives, and the deans who supported the preparation of the dossiers and conducted the critical reviews that are at the heart of promotion and tenure. It is very satisfying to watch and participate in our organized and effective process.

Below are advice, dossier changes, observations, and reminders for the upcoming promotion and tenure review cycle for 2014-15.

**Dossier Guidelines**

Our dossier guidelines are refined each year, but the general outline remains quite similar to the existing version. We have decided to include reports of inclusion and diversity activities throughout the body of the dossier within the various sections. The dossier now includes prompts in all major sections for opportunities to report on these efforts.

**Internal Letters**

The dossier guidelines also call for letters of evaluation from a director when the faculty member’s scholarly work is based in a center or institute. Faculty who are involved in
interdisciplinary work that is not based in an institute or center should consult with the department head and with the chair of the department promotion and tenure committee to determine if the committee should invite a letter from a director and/or interdisciplinary research team leader. The invitation, if deemed appropriate, should come from the department committee chair or the head.

The university committee noted that letters from the department or college committee should address the strengths of each candidate as well as any weaknesses identified by the external reviewers. It is also important for the committee letters to provide reason(s) for negative votes by committee members, presenting a balanced letter that reflects the discussions that took place within the committee. A minority letter is only necessary when there are strong disagreements or a nearly even split of committee votes. Overall, past review cycle letters have addressed the issues outlined above. We wish to emphasize the value of clear and detailed summaries.

Department heads and deans should continue to discuss the strengths and weaknesses that are identified by the committees and the external reviewers. These letters should also include the dean’s or department head’s independent appraisal of the candidate.

**External Reviewers**

Additional guidance on external reviewers was also proposed during this review cycle. It is important for each candidate to be invited to nominate external reviewers who are particularly well-suited to evaluate that candidate’s research and scholarly activities. Most faculty members choose to make recommendations and a few do not. The dossier should continue to clearly indicate which reviewers were selected by the candidate and which were selected independently by the department committee or chair. If the candidate does not make a recommendation about external reviewers, the dossier should include a statement about this choice.

External reviewers for faculty members who are engaged in interdisciplinary research and scholarship should be carefully chosen to ensure that the list of reviewers includes professors at other research universities who can appreciate and evaluate the nature, quality, and impact of the interdisciplinary work.

The university requires a minimum of four external reviewers, and the expectation is that the majority, if not all, are full professors at major research universities. When there are exceptions, the section of the dossier that describes the qualifications of the reviewers should provide a strong justification for the inclusion of faculty who are not at major research universities or who are not full professors. An example of an exceptional reviewer is an individual from a national funding agency (e.g., FDA, USDA, NIH, and NSF) who is well positioned to evaluate the candidate’s scholarship and research.

**Executive Summary and the Candidate’s Statement**

The two most important documents produced by the candidate are the executive summary and the candidate’s statement. The executive summary should highlight the range of achievements of the candidate. For those being considered for promotion to professor, the executive summary should be restricted to activities since their last promotion. The full career
achievements for all candidates can be presented in the body of the dossier. Faculty members should provide selected listings of accomplishments (or all if space allows), being sure to include full citations of research publications, performances, and other creative works.

The candidate’s statement should minimize the use of highly technical language and disciplinary jargon to enable members of the promotion and tenure committee to clearly understand the candidate’s professional aims, achievements, and contributions to the university’s missions of research, teaching, and outreach. Keep in mind that the statement should explain, but not evaluate the work. See the Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for additional information about the candidate’s statement.

**Process Guidelines**

As detailed in the Faculty Handbook, we have adopted a “one vote” standard for all faculty. Department committee members must vote on candidates at the department level, which is the first opportunity that the committee member has to influence the outcome. Department committee members who also serve on the college or university committee are ineligible to vote at these higher levels. In other words, department committee members may not abstain at the department level in order to vote at a higher level.

**Summary**

The university’s promotion and tenure process is designed to provide the opportunity for the department, college, and university committees to evaluate the full range of scholarly accomplishments of the candidate for promotion. We intend for all faculty to have the resources and support to be successful. Endorsement of a candidate for promotion and/or tenure is the natural progression of faculty members who have established effective programs of research and scholarship, teaching and advising, outreach and engagement as well as service to the university and the profession. We wish all candidates success as they pursue their next promotion.