Fairness and Transparency in the T&P Process

Issues and Solutions

OFFICE OF THE Senior Vice President & Provost
Perspectives on the T&P Process: Committee A

Process for Tenure

1. Candidate
   - Proposed List of Referees
   - Department (Chair Review)

2. Department Tenure Committee
   - Curriculum Vitae
   - Research Statement
   - Teaching Evaluations
   - Published Works
   - Reference Letters

3. Basic File
   - Department Tenure Committee
   - Committee Letter
   - Department Chair
   - Chair Letter

4. Office of Faculty Affairs
   - Tenure Committee
Perspectives on the T&P Process: Candidate

**Skull and Bones**

- **Formation**: 1832
- **Type**: Secret society
- **Headquarters**: Yale University
- **Location**: New Haven, Connecticut, United States
Transparency
Lack of Transparency: Contributing Factors

• Vague tenure criteria
  o *Superior intellectual attainment as evidenced in both teaching and research* (Univ. of California)
  o *Demonstrated excellence in research and teaching* (Univ. of Michigan)
• Evolving or shifting standards
• Lots of grey zone (i.e. most tenure cases occur within a wide range of potentially acceptability)
• Confidentiality essential, but sometimes unnecessarily secret
• Late and insufficient feedback for candidate from Comm. A
• Process is also unfair when some can access alternative informal networks for information
Fostering Transparency

• Include tenure track faculty in the tenure discussion of colleagues

  OU Physics and Astronomy asst. professors
  • are privy to all discussion and have access to tenure/promotion files

• Conduct annual progress towards tenure meetings for candidate and Comm. A

• Arrange for mentorship by both senior and near-peer colleagues

• Comm. A should provide written annual reviews with timely, detailed and clear expectations
Fostering Transparency

Examples of written expectations

http://provost.uiowa.edu/faculty-review-common-problems

Weak:
"Dr. K should endeavor to increase her/his number of peer-reviewed publications."
"It will be important for Dr. W to document a record of effective teaching."

Better:
“Dr. K has fewer peer-reviewed publications than expected at this stage; a significant increase in productivity will be needed for a positive tenure review.”
“Dr. W has forgotten to collect ACE forms in some classes. Although peer observations of Dr. W’s teaching were positive, it will be important for him/her to document a record of effective teaching from the student perspective as well.”
Fairness: External Letters
Criteria for External Evaluation

Language required by OU in letter sent to external evaluator:

*We ask that evaluators not provide comments as to whether a candidate should or should not be awarded tenure at the University of Oklahoma but rather comments on how the candidate’s research record compares with those who have recently been awarded tenure at your institution.*
Promoting Fairness: External Evaluation

- Request letters from evaluators from peer appropriate institutions
- Exercise caution when soliciting letters from European colleagues

Advice from Fulbright UK website: *Above all, encourage referees to avoid being restrained and too modest. American referees tend to write in an enthusiastic tone, using very positive and descriptive language. Thus, it is important that your referees keep the audience in mind and be aware of the fact that a standard UK reference may not be a sufficient complement to your US university application.*
Promoting Fairness: Suggested Language for Candidates with Extended Tenure Clocks

- This candidate has received an extension of his or her probationary period under approved university policies. You are asked to evaluate the candidate’s accomplishments and appropriateness for tenure and promotion to associate professor as if the record had been accumulated during our normal six-year probationary period.
Fairness: Implicit Bias
Lack of Fairness: Subtle Preconceptions (Implicit Bias)

Googling “physics professor images”
Lack of Fairness

Implicit Bias
  – Preconceived unconscious ideas related to gender, race, age etc.
  – Inconsistent with stated beliefs
  – Pervasive (men and women)

Evaluators implicitly favor candidates who fit the success stereotype in a given profession over others with same qualifications who don’t fit that stereotype.

• Student evaluation of teaching
• Colleagues evaluation of research and service
• External evaluation of tenure merit
Fostering Fairness: Solutions

- Remediate implicit bias by educating yourself (see resources)
- Keys are “intention, attention and time”
- Be prepared to challenge yourself and colleagues

http://www.tomforth.co.uk/genderbias/
Resources

• Materials on Best Practices for Academia
  – Success on the Tenure Track: Five Keys to Faculty Job Satisfaction by Cathy Ann Trower (Johns Hopkins University Press 2012)
  – https://provost.uiowa.edu/leadership-resources-deos-academic-administrators

• Resources for Women and Minority Faculty
  – Tenure in the Sacred Grove: Issues and Strategies for Women and Minority Faculty edited by Joanne E. Cooper, Dannelle D. Stevens (SUNY press)

• Links to Implicit Bias in Academia Literature
  – http://www.adapp-advance.msu.edu/implicit-bias-resources
  – http://uvasearchportal.virginia.edu/?q=bias_literacy