

# Guide to PROMOTION AND TENURE AT RENSSELAER

By

*The Faculty Senate Committee on Promotion and Tenure 1996*

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## INTRODUCTION.

*This Guide to Promotion and Tenure at Rensselaer gives an overview of the formal promotion and tenure process at Rensselaer. We intend it as a supplement to the Faculty Handbook, not as a substitute for it.*

*Anyone involved in the process of promotion and tenure at Rensselaer should become thoroughly familiar with the sections of the Faculty Handbook regarding promotion, tenure, and appeal, whether you are a candidate or administrator or faculty colleague in a departmental promotion and tenure committee.*

The granting of tenure is the single most significant gesture of faith Rensselaer makes toward a faculty member, and it represents the most significant investment of resources. From the viewpoint of the candidate, it can be a life-altering turning point. A former Provost of Rensselaer called tenure "our million dollar decision." In the time since then, inflation has certainly raised that figure.

The Faculty Senate Committee on Promotion and Tenure (FSCPT), by publishing this *Guide*, wishes to disseminate a basic understanding of how the process works. We also wish to make a clear statement of established procedures in order to ensure continuity from one Department Head to another and from one Dean to another when these positions change hands, as well as to ensure uniform practices among all Departments and Schools at Rensselaer.

We view this *Guide* as provisional and advisory. In an era when the size, composition, and responsibility of faculty are changing, when "normal" career paths are diversifying, and when new paradigms of publication, research, scholarship, creative work, teaching, collaboration, and service are coming into play, any document such as this will naturally require frequent revision. We invite future FSCPTs to revise this document to reflect changes in the profession, and we invite our colleagues to suggest changes and corrections.

Knowledge of the process should help candidates for promotion and tenure to prepare their own cases. We especially hope this *Guide* will be read carefully by Department Heads and the Deans of the Schools so that they, too, can prepare the best possible cases for each candidate and aid the FSCPT to make these important decisions in the most judicious and objective fashion. A sufficient number of poorly-prepared dossiers have reached the FSCPT over the past few years to warrant a clear statement of what the FSCPT views as "best practices." We hope Deans and Heads will measure their own practices against the FSCPT's expectations in guiding a candidate through this lengthy process.

To the candidate, Heads and Deans who are responsible for assembling the dossier, and to all faculty, we offer simple advice. The watchwords for an excellent dossier are attention to detail, honesty, completeness, objectivity, and freedom from influence. In short, the values for judging the merits of promotion and tenure cases are the same as the values treasured in our scholarly work and teaching and, indeed, are built on these foundations of integrity in academia.

## 1. COMPOSITION AND DUTIES OF THE FSCPT.

The FSCPT is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate reporting to the Faculty Senate and the Provost. It is composed of eight tenured full professors elected by their constituencies as follows:

One from each School

Two at-large

One by the student body

The Faculty Senate and Student Senate solicit nominations for tenured full professors and then the entire constituency in each category votes. The seven members representing the faculty serve three year terms, staggered so that there is continuity and corporate memory of FSCPT practices. The faculty member representing the Student Senate serves a one year term.

In the instance of a committee member who goes on leave during his/her time of service on the FSCPT, the constituency has the obligation to fill the seat for the remainder of the term. Generally, the runner-up in the original election is asked to do so, but sometimes a special election is required.

The duties of the FSCPT are chartered by the Constitution of the Faculty Senate: to make recommendations to the Provost on all cases of promotion and tenure of faculty and to hear appeals by faculty members. It is also responsible for reviewing candidates for appointment to faculty positions at the level of Associate Professor or above, and/or with tenure. These include administrators—Heads, Deans and Vice-Presidents of academic units, and Presidents—who are *de jure* members of the faculty.

Each year, the FSCPT elects a chair from among its eight members, usually as the last order of business for the academic year so there is clear responsibility for FSCPT duties that may occur during the summer and so the chair can plan his or her service schedule for the subsequent semester. The chair's role is to facilitate discussions, move them along in a timely and orderly fashion, schedule meeting times (usually through the Provost's office), carry out extra charges of the committee (e.g., seek more information from faculty or department heads), report results of these missions to the committee, and record the votes in order to report them to the Provost. Generally, the chair also takes notes from each meeting so that there is a record of the discussion. The chair is also responsible for communicating with Deans regarding the quality of dossiers the FSCPT has received in the interest of suggesting to Deans ways in which case preparation can be improved. The chair also gives a report of the FSCPT's activities to the Faculty Senate at the end of the year.

## **2. HOW THE FSCPT OPERATES.**

Many faculty who have served on the FSCPT over the years have said that it is one of the most effective committees in the Institute. It is the only standing committee where faculty and Deans make recommendations with an equal voice. It is certainly a committee that is charged with very serious decisions, and individual members often spend hours reading each dossier, generally taking extensive notes.

The rules of objectivity and clear evidence hold sway in FSCPT discussions. As a result, it is very difficult for biases of individual faculty members from either within the committee or outside it to unduly influence the final decision. The FSCPT has a strong tradition of protecting both individual faculty members' and the Institute's interests from undue interest or pressures in any direction, pro or con. The primary function of the FSCPT, then, is to safeguard the standards of Rensselaer and to ensure fairness.

The FSCPT meets several times in each semester. During the first meeting the committee sets the calendar. The meetings begin soon after the deadline for the submission of dossiers to the Provost's office. The committee can meet six or seven times in a semester, and these meetings can last for several hours. The committee will also meet on an emergency basis to vote on candidates who are joining the faculty as Associate or Full Professors with or without tenure; these often require very quick responses by the Institute.

In preparation for meetings, the Chair of the FSCPT asks one individual to prepare a written summary of a given dossier and present the case orally, but it is the responsibility of every committee member to be familiar with every dossier. Then, in typically long and detailed discussion, members compare notes and formulate an emerging opinion about each case. No point is too small to warrant a discussion. In certain exceptional cases, when members sense that there might be positive unanimity, the committee may agree to take an early straw poll to avoid protracted and unnecessary discussion. If there is any objection by any member, or an inquiry about any point, then the dossier is given a full discussion. Difficult, ambiguous, or potentially negative cases tend to receive extra attention.

Unfortunately, incomplete or ambiguous dossiers occasionally reach the FSCPT for consideration. The committee may also find issues in a dossier that require clarification, including such significant matters as whether a decision represents early tenure, or what contractual agreement a candidate had with the Institute when hired, or apparently trivial matters such as a missing recommender's biographical blurb. In these cases, the FSCPT asks the Provost to go back to a Department Head to request additional information, either from the Head directly or from a candidate via the Head. In rare cases, such as when there is an obvious mismatch between the apparent value of a candidate's record and a department's vote, the FSCPT has asked that the Department Head or a member of the department meet with the FSCPT to clarify the matter. These fact-finding meetings are informational and are held only in circumstances when every other route to clarify an issue has been exhausted or there is no more expedient route, since feedback between the FSCPT and the department is sensitive, and the FSCPT wishes to avoid raising alarms or giving undue influence to a Department Head's voice in the committee.

After discussing each dossier the members of the FSCPT take an interim vote on a scale

ranging from -2.0 to +2.0, with 0.5 point increments (i.e., -2.0, -1.5, -1.0, 0, + 0.5, +1.0, +1.5, and + 2.0). This vote is not final and is used to express the current position of each member. The Chair of the FSCPT is obliged to report the vote of the FSCPT to the Provost so that there is an official record of the FSCPT's recommendation on each case.

In an extensive meeting with the Provost the FSCPT again discusses each case, informing the Provost in detail of the arguments pro and con, problems with the dossier, and the results of the *interim* vote of the FSCPT. The FSCPT also will make comments about the quality of the preparation of the dossier, since the Provost is the proper route for information to flow back to Deans and Department Heads and then to the faculty candidate. Sometimes opinions shift between the last FSCPT meeting and the FSCPT meeting with the Provost. The Provost also has a meeting with the committee of Deans during which they inform him of their discussion. Finally, the FSCPT, the Provost and the Deans meet to discuss each case yet again. The faculty and Deans vote together. This meeting, chaired by the Provost, might appear redundant, but it is actually crucial for formulating a clear understanding of the value of a candidate to the institute and his or her profession. Every time a vote is taken, it is a new vote and supersedes any previous vote.

The Provost formulates his/her position based upon the recommendation of the Deans and the FSCPT and makes a recommendation to the President. The President makes his/her recommendation to the Board of Trustees and the Board of Trustees makes the final decision.

### 3. SCHEDULING AND DEADLINES.

From the time the dossiers leave the schools, the decision process usually takes about eight weeks and so the FSCPT meetings begin well before the middle of each semester. As implied by the discussion above, the entire schedule for reviewing a professor's candidacy is driven retroactively by the meetings of the Board of Trustees late in the Fall (December) and Spring (May) semesters. The FSCPT and Deans make their separate recommendations to the Provost about a month before the Trustees meet, and then the Deans, FSCPT, and Provost must vote, and the Provost must make his/her recommendation to the President, who in turn must advise the Board. (See Table 1 on page 9).

Since there can be twenty candidates or more in a semester and some dossiers will require hours of discussion, the Provost mandates deadlines very early in the semester (Early October and Early February) for receiving the dossier from the schools. Consequently, the candidate, departments, and schools have to prepare even further in advance. A rushed dossier serves neither the interests of the candidate nor of the process.

Normally, a Department should be prepared to make its decision in the first month of a semester. That means that the process of assembling the dossier, especially external reviews, should have been nearly completed at the very latest by the beginning of the semester in which the candidate wishes to be considered. Consequently, if a candidate wishes a decision in Spring of one year, s/he should have prepared the dossier by the beginning of the Fall semester of the previous year.

**Candidates and Department Heads should discuss the promotion and tenure process at least once a semester and have a detailed discussion the semester before the process has to begin,** and choose whether they will target the Fall or Spring Trustees meeting. For a tenure decision, this discussion should be the culmination of a probationary period that is no longer than six years (or in cases where a leave has been granted, seven years), in which the candidate has had annual reviews with the Head of his/her department and a three-year review. These reviews, which require written feedback to the candidate, are important steps in preparing the candidate for consideration for tenure and promotion. All evaluations and mentoring should be performed with an eye to advising and preparing the candidate to make the best case possible.

The Department Head should give the candidates a firm deadline well in advance for submitting his/her parts of the dossier to the departmental committee. These include

- the Rensselaer 23-page biographical sketch form, available from the Provost's office.
- depending on the discipline selected publications, records of exhibits, performances, installations, etc.
- any additional pertinent information for which there is no room on the bio-sketch

The Department Head or mentor chosen by the candidate and the Head from among the senior faculty of the candidate's Department should also help the candidate assemble the bio-sketch, and then review it rigorously and critically, looking for all the points noted in Section 3 below and recommend changes, additions, and deletions.

Department Heads should leave plenty of time between the candidate's deadline and their own deadline for making a recommendation to their respective Schools, since the Departmental committee must have time to mail out and receive back the dossier to internal and external evaluators, read the dossier and vote. In turn, the Deans should set a deadline well in advance of the FSCPT deadline for receiving all promotion/tenure cases from the departments, since the School executive committee must read the dossier and vote on the case. The school executive committee generally consists of Heads of Departments and Associate and Assistant Deans.

Department Heads must report back to the candidate in a timely fashion on the decision at each step in the process.

**Any negative decision of the Head, Dean or Provost based on the recommendations they receive stops the process.** In the case of any negative decision at any step in the process, the candidate has the option to appeal, which may involve re-assembling the dossier, adding more evidence, soliciting the help of an advocate, and beginning the case over again (See *Section 7* below). A negative decision requires written explanation to the candidate from the person that made the decision.

**Any positive recommendation is advisory to the next level in the decision-making hierarchy at every step.** The Department Head is not bound by the vote of the Department committee. The Dean can make a recommendation that is different from the vote of the Department or the Executive Committee of a school. The FSCPT recommendation may not agree with the recommendation it receives from the Dean. The Provost reserves the right to form his/her own judgments and make recommendations to the President which may differ from the determination of the joint committee of Deans and faculty. And the President can do the same based on the Provost's recommendation. Finally, the Board of Trustees can formulate its own decision. The Provost is responsible for reporting to the FSCPT (and the Deans) about the outcome of each case.

Table 1: A General Timeline of the Promotion and Tenure Decision Process

<b>Time before Board of Trustees Meeting</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
~ 6-7 months	Candidate assembles bio-sketch, sample publications, and list of internal and external evaluators to the Department Head. Candidate and Head discuss selection of external and internal evaluators and the procedures and the deadline for submitting the dossier. Department Head makes initial phone or e-mail contacts to determine availability of evaluators and then sends out dossier to evaluators and chooses some evaluators not recommended by the candidate (half from candidate, half not).
~ 14 weeks	Early in the semester, the Department Promotion and Tenure Committee (or equivalent body) reviews and votes on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Department Head. If the Head's recommendation is positive, s/he forwards the dossier and a written recommendation to the School. If negative, the Head informs the candidate formally, including the candidate's right to appeal.
~12 weeks	The Executive Committee of the School reviews and votes on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Dean.
~ 10 weeks	If the Dean makes a positive recommendation, s/he forwards the dossier with a written recommendation to the Provost before the deadline of the target semester, Fall or Spring (usually October and February, respectively). If the Dean's recommendation is negative, s/he informs the candidate formally, including the candidate's right to appeal.
~ 10-5 weeks	The FSCPT reviews and votes on the candidacy.
~ 8-5 weeks	The Deans of the schools review and vote on the candidacy.
~ 5 weeks	The FSCPT take a final vote on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Provost.
~ 5 weeks	The Deans of the schools take a final vote on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Provost.
~ 4 weeks	The FSCPT and Deans meet together to vote on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Provost.
~ 4 weeks	The Provost makes a recommendation to the President.
	The President makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
	The Board of Trustees make a final decision.

#### **4. THE DOSSIER.**

The dossier is the primary instrument used to make the promotion and tenure decision. As many as sixty or seventy people will review a candidate's dossier during the process: a dozen external evaluators, the departmental P&T committee, the School's executive committee and Dean, the FSCPT, the Deans of the Schools, the Provost, the President, and, in executive summary form, the Board of Trustees. Many of these readers in the audience will have little or no knowledge of the "local conditions" or specific details of a candidate's career and circumstances, nor of the canons of judgment that apply in a Department, School, or academic discipline. As a result, it is necessary that the dossier represent in as complete and clear way any information that pertains to the career of a candidate. More explanation, within reason, is generally better than less. Little should be left to the imagination, and it should not be assumed that all reviewers will be able to judge the value of a candidate's contributions in the classroom or in the lab or in the profession at large.

##### **4.1 Assemble the bio-sketch and supporting materials early.**

The candidate for associate professor should start assembling his or her dossier at the time of hire and start to package it as early as six months before forwarding it to the Departmental P&T committee. Normally, each faculty members has kept the records on which the dossier is based, through a carefully-prepared and current curriculum vitae.

The standard long biography form or bio-sketch is the central item in the dossier (see recommendations about it in Section 4.2.3, below). We strongly urge each faculty member to examine this form in the first year of his/her appointment to a position at Rensselaer. Department Heads should give each new professor a copy upon hiring and discuss with the candidate professor the process and career issues involved. The Department Head should also remind the candidate at each annual review to update the bio-sketch.

Candidates should also give early and serious thought to the list of outside evaluators whom they will offer to the Department Head, who will then solicit some from among the list of the candidate's choices.

##### **4.2 Parts of the dossier with FSCPT recommendations for best practices.**

The dossier is a complex document, made up of various parts. Together, these parts should provide a clear picture of the candidate's accomplishments.

The dossier is also a document reviewed by many people with many different interests: colleagues or future colleagues, professionals and peers in the field, Department Heads, Deans, faculty from other schools in the Institute, Provost, President, Trustees. In what follows we specify and describe each part of the dossier as it traditionally arrives at the FSCPT, and we make special note of common difficulties, offering hints and advice about how to avoid common pitfalls and optimize the process of judgment. Below we list the parts of the dossier in the order in which they are viewed by the FSCPT and Deans, not in the order of their assembly. In each section, we explain the practices and pitfalls that accompany each part based on our collective experience of the decision-making process.

###### **4.2.1. The Dean's letter.**

The Dean's letter records the Dean's decision on the candidate and provides a detailed explanation of the decision.

It should include:

1. An *account of the vote* of the executive or chairs' committee of the school. It is expected that the Dean will interpret or explain any unusual circumstances surrounding that vote.
2. A *review and evaluation* of all aspects of the candidate's career, focusing on items and accomplishments of special interest.
3. A *statement of the dean's view* of the value of the candidate to the school.
4. An explanation of any deficiencies in the candidate's file. For example, if a candidate has a poor teaching record in an otherwise stellar career, this needs to be addressed and justified in the letter.

Many Deans excerpt highlights (e.g. direct quotes) from the external review letters in addition to giving their own opinions and judgments. It is also crucial that, the Dean's letter not ignore problems brought out in the letters; rather, these should be addressed directly, placing them in context.

#### **4.2.2. The Department Head's letter.**

The Department Head's letter gives the Head's decision and provides a detailed explanation of his/her recommendation. It should include

1. The *vote* of the department's P&T committee, including an interpretation or explanation of the vote if there are any ambiguities, and a definition of the composition of the committee, since it changes from department to department.
2. The *chair's evaluation* of all aspects of the candidate's career, focusing on outstanding qualities but also placing in context how the university should understand the value of the candidate's research, teaching, and service to the department. Special effort to explain the meaning of a candidate's research within the discipline and the importance of the candidate to the department,—the "fit"—since the department head is most likely to be in the best position to give this view. In addition, the committee generally relies on the Department Head's letter to clarify the relative value of publications, both by the number of publications, the originality of their contribution, the coherence of the candidate's research or scholarly program, and the prestige of the journals, since standards vary widely from discipline to discipline.
3. The committee also relies on the Department Head's letter to interpret the value of external evaluations, picking out high points and explaining weak ones.
4. An *explanation of any special circumstances* in the candidacy, including
  - whether it represents an early decision and why that is justified;
  - an assessment of (not an excuse for) poor teaching evaluations and especially light or heavy teaching loads;
  - an explanation of the research effort, especially an apparently low research and/or publication effort;

- a description of efforts, especially service efforts, over and above what the biographical sketch shows or the recommendations explain.

### 4.2.3. Candidate's Biographical Sketch.

Assembling the Biographical Sketch is the candidate's responsibility. It is the key document on which all the other recommendations and decisions depend. The FSCPT assumes that the candidate has selected and reviewed everything in it for accuracy and detail. In itself the dossier is read as a token of the candidate's ability to take the process seriously and attend to detail, so the FSCPT is especially interested in the completeness and accuracy of every datum.

The candidate should assume that the bio-sketch is a working template in the sense that not all categories in it must be filled, and not all the categories that represent a candidate's career appear on the standard form. *Therefore, the FSCPT strongly urges candidates to include material for which there is no obvious category. If you feel that there is significant information about yourself that is not covered by the listed categories, make the necessary additions.* This is preferable by far to trying to squeeze an aspect of your career such as extraordinary service or fieldwork, a non-traditional publication or other accomplishment into a category to which it doesn't belong. But please take care to label new or additional categories clearly, completely and unambiguously: i.e. "Refereed electronic journal publications"; "Installation of original work"; "Conferences chaired," "Educational software design," etc.

In what follows, we list the categories in the bio-sketch and give our advice about what to include or not include (when it isn't obvious):

**I. Identification:** Name Current rank Department School, Year and rank of first academic appointment at Rensselaer Dates and rank for subsequent promotions

**Educational Preparation:**

- (1) Baccalaureate and graduate degree(s) with Institution and date
- (2) Non-degree preparation

**II. Professional Experience:** Include here not only academic experience but other professionally relevant employment, including military service, corporate research, sabbatical appointments, employment during leave of absences, etc.

**III. Teaching:** The candidate's teaching record is a critical component of the dossier and it is important that this is well documented. Teaching is not limited to evaluation scores, but includes innovations in education and mentoring.

***A. Courses***

It is most helpful if the candidate provides the following information in a table format with courses divided according to the semester and year:

- Name and course number listed by semester, summer session

- Number of students who completed each course
- Name of colleagues with whom you taught the course and percentage of your responsibility for the course if it was team- taught
- Teaching evaluation score for each course
- Independent studies, special projects, etc. Include titles, dates.
- Selected positive and negative student comments should be included as an appendix to the bio-sketch

### ***B. Student Thesis Supervision***

#### *1. Thesis completed*

- a. Bachelors
- b. Masters
- c. Doctoral

For each category above indicate the student's name and year of completion (already completed or expected), and the title of the student's thesis.

*2. Thesis Committees:* Under a separate listing, include committees in which you've participated but not chaired or supervised.

### ***C. Curriculum design***

Include the names of new courses designed or old courses re-designed, including collaborative or team-teaching, introduction of instructional technology, software designed, or new pedagogical methods. It is appropriate to include new syllabi in an appendix.

### ***D. Advising***

- 1. Undergraduate Student Advising and Counseling (number and year)*
- 2. Graduate Student Advising and Counseling (number and year)*

List numbers of students advised each semester. Many departments have asked faculty to take on student advisees formally or informally. While few faculty members keep lists of all their advisees, please estimate the numbers of students you have advised in each semester.

## **IV. Publications, Performances and Exhibitions**

When listing publications, follow the normal style for bibliographic entries. Give complete list of coauthors, title, journal, volume, issue, date, paging. List articles in reverse order of publication from most recent. Include articles not yet published but accepted or under review, but indicate the status clearly and unambiguously (e.g. identify each as “submitted” or “accepted for publication”). List adaptations, translations or re-publications of your original work in other forms (i.e. conference proceedings republished as book chapters or journal articles) clearly and not as separate entries.

It is important that some method be used to designate the role of the candidate in the author list. Each discipline has its own traditions (e.g. advisors are often major authors,

but listed last) and these should be clarified. One example is putting student names in italics and corresponding or major authors marked with an \*. This is up to the candidate, but whatever method is used should be defined at the start of the section.

The values of different kinds of publications vary widely among disciplines and genres. Textbooks are distinguished from monographs (sustained works about a coherent subject) and both vary in perceived value from discipline to discipline. In some disciplines, a single journal article may weigh more heavily than a book, and in some disciplines a conference proceedings at a prestigious conference has more impact than a journal publication. ***It is therefore of great importance that the Department Head and the Dean explain the perceived value of publications and other professional work within the profession of the candidate and that the dossier distinguish clearly among different sorts of publications.***

#### ***A. Books, Monographs, Published Recordings***

1. *Single author books, recordings*
2. *Contributor, books, recordings*

A brief description of each item if it is not a book is helpful (one or two sentences). If it is a textbook or an edited volume, indicate so to distinguish it from a monograph. A distinction should be made between an edited volume of original essays or chapters and an edited proceedings of a conference. If you edited a volume, include any chapters or introductions you wrote. Similar suggestions apply for published recordings.

#### ***B. Patents and Patent Applications***

Give patent number, dates, names of collaborators and co-holders, and explain the device or object patented, including its significance.

#### ***C. Journal articles***

1. *In refereed journals (articles which are reviewed by peers in the field prior to publication.)*
  - a. *Major articles*
  - b. *Abstracts, Letters of Correspondence, Book Reviews, etc.*
  - c. *Short articles, Interviews*
  - d. *Conference Proceedings*
2. *In non-refereed journals*
  - a. *Major articles*
  - b. *Abstracts, Letters of Correspondence, Book Reviews, etc.*
  - c. *Minor articles, Interviews*
  - d. *Conference Proceedings*
3. *Catalogs and exhibition publications*

Be very clear in distinguishing the publication of conference proceedings from refereed journal publications, and refereed from non-refereed journals or conference proceedings.

The candidate is free to add clarifying information about the degree of rigor of each of these, especially in published conference proceedings, since having a paper accepted at some conferences is as prestigious and as important a contribution to the field as some journal publications.

***NOTE: The dossier should include, in an appendix, copies of 3-4 of the candidate's best papers or works (chosen by the candidate). This list may also contain articles accepted but not yet in print and those submitted but not yet reviewed.***

**D. Exhibitions, Performances and Recitals**

*1. Major (national and international level) Solo Exhibitions, Performances, Recitals and screenings*

*(Give title, venue and dates. Describe the nature and significance of the presented work. Enclosed documentation.)*

*2. Minor (local level) solo exhibitions, Small Scale Musical or Video Works*

*(Give title, venue, and dates)*

*3. Group Exhibitions and Performances, Ensemble Recitals*

*(Give title, venue and dates. Detail your contribution and enclose documentation.)*

**E. Major Research Archives or Databases**

*(If you wish to list archives or databases, give indication of scope and distribution of the work.)*

*1. Design of Research Archives or Databases*

*2. Inclusion in Research Archives or Databases*

**F. Other originally authored computer software or systems**

*(If you wish to list computer software or systems, give indication of scope and distribution of the work.)*

**G. Published Reviews, Descriptions of Work and Interviews**

**H. Artistic Residencies**

**I. Commissions**

## **V. Research Contracts and Grants:**

### ***A. Proposals Approved and Funded***

List all co-authors and co-principals, other researchers or investigators; the title of the grant; dates; granting agency; monetary amount. A brief narrative description of the nature of the grant and its accomplishments is desirable but not required. Show multiple grants for the same project clearly.

Given the increasing number of large multi-investigator grants it is important to identify what portion of the project is supporting the candidate.

### ***B. Proposals Submitted and Not Funded, or Still Pending, with Current Status***

List all co-authors and co-principals, other researchers or investigators; the title of the grant; dates; granting agency; monetary amount.

### ***C. Candidate's Account of Research***

This is an important — and often underestimated — opportunity for the candidate to explain his or her career to the more general audience who will review the dossier and to express any larger vision the candidate may have. Consequently, the candidate should take this section most seriously. It is the only opportunity for the candidate to "speak" to his/her audience and to indicate any personal flavor or distinction in the candidate's career. Good accounts of research are:

- well-written and grammatically and mechanically correct
- define terms clearly and avoid jargon
- explain aspects of the career that may not be clear from the data elsewhere in the dossier, while avoiding defensiveness
- take into account the generalized audience who will read them (i.e., colleagues from many different disciplines)
- explain the significance of contributions
- place research in the contexts of the Institute, the profession, and perhaps even the world at large
- describe a large plan or vision of the research project(s), offer a sense of conviction and coherence.

Explanations of the coherence and future plans of a research program and its ties to teaching are most impressive.

## **VI. Editorship of Journals, Review of Manuscripts, Books, Research Proposals, Curating, and Jurying of Exhibitions**

(Give organization of journals, significant items reviewed, dates.)

Please include editorial positions, including advisory boards, curating and jurying of exhibitions

## **VII. Service**

For all the following, give dates and titles of service. Indicate if position was elective or appointed.

**A. *Service to the University***- include committees, elective positions, chairship of Institute committees, participation in Councils, retreats, special presentations to alumni, Board of Trustees, or administrative bodies.

1. *University Service*
2. *Service to the School*
3. *Departmental Committees and Dates for Each*
4. *Other Service and Administration Activities*

### ***B. Service to the Profession***

This section should include:

- Memberships in professional societies, including dates and titles of executive positions held and other service functions.
- Conferences and symposia organized
- Panels and sessions chaired at international and national conferences
- List editing of newsletters, directorship of conferences, committees within professional societies, etc.).
- Service to the profession in review of grants, publications, proposals, and candidacies for tenure and promotion at other institutions.

### ***C. Community and Public Service***

(Give national, state, and local organizations; positions held; and dates.)

This section should include service to the community, including public posts in charitable organizations. Describe special initiatives and accomplishments.

## **VII. Profession and Public Lectures**

Give list of authors, title, conference, site, location, and date for each of these. Distinguish carefully among the different sorts of talks, papers and presentations, especially as to whether they were refereed or not. International presentations, keynote or plenary speeches/papers/presentations, and invitations to present at prestigious venues represent significant contributions and should be noted clearly. The following represent some but not all of the major categories of achievement that should be noted in this section:

- Keynote speeches, plenary addresses, papers, presentations
- Invited papers, presentations, talks
- Intra-university, school or departmental colloquia
- Contributed presentations, papers, talks
- Interviews to news media, radio shows, television, etc.

**VIII. Awards and honors, fellowships:** List date, place, title of project, awarding agency, and explain significance and value.

**IX. Sabbatical Leaves,** off campus study programs, foreign and professional travel, dates and topics

## **X. Other activities**

Other relevant activities most often includes consulting, but this category should be used to mention any miscellany or aspects of a candidate's career that don't fit neatly into any of the pigeonholes above. If you list consulting activities, include name of company and days per year and provide a sentence or two describing the nature of the consulting. You may also list here professional services you've provided including activity as expert witness or congressional testimony, advice to government agencies, etc.

## **XI. Miscellany**

Include if pertinent, concrete evidence of teaching ability and any unusual contributions to university affairs such as curriculum advising or development, continuing education, distance learning, lab or studio design, that wasn't included under the teaching category of the bio-sketch.

### **4.2.4. Letters of recommendation or review.**

The Faculty Handbook spells out the guidelines for assembling a list of external peer reviews of a candidate's dossier. There must be no fewer than six external reviews, with equal numbers of reviewers suggested by the candidate and the department. (However, please note that six external reviewers would generally be viewed as a very small number.). The more qualified the reviewer, the easier it will be to make clear judgments about a case. The FSCPT looks closely at each external (and internal) reviewer's rank,

institution, achievement, experience, and relationship to the candidate. Consequently, each reviewer's letter should be accompanied by a *brief* biography and statement of the reviewer's relationship to the candidate. Dossiers that do not have sufficient numbers of well-qualified external reviewers are difficult to judge and may reflect poorly on the candidate's case. In specific instances, a candidate or department head may wish to elaborate on the qualifications of a given reviewer.

***It is not recommended that the candidate's thesis advisor is one of the letter writers.***

These letters play a very significant role in shaping the FSCPT's decision. Consequently, a dossier that includes only letters from friends, collaborators, former colleagues, recommenders from non-academic settings, and colleagues of equal or lesser rank give the FSCPT very little objective, academic information on which to form its judgments. The inability of a candidate or a department to gather such information may be considered *prima facie* a weakness in the candidate's case describing evaluation of teaching, publication, and service.

The Department Head and the candidate select the list of external reviewers together and the candidate must be advised of the final list of external reviewers selected. The candidate does not have the right to veto any choice suggested by the Head, but s/he may append a letter explaining any objection to the choice. Typically, half the reviewers are ones suggested by the candidate and half suggested by the Department Head or senior colleagues from whom the Department Head requests recommendations. The Head should show the candidate his/her list first and with plenty of time for response to avoid gaining an unfair advantage. The same rules apply to internal reviewers.

***The letters need to be requested several months before the Department vote to ensure that the external reviewers have enough time to write a thoughtful letter.***

The following must be present in the dossier:

*A. List of all external reviewers*

The Department Head must submit *a list of all external reviewers solicited*, whether they responded or not. This list should indicate whether the external reviewer was suggested by the candidate or the department.

*B. Copy of letter soliciting external review*

The Department Head must also include a copy of his/her *letter soliciting external reviews*. The Head's letter soliciting external reviews must follow these guidelines in order to keep the dossier free from suspicion of influence:

*The same letter should be sent to all reviewers.* It is up to the Department Head to decide whether to say in that letter if the reviewer was selected by the department or the candidate.

The language should be neutral. The letter should avoid giving the reviewer any impression about the candidate's chances, how the candidate is viewed by the department, or what aspects of the candidate's profile should be emphasized.

The letter should include a statement of the guidelines for granting tenure or promotion at Rensselaer. A quotation from the appropriate sections of the Handbook serve this purpose well.

#### *C. Reviewer's brief bio statement*

The Department Head should solicit a brief biographical statement from the reviewer, as well as a full disclosure from the reviewer of the relationship between the reviewer and the candidate, including professional collaboration, supervision, or personal relationships.

#### *D. External Review Letters*

All external letters received must be included in the Dossier. This is indicated in the handbook. FSCPT sifts through letters of recommendation very carefully. It looks for nuances of expression that might indicate subtle judgments, since in an increasingly litigious atmosphere, negative recommendations are fewer and praise tends to be inflated. Does the reviewer understand the values and standards of academia sufficiently to make a recommendation?

#### *E. Department Head's letter soliciting internal reviews*

The same guidelines for external review letters apply to internal review letters, although the tone may be more informal and the Department Head may instruct an internal reviewer to focus on particular aspects of a candidate's career. The letter soliciting internal reviews must be neutral, however. The Head should include in the dossier a list of all internal reviewers solicited, whether they responded or not. This list should also indicate whether the reviewer was suggested by the candidate or the department. The expectation is that about half of the letters are chosen by the candidate and half by the Department Head or Mentor.

Some Department Heads publish a general solicitation for evaluation of a candidate's career to all members of a department or school.

#### *F. Department Head's list of internal reviewers*

The Department Head should list all internal reviewers, indicating whether the reviewer volunteered, was solicited by the Department Head or department, or by the candidate. Again a policy of half chosen by the candidate and half by the Department Head is appropriate.

#### *G. Department Head's letter describing process by which student input was solicited*

The Department Head should submit a brief statement describing how students were asked to write letters reviewing a candidate's performance as teacher, advisor, project supervisor, or thesis advisor. If a formal letter was used, the Head's solicitation letter must be neutral.

The Department Head should also include a list of all student

reviewers solicited, whether they responded or not. This list should also indicate whether the reviewer was suggested by the candidate or the department.

#### *H. Student letters*

Letters from graduate and undergraduate students who have worked with a professor in research or who have taken a professor's class are highly valued by the FSCPT, which recommends that a minimum of eight letters be submitted. It is expected that the letter writers cover the broad spectrum of students at Rensselaer, including both undergraduate and graduate students. It is also expected that at least two will be from female undergraduates.

It should be understood that all letters received will be included in the file and become a permanent part of the file.

### **5. EXTERNAL APPOINTMENTS, INCLUDING DEANS, DEAN OF THE FACULTY, AND PRESIDENT.**

The FSCPT must vote on external appointments to the faculty that carry tenure and/or rank of associate professor or above. This includes appointments to administrative positions that carry faculty rank, including Department Heads, Deans, Vice-Presidents and Presidents. Quite often, the role of the FSCPT in ratifying these appointments is overlooked as the complex process of search and identification for qualified candidates proceeds on a schedule that is more hasty than that for internal promotion and tenure. Nonetheless, **the FSCPT must see the candidate's credentials and dossier before the contract is issued from the Institute.** In general, the FSCPT has viewed its role as aiding Departments and Deans to help the Institute secure the best candidates available.

It is the Search Committee's responsibility to assemble an adequate dossier for any candidate whom it recommends for appointment with tenure. A full dossier is often impossible, but at very minimum, the dossier should include all of the written information the search committee has gathered in its deliberations, including letters of review by faculty within the Department or School to which the new appointment will be made. At very least, this abbreviated dossier should include:

- . • A full curriculum vitae
- . • Sample of publications
- . • Letters of recommendation, including at least three or four NOT assembled by the candidate
- . • A cover letter from the chair of the Search Committee and another letter from the ranking administrator responsible for the appointment (Head in the case of faculty, Dean in the case of Department Head, President in the case of Dean) etc. This letter should outline the career of the candidate, a review of his/her profile and the reasons for the recommendation.

- . • Any relevant application material, including letter of application from the candidate.
- . • Departmental vote

## **6. APPOINTMENTS FROM OUTSIDE ACADEMIA.**

Rensselaer is in the forefront of academia when it comes to appointing qualified faculty whose primary experience has been in industry. These candidates most often become highly valued and qualified colleagues. However, their candidacies often do pose challenges for the judgment of the FSCPT since their careers and records of publication, research, grants, teaching, and service all may have followed nontraditional paths. In some cases there may be only very slight or no evidence for teaching ability. In some cases, the most significant research performed by the candidate was "locked up" by corporate ownership and was never published.

Since the value of such appointments is often very clear to the departments or Heads who sponsor them, a certain eagerness may cause the sponsoring Departments and Schools to overlook or disregard traditional categories for academic judgment for tenure and promotion. Yet, the FSCPT takes primary responsibility for enforcing these standards. As a result, the Department Head and Dean must take special care to address problems in evaluating such candidates. Special care should be taken to assemble qualified external reviewers who are familiar with academic standards. If there is no evidence of teaching, perhaps it is advisable for the candidate to delay tenure until some record of teaching is accumulated. If research publication is thin because the candidate's responsibility to a corporate employer prevented publication, then some way of evaluating the rigor and value of that research must be found.

## 7. APPEALS.

If a candidate for promotion or tenure is rejected at any stage in the process, s/he has the right of appeal as described in the Faculty Handbook, which we recommend be consulted before proceeding with this section. The appeal should be submitted at or before the deadlines set by the Provost for other Promotion and Tenure cases to ensure enough time for proper review.

However, the Handbook leaves many grey areas about the process which have been defined more clearly by precedent. In what follows, we describe the process we feel strikes the best balance between the interests of the candidate and the Institute based on precedents that have been set in the appeals procedure.

When a candidate for promotion or tenure is rejected at any stage, the candidate has the right to choose an advocate, a tenured full professor from inside or outside the candidate's department or school but within the Institute, who will act as the candidate's representative in the process. If the candidate has received a negative ruling, s/he has the right to appeal with a strengthened dossier, which begins the entire process over again (under the presumption that a positive but mixed vote at an earlier step might have resulted in a negative vote at a later step, and an improved dossier may change a mixed but positive vote to one that is even more positive).

However, though the process begins again, the clock of the tenure decision is not stopped, so a candidate who is in the final year of a contract, or the grace year<sup>1</sup> after a negative decision may have some urgency in achieving resolution of a case. For that reason, as well as the natural anxiety that attends appeal cases, appeals must take precedence over regular decision, and the FSCPT should set aside regular business to hear appeals with all due speed.

The advocate, while unable to render judgment on the case, accepts this responsibility with the commitment to do everything within her/his power to help the candidate strengthen the case for promotion or tenure. The advocate has the right to review all documents, including confidential ones and ones that are not represented in the dossier — e.g., the minutes of the departmental P&T committee or executive committee of the School — concerning the original case. At the same time, the advocate must preserve the principles of confidentiality. In short, the advocate walks a tightrope. S/he has the delicate task of sifting through confidential material in order to give advice to the candidate without revealing the names or some specifics of the origin of negative opinions and information.

The candidate should then take all steps possible to strengthen his/her case: soliciting additional evaluations of the dossier, adding explanatory material; revising statements about research; remembering and adding details, etc. The candidate may also wish to write a statement in his/her own defense that the advocate can then use as the basis of advocacy.

With this revised dossier and additional information, the advocate then brings forward the case to the new starting point. The advocate is welcome to give an oral statement about the candidate, ask questions of anyone involved in the process (Heads, Deans, committees, etc.), and expect responses, either in the form of oral or written remarks

which can be entered into the record and to which further responses by the advocate and candidate are also permitted. The FSCPT and the Committee of Deans will make time on the P&T agenda to hear any advocacy.

In the past, the FSCPT has on occasion asked that an advocate present the appeal to the committee. The FSCPT has on occasion also solicited further information from the advocate, the candidate, the department P&T committee, the school executive committee, the Head, or the Dean involved in the decision.

After hearing and reviewing all new evidence, each committee or agent (dean, chair, committee) in the process will once again deliberate on a case and deliver a formal recommendation, yea or nay. (This is in place of the -2.0 to + 2.0 rating system described previously for normal [i.e., non-appeal] cases.). The advocate does not have the right to be present for these discussions or votes. However, the advocate, on behalf of the candidate must be permitted *timely* access to all new information added at any time to the dossier, including new information that emerges in a Dean's or Department Head's letter. Any new oral testimony in the case heard by any committee or administrator must also be presented to the advocate, and the advocate must be given a timely interim in which to respond.

Unlike the original process, in an appeals process a negative opinion delivered at any stage does not halt the appeal. Instead, the dossier is passed through to the next step, through the FSCPT and Committee of Deans, Provost, President and, if positive, to the Trustees.

## CONCLUSION.

“Mongst all these stirs of discontented strife O, let me lead an academic life.”

— Joseph Hall (1648)

Tenure, and to a lesser extent promotion, are two cornerstones of academic life. They ensure freedom of thought and speech and grant privilege and prestige not so much to individuals as to ideals of academic pursuit: the getting and sharing of knowledge free from restraint, free from influence, free from political pressure or monetary reward, or free even from blind self-interest. Perhaps most importantly, tenure grants faculty members the freedom to take risks and to pursue pure knowledge and truth in ways no other cultural institution can afford.

Tenure and faculty privilege are perennially under assault and increasingly so these days. This is all the more reason that all participants in the process of deciding on the fate of candidates take care and strive for utterly scrupulous rigor in gathering evidence, formulating judgments, and rendering decisions. We hope that a clear articulation of, and strict adherence to, the processes described in this document (and in the Faculty Handbook), will help to protect the candidate, the Institute, the phenomenon of tenure itself, and therefore the higher goals and interests of academia, which emphasize the unfettered search for truth.