


August 22, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kimberly Andrews Espy
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

FROM: Daniel J. Gelo 
Dean

RE: Report of the Committee on Promotion Standards

As co-chair of the committee I am pleased to submit the attached report summarizing recommendations concerning promotion standards. We hope that these recommendations prove valuable to you as you review current policies and procedures.

As noted, co-chair Jesse Zapata or I would be happy to provide more detail about these recommendations, and the committee members are willing to serve further if need be.

c: Rena Bizios
Rosalind Horowitz
Jerome Keating
Paul LeBlanc
Clyde Phelix
Tulio A. Sulbaran
Jesse Zapata

PROVOST/VPAA

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Report of the Committee on Promotion Standards

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In Spring 2018, Interim Provost C. Mauli Agrawal empaneled a committee to form recommendations concerning UTSA policies governing tenure and promotion, especially the process of promotion to full professor rank. In doing so, Dr. Agrawal acknowledged concerns emerging from the most recent promotion process and expressed by various UFRAC members in a post-evaluation meeting and associated email correspondence. From among these concerns he formed a charge for the committee, to consider three focused issues:

- 1) whether the content of the current Provost's website promotion guidelines accurately reflected current university expectations or desired standards, particularly the current language suggesting that a faculty member could earn promotion with "extraordinary" performance in any one, and only one, of the three performance categories of research, teaching, and service
- 2) whether there should be a limit on the number of times a faculty member could apply for promotion to full professor or the frequency of applications
- 3) the nature of the requirements for outside evaluation letters

On these matters the Interim Provost requested concise recommendations for improvement which could inform changes in the Provost's guidelines or the *Handbook of Operating Procedures* (HOP) through the normal HOP revision process.

The committee consisted of: Rena Bizios, Flawn Professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering; Daniel J. Gelo, Stumberg Distinguished University Chair and Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts (committee co-chair); Rosalind Horowitz, Professor, Departments of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching and Educational Psychology; Jerome Keating, Flawn Professor, Department of Management Sciences and Statistics; Paul LeBlanc, Professor and Department Chair, Department of Communication; Clyde Phelix, Professor, Department of Biology; Tulio A. Sulbaran, Professor and Department Chair, Department of Construction; and, Jesse Zapata, Senior Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Support (co-chair). The committee met on February 20, April 9, and July 11, 2018. The committee studied current university published policies on promotion and tenure. Various committee members obtained comparative materials from peer and aspirant institutions and drew on their own knowledge and experiences as faculty members or evaluators at other universities. On the basis of these discussions, the committee offers the following recommendations:

Standards for Promotion to Full Professor

- We recommend the primacy of research in promotion criteria, and clarification of published criteria to eliminate alternatives to research excellence as a qualification for promotion to full professor rank.
- We recommend that the full professor promotion criteria state that the candidate must excel in research plus one other area of performance (teaching or service).

- Excelling is defined as achieving national or international recognition in an area.

Research excellence and recognition are evinced by the number and quality of peer-reviewed publications, grants, and other scholarly or creative products as defined and valued by the candidate's discipline.

Teaching excellence and recognition are evinced by methods that are transformative or adopted nationally. Textbooks, MOOCs, and external teaching awards are sample indicators of teaching influence.

Service excellence and recognition are defined as peer-recognized contributions to the candidate's discipline or society in general at a national or international level.

Limits on Application to Full Professor Rank

- We recommend that a faculty member should be eligible to apply for promotion to full professor up to three times, and that following an unsuccessful application, a candidate must wait three years before applying again. The committee notes that promotion review is expensive of time and effort for both the candidate and reviewers, and feels that these measures can help ensure that strong cases are advanced.
- We recommend that the full professor promotion policy offers peer mentoring as part of the application or re-application process.

External Letters

- The current Provost's Guidelines regarding external evaluations are generally satisfactory.
- We recommend that the current number of required external evaluator letters (3 to 6) should not be changed.
- We recommend that the external evaluation solicitation letter template in the Provost's Guidelines be amended to read, "First, please indicate whether or not you have had any personal or professional association with the candidate..."

The committee co-chairs would be pleased to discuss these recommendations in more detail. Committee members expressed a willingness to continue serving should further examination of the policies be required.