March 1, 2024

RE: Request for External Reviewer for Promotion and/or Tenure

UTSA is eager to continue building a campus that is widely recognized for the highest quality research, teaching, and service, and we depend on knowledgeable experts like you to help us understand the contributions of our candidates. We also recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic may have caused varying disruptions to faculty in their teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity and service goals. Furthermore, we understand that these disruptions impact individual faculty in unique ways, based on differing responsibilities and circumstances, and differing timescales and intensities. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disruptive impacts, all pre-tenure candidates across the university were granted a one-year extension in the probationary period as a matter of right. Candidates should be held to the same standard you expect for a typical probationary period.

Beginning in the Spring 2020 semester, university faculty experienced a significant disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Spring 2020, as a result of the health crisis, all faculty moved their courses to the online modality and worked remotely research facilities including labs and libraries were closed and all student evaluation of teaching was suspended. In conjunction with the disruptions experienced on-campus, many faculty were working remotely from their homes while simultaneously providing childcare due to closures of daycare facilities and K-12 schooling, or attending to the needs of aged or ill family members. Research disruptions, significant shifts in teaching modalities, limited childcare, and remote work has continued to persist. We ask that you take this unprecedented event into consideration in the evaluation of work performed during the pandemic period. In light of the pandemic, for example, we ask you to consider cancelled/postponed work and focus your review on the quality of the work conducted relative to the unusual demands on faculty time in this period.

Again, I thank you for your time and assistance. I recognize that this request adds to what is no doubt a considerable workload and appreciate your willingness to be a reviewer for our tenure and promotion process. It is an essential part of peer review and we depend on our colleagues to help us make well-informed decisions.

Sincerely,

Heather Shipley, Ph.D.
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs