

Report of the UNC Task Force on Future Promotion and Tenure Policies and Practices

Introduction

The conferral of tenure at the University of North Carolina carries significant privileges as well as responsibilities on the part of both the university and the faculty member. For the faculty member, tenure grants the right to engage in free inquiry in both teaching and research without fear of reprisal. Tenure also provides job security. Tenured faculty provide the university a vigorous exchange of ideas in both scholarship and the classroom, and a stable, high quality professional staff loyal to the institution.

Given the value of tenure in the university community, it is important to ensure that the criteria used to confer tenure are up-to-date, clear and applied fairly. This report proceeds from the assumption that periodic reviews of tenure policies and practices are valuable for all involved. Three current trends in the mission and role of the public university have prompted the review and recommendations offered here: (1) calls for increased engagement with the public, (2) new forms of scholarly work, and (3) increased scholarly activity across disciplinary lines.

With these trends in mind, UNC-CH Provost Bernadette Gray-Little requested that a faculty Task Force investigate and make recommendations by May 2009. The Provost also asked the Task Force to consider the possibility of extending the probationary period before the tenure decision, and enhanced mentoring of faculty, as two mechanisms that might improve tenure and promotion processes and decisions in the future.

Process

A steering committee of ten faculty, chaired by Professor Jane D. Brown, was convened in November 2008. Two members of the steering committee were named as co-convenors for each of five subcommittees comprised of 38 faculty from across campus who were selected based on interest and expertise (see committee rosters in Appendix A). Each of the subcommittees met three or four times in Spring 2009, with oversight by the steering committee. Each subcommittee, with the assistance of William Nolan, a recent UNC-CH graduate, examined existing evidence as well as protocols at peer institutions. The subcommittees also looked at the practices and protocols of academic units at UNC-CH that have addressed similar issues, and consulted with experts on campus. Drafts of the report and recommendations were discussed with: _____

Overall, the Task Force recommends that:

1. Faculty engagement with the public outside the halls of academia should be valued and evaluated during the tenure and promotion process.
2. New forms of scholarly work and communication made possible primarily by digital technology should be included in evaluations of scholarship.
3. Work across disciplinary lines should be supported. Expectations of all involved parties should be articulated at the outset, and referred to as tenure and promotion decisions are made.
4. The expectations and procedures of the tenure and promotion process should be as clear as possible, and tenure and promotion policies and procedures reviewed and revised at the unit level at least every five years.
5. Mentoring of faculty should be seen as an important responsibility of chairs and senior faculty.

More specific recommendations are listed here. The rationale for each of the recommendations is provided in the body of the report.

1. Define, value, and evaluate faculty engagement with the public

- a. The University's personnel reviews, at departmental, school and university levels, should include consideration of the faculty member's interactions and engagement with communities outside the traditional scholarly community.
- b. In the Provost's document, "Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review," the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of the *chair's letter* should be revised to reflect the importance of faculty engagement to the University's mission.
- c. In the Provost's document, "Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review," the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of *faculty CVs* should designate a section of the CV for listing engaged faculty work that does not fit in already established categories.
- d. A survey should be conducted of faculty to determine the nature and extent of ongoing engaged scholarship and engaged activities at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.
- e. In the Provost's document, "Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review," the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of the *chair's letter* and the *faculty CV's* should be revised to clarify the importance and different types of work that count as *service*.

2. Recognize new forms of scholarly work and communication

- a. All academic units that grant tenure and promotion should revise their personnel documents to include guidelines for the evaluation of new forms of scholarly communication.
- b. Evaluations from scholarly peers are certainly appropriate, but units should also consider feedback from users, students, and other audiences for the new forms of scholarly work.
- c. In the Provost's document, "Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review," the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of *faculty CVs* should designate a section of the CV for listing scholarly work that does not fit in already established categories.
- d. In the Provost's document, "Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review," the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of the *chair's letter* should be revised to instruct the chair to address what measures have been taken to assess the faculty member's scholarly communications that fall outside of traditional, peer-reviewed publications.

3. Value interdisciplinary work

- a. All academic units that grant tenure and promotion should revise their personnel documents to ensure that they explicitly address questions of interdisciplinary research and teaching.
- b. In the Provost's document, "Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review," the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of the *chair's letter* should be revised to instruct the chair to address the faculty member's interdisciplinary work as a contribution to one of the core values of the University's mission.
- c. Academic units involved in joint appointments should be *required* by the Provost to develop a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) that is provided to the faculty member and filed with the Provost.
- d. Grounds for dissolving a faculty member's joint appointment in a particular unit should be articulated, and procedures to initiate the dissolution should be established by the Provost's office.
- e. The Provost's office should specify procedures for situations in which one unit denies tenure and/or promotion and the second unit approves.

- f. All joint appointments should be for fixed periods, ideally between appointment steps.
- g. New external letters should no longer be *required* for sequential joint appointments.
- h. (see report for other specific recommendations to facilitate interdisciplinary work and joint appointments)

4. Establish clear and realistic expectations for tenure and promotion

- a. All academic units that grant tenure and promotion should be directed to make periodic reviews of their hiring, promotion and tenure policies to ensure clear and reasonable expectations. These reviews should occur no less frequently than every 5 years.
- b. An extended tenure clock “option” should be exercised only on the initiative of the faculty member and by mutual agreement with the institution. Procedures for engaging this option should be specified and overseen by the Provost’s office.
- c. Data relating to tenure-track positions should be collected on a university-wide basis. These data should be collected to learn departmental and school approval rates for tenure and promotion as well as the manners in which tenure clocks begin, end and are extended or paused.

5. Ensure good mentoring of faculty

- a. All academic units that grant tenure and promotion should have a mentorship plan in place that is filed with the Provost’s office.
- b. Mentorship training for promotion and tenure should be provided to all department chairs and school deans.
- c. Senior faculty should be provided regular university-wide workshops on mentoring.
- d. Mentorship should be part of the post-tenure review evaluation. In the Provost’s document, “Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review,” the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of the *chair’s letter* should be revised to instruct the chair to address the faculty member’s mentorship as part of his or her service to the academic unit or larger university community.
- e. Mentoring awards should be instituted by the University, College, Schools and departments.

- f. A regular survey of junior faculty (perhaps in their fourth or fifth years) should be conducted to determine the state of mentorship on campus as well as the mentorship needs and expectations of junior faculty.

Note: Two important issues arose in our discussions but were beyond our purview: (1) the terminology of the categories of faculty employment (such as “professors of the practice” and “adjunct faculty”) and, (2) career trajectories of fixed-term faculty in the University.

We strongly recommend a more thorough examination of, and an attempt to regularize terminology practices across the university. We were also pleased to hear of the work of a Task Force in the College of Arts and Sciences that is focused on the issue of non-tenure track faculty. As the balance of tenured /tenure-track faculty to fixed-term faculty shifts, the university ought to develop career paths and clear expectations for rewarding these important members of our faculty.

DRAFT

1. Define, Value and Evaluate Faculty Engagement with the Public

Recommendation: The University's personnel reviews should include consideration of the faculty member's interactions and engagements with communities outside the traditional scholarly community.

Engagement is a core component of the University's mission. Such engagement has become important for the professional work of faculty in most units of the University, and exemplifies part of our commitment to the principles of the UNC Tomorrow initiative. Faculty engagement is also consistent with a national trend at peer institutions in higher education.

The meaning of faculty engagement

Faculty "engagement" refers to scholarly, creative or pedagogical activities for the public good, directed toward persons and groups outside the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Such activities (in the form of research, teaching, and/or service) develop as collaborative interactions that respond to short and long-term societal needs. Engagement serves people in our state, nation, or the wider world through a continuum of academically informed activities. Although the spectrum of engaged scholarship and activities varies among disciplines, "engagement" is planned and carried out by University and community partners, and includes:

- *Engaged scholarship:* Scholarly efforts to expand multifaceted intellectual endeavor with a commitment to public practices and public consequences.
- *Engaged activities:* Artistic, critical, scientific and humanistic work that influences, enriches and improves the lives of people in the community.

Guidelines for evaluating faculty engagement in tenure and promotion reviews

Engagement will inevitably take different forms in the various schools, divisions and departments of the University. As a Research I University, UNC-CH will continue to require original scholarly research as a key criterion for tenure and promotion in rank. Faculty engagement can take the form of "engaged scholarship" and other "engaged activities."

- To satisfy the criterion for scholarly research, "engaged scholarship" must meet a rigorous standard such as external funding, peer reviewed publications and evaluations. As is the current practice for other kinds of scholarship, each school, department, and discipline should determine the criteria for evaluating the excellence of engaged scholarship.
- To define the criterion for "engaged activities," each school, department, and discipline should develop its own descriptions and examples of academically-informed activities that constitute faculty engagement (For

example, but not limited to: the Apples courses, outreach to public schools and adult audiences re: North Carolina history, medicine and other academically-informed topics).

In establishing these criteria each unit should refer to the “The meaning of faculty engagement” paragraph above. The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Public Service and Engagement is also available to work with schools and departments in developing guidelines and criteria for engagement. See: <http://www.unc.edu/cps/>; <http://www.unc.edu/cps/learn-more-about-engagement.php>.

Engagement should be recognized as a significant component of a faculty member’s professional achievements. Engagement may play a more prominent role at different phases of a faculty member’s career, and it should be supported at any phase if it is consistent with a unit’s practices and priorities. However, faculty whose work does not include engaged activities should not be penalized or denied tenure or promotion on those grounds.

Guidelines for reporting faculty engagement

- Engagement may be embedded in one or more aspects of a faculty member’s work-- research, teaching, and service. Faculty should be asked to describe their “engaged scholarship” and “engaged activities” in their promotion/tenure statements about research, teaching, and service.
- “Engaged scholarship” and “engaged activities” should be included as categories within the dossiers faculty prepare for personnel reviews, similar to traditional categories such as “scholarly publications,” “course syllabi,” and “teaching evaluations.” Descriptions of engaged activities must be demonstrated with specific examples and should be evaluated with the usual attention to significance and influence in a professional field.
- In addition to the categories of Research, Teaching and Service, the Provost’s document, “Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review” should provide the department chair with the opportunity to assess the faculty member’s engagement as a fourth category of their academic work.
- In the Provost’s document, “Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review,” the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of *faculty CVs* should designate a section of the CV for listing engaged faculty work that does not fit in already established categories.

Recommendation: The “service category” in the Provost’s current guidelines for tenure and promotion should be revised. This kind of service typically differs from “engaged activities” with communities outside the academic world, although there can be some overlap. Categories that might be included:

- Service on departmental committees;
- Service on school and university committees;
- Service in professional scholarly organizations;
- Service for scholarly journals and presses;
- Service for international/national scholarly associations.

Recommendation: A survey should be conducted of faculty to determine the nature and extent of ongoing engaged scholarship and engaged activities at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

2. Recognize New Forms of Scholarly Publication and Communication

The forms in which scholars do and disseminate their work will continue to multiply. It would be fruitless to try to list all the forms currently available and even more pointless to try to predict ones that will become available in the future. But the plurality of forms is already a fact.

Our overriding recommendation is that the university, in all its academic units, should demonstrate an openness to new forms of scholarly communication and to a diversity of activities and styles. Each unit should amend tenure and promotion procedures to make such openness a fact in faculty evaluation. The tenure and promotion process should encourage innovative and ambitious work, not place roadblocks in its way. Academic units need to develop appropriate evaluation procedures for such work so that it is fully recognized as legitimate by the University.

Recommendations:

- A place on the standard format for *faculty CVs* should be clearly designated for listing scholarly work that does not fit in already established categories. The Provost’s document “Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review,” should be revised accordingly.
- Chair’s letters for Tenure and Promotion decisions should indicate what measures have been taken to assess the faculty member’s scholarly communications that do not fit in already established categories. The Provost’s document “Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review,” should be revised accordingly.

Academic units should recognize that evaluation of new forms of scholarship often will come after publication. Such work can come in the form of databases, blogs, web sites, and other forms that do not resemble traditional journal articles or monographs. Digitally published work is not always peer-reviewed prior to publication and dissemination. Academic units should also recognize that faculty often must devote considerable amounts of time to mastering new technologies and methods.

The importance of identifying and gathering responses from appropriate reviewers is increased when new forms of scholarly communication are included in the dossier. The faculty member him- or herself must accept some of the burden of (a) deciding which work s/he wants evaluated in a tenure or promotion case (most likely in consultation with the chair), and (b) providing a clear account in the research statement of the goals and significance of such work in terms of audience and contribution to the faculty member's overall career.

Recommendation: Evaluations from scholarly peers are certainly appropriate, but departments and units should also consider feedback from users, students, and other audiences for the work in question.

In developing tenure and promotion procedures for evaluating new forms of scholarly communication, departments and units may find it useful to pay heed to some of the following non-traditional features of some digital work:

- the frequency and depth of collaboration, even in fields where collaboration has not been the norm;
- a process-orientation that may, in the most extreme cases, never provide a final product since results are open to constant revision—and often revision by multiple users;
- expansion beyond the standard audience of one's academic peers, with the accompanying different strategies for presentation that entails;
- using multiple forms (audio, video, blogs) to supplement or disseminate work that has been, traditionally, written; and
- the creation of enabling software or databases that requires skill and time but which is more oriented to facilitating the work of others than in producing finished conclusions of one's own.

In sum, digitally disseminated work is often collaborative and, even in some cases, does not result in a stable, unchanging, product. Who gets to designate what counts as a "finished" product? How are such products to be archived? Are only works that aspire to some kind of permanence to be counted? Crucial issues of accessibility also arise here. How public must work be to count as scholarship? Answers to such questions have to be developed as departments and units create metrics by which to evaluate this work. For some examples of how other institutions are evaluating digital scholarship see the following sites from the University of Virginia and Mount Holyoke:

- http://artsandsciences.virginia.edu/dean/facultyemployment/evaluating_digital_sc_holarship.html
- <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/committees/facappoint/guidelines.shtml>

The university also needs to understand that more collaborative work is going to be done in the humanities and social sciences, while such work is already the rule in the natural and health sciences. In evaluating collaborative work, it is crucial that the faculty member be asked for a transparent account of his or her contribution to specific projects, while it is also reasonable for the department or unit to solicit from the faculty member's collaborating colleagues similar information. Since types of collaboration vary widely, tenure and promotion procedures need to explicitly outline the responsibility on both sides—the faculty member's and the department's—for providing and/or gathering all information that will assure that the faculty member's work is understood and recognized.

Conclusion

The key is flexibility. New forms of scholarly communication will continue to emerge and those new forms will in some cases change the goals, methods, and effects of scholarship. We need tenure and promotion guidelines that encourage, rather than discourage, innovation and experimentation. We also must be flexible about how such encouragement, accompanied by fair and effective evaluation, is reflected in the tenure and promotion procedures of different academic units. But the mandate to all units to be open to new scholarly forms should be loud and clear.

3. Value Interdisciplinary Work

The pursuit of interdisciplinary scholarship is an issue of intellectual freedom. Policies, procedures, or academic cultures that discourage or interfere with the pursuit of interdisciplinary scholarship are inconsistent with the University's mission. Not only does interdisciplinary work provide opportunities for creating knowledge in new and unanticipated ways, University support for new work that crosses boundaries and brings together perspectives from new and traditional disciplines can be a factor in the recruitment and retention of the very best scholars and teachers. Interdisciplinary work often represents cutting-edge scholarship and teaching, but in UNC's department-oriented promotion and tenure process, questions often arise about how to evaluate interdisciplinary work.

We considered a variety of topics relating to opportunities and barriers to interdisciplinary work and compiled best practices for ensuring fair evaluation of that work in the tenure and promotion process. Although the issues are relevant to promotion from Associate Professor to Professor, we focused on promotion to Associate Professor with tenure, because Assistant Professors are most vulnerable to factors that can influence their ability to pursue interdisciplinary scholarship freely. We also recognized that some faculty members are hired explicitly to engage in interdisciplinary work, which is typically manifested by joint appointments between academic units or by hiring within

an inherently interdisciplinary unit. In other cases, a faculty member's work can evolve to become more interdisciplinary over time.

Procedures and policies cannot by themselves create a welcoming environment for interdisciplinary scholars in traditional disciplinary departments. But much more can be done to provide structures to regularize expectations for faculty members whose work touches more than one department, or whose work presents a profile that is unusual in the department in which he/she finds a tenure home. The Office of the Provost can make it clear how departments and schools should report on the evaluation of interdisciplinary work as a part of the tenure and promotion process.

We have identified several points at which interdisciplinary work might be better recognized and make recommendations to improve policies and procedures to at least accommodate, if not promote, interdisciplinary scholarship at the University.

A. Departmental personnel documents

An academic unit's personnel documents typically state the unit's expectations for faculty excellence at different ranks, and they serve as a guideline for newly hired faculty looking ahead to tenure and promotion.

Recommendations:

- Each academic unit should review its personnel documents to ensure that they explicitly address questions of interdisciplinary research and teaching. Questions such as how review committees should be constituted in the case of jointly appointed faculty and in the case of interdisciplinary faculty whose work might involve publication and evaluation in venues different from those typically seen in that unit should be answered.
- For fields in which scholarly publications with multiple authors are atypical, the personnel documents should also address how multi-authored works are to be evaluated. For academic units in which scholarly publications are in different formats (e.g., some faculty members publish books and others journal articles), personnel documents should also address how these different formats will be evaluated. The continued emergence of new forms of scholarly communication as discussed above compounds the need for academic units to consider how interdisciplinary work will be evaluated.

B. Joint appointments

Joint appointments are common at the University and are a primary mechanism of promoting interdisciplinary scholarship. There are benefits to both the academic unit(s) making a joint appointment and the faculty member. Benefits to an academic unit include:

- funding, if specifically provided for joint hiring;
- addition of a new perspective to the unit's culture;
- and the ability to advertise that the faculty member is part of the unit

Benefits of joint appointments to the faculty member include:

- exposure to potential collaborators in multiple units;
- access to graduate students in multiple units;
- enhanced professional stature;
- and improved research funding opportunities.

Joint appointments can be made between several types of units, which has implications for the conduct of promotion and tenure decisions:

- between two academic departments; promotion and tenure decisions require votes in the two departments;
- between an academic department and a Curriculum, Institute or Center that does not have faculty lines; promotion and tenure decisions require a vote only in the home department;
- and between an academic department and a Curriculum, Institute or Center that *does* have faculty lines; promotion and tenure decisions require votes in two units.

There are two types of joint appointments: those that are made at the hiring stage, typically in response to the availability of special funding for that purpose (a “mutual-hiring” joint appointment), and those made at the request of a faculty member already holding an academic appointment (a “sequential” joint appointment). Mutual-hiring joint appointments typically involve a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the appointing units. The MOU typically spells out the expectations for teaching and service, the salary split between departments, and the method for constituting review committees at the time of consideration for tenure and for promotion. Sequential joint appointments require completion of a “Recommendation of Joint Appointment” form that accompanies other paperwork provided to the Office of the Provost; this form requests minimal (albeit important) information and is signed by the heads of each appointing unit.

Situations have arisen in which joint appointments are no longer tenable for one of the originally appointing units, the faculty member, or both. One example is the denial of tenure in one unit and approval in another. Denial of tenure in one unit is particularly egregious when the joint unit would have approved of tenure but does not hold faculty lines. Another example is when a jointly appointed faculty member becomes uninvolved in the joint unit. If the faculty member had teaching responsibilities in that unit, its teaching needs might go unmet; this is a particular problem for Curricula that do not hold faculty lines.

Finally, current University policy requires that, for sequential joint appointments, new external letters be obtained by the jointly appointing unit. This requirement places an undue administrative burden on the jointly appointing unit if it is satisfied with the letters that had been obtained in the most recent evaluation by the primary unit; it also can place a burden on the external reviewers, some of whom might be asked to re-write letters they had written only recently.

Recommendations:

- Grounds for dissolving a faculty member's joint appointment in a particular unit should be articulated (e.g., because that faculty member no longer contributes to the unit). Procedures to initiate the dissolution should also be established. We recommend that these grounds and procedures be articulated at the level of the Provost.
- Specific procedures should be established for situations in which one unit denies tenure and/or promotion and the second unit approves (or would approve if it could). For example, if the joint appointment is between units that both hold faculty lines, the joint appointment could be dissolved, leaving the candidate with promotion and tenure in the unit that made the affirmative decision. We recommend that general guidelines for these procedures be established at the level of the Provost.
- Academic units involved in joint appointments, whether a mutual-hiring appointment or a sequential joint appointment, should be *required* to develop an MOU. The currently required form for sequential joint appointments is a poor substitute for a well-conceived MOU. If adopted, this requirement would be implemented by placing appropriate language in the University's EPA Personnel Guidelines. It would be most helpful for the guidelines to provide a template for MOUs, but at a minimum the guidelines should identify the issues that should be included as a minimum in every MOU:
 - expectations for teaching in each unit and how teaching needs will be met if the jointly appointed faculty member is no longer able or willing to teach in one of the units.
 - expectations for service in each unit
 - the salary split between units
 - procedures for making recommendations in salary adjustments
 - provision of space
 - provision of administrative support
 - administration of grants and contracts
 - split of F&A funds and patent/royalty income
 - description of the process that will be followed in the promotion and tenure proceedings; if one unit is the primary tenure home, the role of the joint unit in the evaluation process should be specified.
 - description of procedure to be followed if the joint appointment is dissolved at the end of its term, either by denial of tenure in one unit, at the request of the head of one unit (e.g., because of lack of participation of the faculty member), or at the request of the faculty member
- A copy of the MOU should be provided to the faculty member.
- All joint appointments should be for fixed periods, ideally between appointment steps (i.e., first and second probationary terms, promotion to Associate Professor, promotion to Professor, and at five-year intervals corresponding to post-tenure reviews). This provides an opportunity to exit a joint appointment that is no longer tenable.

- New external letters should no longer be *required* for sequential joint appointments. Such letters can be sought by the jointly appointing unit as desired for its own evaluation.

C. Interdisciplinary faculty in a single academic unit

Faculty are at times hired into an academic unit in response to an advertisement for a position intended to be interdisciplinary, and in other cases a faculty member might be interested in exploring interdisciplinary activities after being hired. An interdisciplinary faculty member in a tenure-track position in a unit that does not have a history of interdisciplinary scholarship can be vulnerable to either overt or subliminal messages that discourage such scholarship. In the worst cases, tenure could be denied because the department's faculty who vote on tenure do not value the interdisciplinary work or do not know how to evaluate it. In fields that would require a considerable investment of a faculty member's time to explore interdisciplinary opportunities, the relatively short tenure clock itself could be a significant barrier to pursuing such opportunities.

Recommendations:

- If a faculty member is hired in response to an advertised position that is intended to be interdisciplinary, a copy of the position advertisement should become part of that faculty member's permanent file and should accompany all documents that are part of the promotion and tenure evaluation process.
- An MOU should be developed between the unit and the interdisciplinary faculty member. The MOU should specify the process that will be followed in promotion and tenure evaluations, including details relevant to the particular appointment that would not otherwise be addressed in the unit's personnel documents.
- Consideration should be given to creating an opportunity for an untenured faculty member to request a one-year leave to explore an interdisciplinary opportunity. If granted, the leave period should not count towards the tenure clock.

D. Mentoring and yearly evaluation

In addition to the concerns that face every faculty member with respect to mentoring (including clear expectations in the personnel document and clear communication from chairs in the yearly evaluation meetings), interdisciplinary scholars in particular would benefit from regular and sustained attention to the ways their interdisciplinary work is understood in their home departments.

Recommendations:

- For a faculty member hired into an interdisciplinary position, the MOU that formed the basis for the initial agreement should be reviewed in annual evaluations conducted by the unit head with the faculty member. An opportunity should be provided to update or revise the MOU by mutual agreement.
- The nature of an interdisciplinary faculty member's scholarly work should be considered during faculty meetings in which the progress of junior faculty members is discussed.

E. The promotion and tenure process

The promotion and tenure evaluation process itself can work against an interdisciplinary faculty member in the absence of explicit policies to take account of the interdisciplinary scholarship. For this reason, tenure and promotion committees for interdisciplinary faculty should contain members who collectively are able to judge all aspects of the faculty member's work. Sometimes this might involve appointment of members from outside the department and/or coordination with a review committee in the joint or adjunct department (the MOU should spell this out). To be fair to the interdisciplinary faculty member, an effort should be made to secure outside evaluators from the major disciplines on which the faculty member's work touches, and procedures should take into account both the interdisciplinary interests the faculty member had when hired and those that might have developed during the course of his/her career at UNC.

Current University policy requires that letters sent to external reviewers ask the reviewer to determine if the candidate would be likely to receive an equivalent promotion and/or tenure at his or her institution. This question is inherently unfair to an interdisciplinary faculty member being reviewed by an external reviewer in a traditional disciplinary department that does not itself value interdisciplinary work or which is different from the candidate's own disciplinary background. At best, the reviewer ignores the question, but more often the reviewer is compelled to provide a lengthy explanation of the answer.

Our subcommittee also discussed the potential value of including Associate Professors in the promotion and tenure decision. Associate Professors are likely to be closer to the culture from which interdisciplinarity evolved, and therefore are more likely to value interdisciplinarity scholarship. Although the University's policies currently allow Associate Professors to participate in decisions regarding promotion to Associate Professor with tenure, this policy does not appear to be well-known around the University.

Recommendations:

- Academic units that make promotion and tenure decisions for interdisciplinary faculty should be required to show how the review process has taken account of interdisciplinary scholarship, such as in the constitution of the review committee and/or in the choice of external reviewers.
- To hold a unit accountable for the first two recommendations, a faculty member should have the right to declare that his or her work is interdisciplinary and formally request that the promotion and tenure evaluation process take this into account.
- Careful consideration should be given to the selection of external reviewers to ensure that the breadth of an interdisciplinary scholar's work is represented. In some cases it might be advisable to seek more than the minimum number of reviewers.
- The University should no longer require that letters sent to external reviewers ask the reviewer to determine if the candidate would be likely to receive an equivalent promotion at his or her institution.

- The unit serving as primary tenure home should recognize the contributions of a faculty member to other academic units (e.g., teaching, membership on thesis or dissertation committees) in the promotion and tenure evaluation.
- The policy allowing Associate Professors to participate in decisions regarding promotion to Associate Professor with tenure should be made explicit in the EPA Personnel Guidelines and other documents that are consulted by unit heads and administrative staff responsible for making personnel decisions.
- In the Provost's document, "Dossier: Format for Tenure Track or Tenured Faculty Review," the section that provides guidelines for the formatting of the chair's letter should be revised to instruct the chair to address, if relevant, the faculty member's interdisciplinary work as a contribution to the core values of the University's mission.

4. Establish Clear and Realistic Expectations for Tenure and Promotion

Conferral of tenure represents a significant commitment of resources by the institution. As a consequence, the institution has a responsibility to institute policies and procedures that result in sound tenure decisions. As part of the goal of ensuring good tenure decisions, it is important that the tenure process is transparent, and that procedures are put in place to monitor tenure processes and decisions. On both counts (transparency and monitoring), current practices could be improved.

A. Tenure Guidelines

Recommendation: Individual schools and departments should be directed to make periodic reviews of their hiring, promotion and tenure policies to ensure clear and reasonable expectations. These reviews should occur no less frequently than every five years.

In setting these policies, the requirements and expectations for promotion and tenure should be as clear as possible. There should be sufficient periodic review of tenure-track faculty members to tell them how they are progressing. Stated policies should be adhered to consistently and thoroughly. Appointment letters should state clearly the meaning of tenure conferred, and clearly spell out the implications of contingency clauses.¹

B. Monitoring

It is difficult to obtain data on the results of current tenure practices and processes at UNC-CH. Without such data, it is difficult to judge the success of these practices. For example, we were unable to obtain data on the current or past success/fail rates of tenure cases, or the use of extensions to the tenure clock by faculty members.

¹ We noted that the most recent COACHE Survey suggested that untenured faculty perceive that the current tenure standards at UNC-CH as unclear and perhaps unfair.

Recommendation: Data relating to tenure-track positions should be collected on a university-wide basis. In particular, we recommend:

- a. Consistent data collection and aggregation.** Ensuring consistent collection of data in a longitudinal study of tenure outcomes, including the hiring of new faculty, the exit of faculty members for different reasons, the use of leaves of absence and other extensions of the tenure clock, the frequency of lawsuits over tenure decisions, and the outcomes of successful and unsuccessful probationary and tenure reviews, at all levels.
- b. Survey of current untenured faculty.** Conducting a survey of currently untenured tenure-track faculty members (as in the COACHE survey) regarding their perception of the clarity of the tenure process and expectations for tenure; whether they have engaged in strategies to extend the probationary period, or are interested in doing so; and their understanding of the benefits and responsibilities of tenure. We also recommend including questions about faculty members' perceptions of 'quality of life' as related to the tenure process.

C. Tenure clock

The data that we were able to collect, while incomplete, suggest that the proportion of tenure-track faculty at UNC, compared to fixed-term faculty, is declining over time. Changes in the composition of the faculty, and in particular the proportions of fixed-term and tenure-track faculty, is part of a national trend in the decrease in the proportion of tenure-track positions over the last 30 years, as documented by the AAUP. At UNC, the current proportion is approximately 40% fixed-term faculty and 60% tenure-track. Nationally, tenure-track positions have declined from 59% to 31%.

In addition to the decline in the proportion of tenure-track faculty, the meaning of tenure may itself be changing in some units; in particular, the use of contingency clauses has increased. Both of these changes likely reflect the resource constraints that the conferral of tenure places on the institution. Given resource constraints, it is important that the institution consider whether changes in the process, and in particular the tenure clock, may give some units the ability to make better tenure decisions. As mentioned, we were unable to get good data on the use of family leave and extension of instructor status as methods of extending the tenure clock. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that in some academic units faculty members have adopted such strategies to extend the tenure clock, indicating that there are pressures within the system that need to be addressed.

Flexibility is important. The suitability of the current tenure clock may vary from unit to unit since research programs and measures of success differ substantially across areas. In the School of Medicine, for instance, the insistence on obtaining prestigious R01 grants from the NIH as a prerequisite for tenure has run into the problem of the increasing

scarcity of such grants. The more competitive grant landscape has contributed to an interest in some medical schools to extend the tenure clock.²

Increasing the standard probationary period, while giving individual units the ability to confer tenure inside that period, is an option that could be valuable to both the institution and the faculty member. The criticism of greater flexibility in the tenure clock is that an administratively decreed change in the probationary period may give the institution the ability to exploit the faculty member by keeping her or him in limbo for a longer period. But it appears that the institution is already finding ways to keep faculty in (limited) limbo through the use of contingency clauses and perhaps through substituting fixed-term faculty for tenure-track faculty.

Recommendation: An extended tenure clock “option” should be exercised only on the initiative of the faculty member and by mutual agreement with the institution.

Such a solution may assuage the concern about exploitation. While we have seen some limited data indicating slight variations in the length of probationary periods at peer universities, we suggest that the creation of a new policy should have as its goal a better, more informed tenure process leading to better tenure decisions. Individual units should first reconsider how realistic their expectations are for determining tenure within the current university probationary period. If the school or department can make the case that better tenure decisions can be made by offering their faculty members a longer tenure clock, for reasons of competition with peer institutions, decisions regarding grant funding, lengthy setup times for research projects, or publication lag-times, the provost should consider how to accommodate such a proposal, without necessarily affecting any change in the way most units successfully apply the standard probationary period for tenure decisions.³

5. Ensure good mentoring

Mentoring is central to both individual and institutional success. Good mentorship is a hallmark of prosperous academic units. The department chair or school dean is responsible for ensuring mentoring is available and for establishing an environment conducive to and supportive of mentorship. Senior faculty members have a responsibility to support and advise their junior colleagues. Junior faculty should be proactive in developing mentoring relationships and are responsible for taking advantage of the mentorship opportunities available to them.

Mentoring should be designed to meet the goals of the mentee. Mentoring requires a trusting, confidential relationship built on mutual respect, so optimal mentoring relationships are voluntarily established rather than dictated. The best mentoring

² See the November 4, 2008, letter on this subject from Eugene Orringer, Executive Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs at the School of Medicine, to Provost Bernadette Gray-Little.

³ See, for example, the differing school and university tenure clocks at the University of Michigan, described in “Guidelines regarding University of Michigan Policies that Govern Time to Tenure Review (‘The Tenure Clock’) and Related Matters” (April 20, 2005).

relationship creates a safe space in which the junior faculty member can openly and honestly discuss challenges, problems and concerns, and be assured of confidentiality as well as advice and support. It may be desirable for an early-career faculty to have multiple mentors. One mentor might assist a junior faculty member develop an independent academic identity, but a different mentor might be better prepared to help the junior faculty member balance professional and personal demands.

While we are aware of many instances of exemplary mentoring at Carolina, our sense is that mentoring remains sporadic and variable across campus. Our hope is that this report will serve to stimulate a campus-wide discussion of and commitment to mentorship. Toward that end, we (1) discuss the functions of a mentor; (2) discuss mentorship best practices; and (3) make recommendations that should enhance mentoring on the Carolina campus.

1. The Functions of a Mentor

(a) Developing an academic identity and a body of scholarship

While it is the unit head's responsibility to inform junior faculty members of the steps, deadlines and paperwork required in the promotion and tenure process and to clearly convey the unit's performance expectations, a mentor goes beyond this basic advising function to assist the junior faculty member in developing an academic identity and a coherent research, teaching, engagement and service agenda. In other words, a mentor helps a junior faculty member learn how to weave his or her research, teaching, engagement and service into a coherent whole, thereby identifying a clear path to promotion and tenure.

(b) Introduction to the institutional culture

Every organization has both formal and informal structures, written and unwritten standards and expectations, which together comprise the institutional culture. Formal promotion and tenure structures include the written tenure regulations, the number of external letters required, and the process through which teaching is evaluated. Informal promotion and tenure structures include such things as what activities dominate the tenure decision, the weight placed on external letters, and whether it is wise to chair committees before tenure. Mentors can be invaluable in helping junior faculty understand the informal structures within the University and their academic units. Indeed, an appreciation of the institutional culture and the ethos that guide and define acceptable behavior and actions both within the University and across the profession can be the difference between promotion and termination.

Any successful senior faculty member who has some sense of the institution and involvement in the profession can help junior faculty understand the informal structures. The most important factor is the experienced professor's willingness to spend time with the junior faculty member. Chairs and deans can play a role in the process, but sometimes the unit head's outlooks and preferences are an integral part of the institutional culture

with which the junior faculty member must become familiar, and a different voice is needed to provide perspective. Since junior faculty must be able to work with the chair or dean to be successful, other senior faculty, perhaps even faculty from outside the department or school, may be better situated to help assistant professors understand internal issues.

(c) Networking and establishing linkages

Exposure to positive, career-building opportunities at the right time is crucial to success in academia. Guiding young faculty to the correct individuals and resources, both locally and nationally, is an important service that can help ensure a successful career start for a faculty member. In addition to promoting participation in disciplinary meetings and activities, a mentor can encourage and facilitate interdisciplinary involvement when the benefits for tenure and promotion are clear.

2. Mentorship Best Practices

The chair or dean has the responsibility to ensure that all junior faculty develop clear plans leading to promotion and tenure.

- The chair or dean should provide all junior faculty, in writing, with a timetable showing when reviews will occur and what steps the junior faculty member must take to succeed at each review stage.
- The chair or dean should convey to the junior faculty member, in writing, what the department's or school's expectations are for a successful third-year and tenure-promotion review in the faculty member's discipline or field.
- The chair or dean is responsible for ensuring all paperwork is complete and deadlines met.

The chair or dean is responsible for creating an organizational culture that encourages junior and senior faculty to develop mentoring relationships and rewards effective mentorship. Each department or school should have a mentoring plan. Among the elements that a mentorship plan might include are:

- Informal opportunities for junior and senior faculty members to interact with and get to know one another, such as coffees and lunches, to pave the way for development of mentoring relationships.
- A faculty research venue in which both junior and senior faculty members present their work in progress and share research ideas.
- Writing groups among the faculty, small groups of faculty members who meet regularly to share what they have written, critique one another's work, offer each other advice, guidance and encouragement.
- Periodic teaching colloquia at which faculty are brought together to discuss issues related to effective teaching and/or explore new ideas and teaching techniques.
- A plan for regular peer teaching reviews of junior faculty by senior faculty.
- Junior faculty development workshops, addressing such issues as how to get funding, write grant proposals, select an appropriate journal or publisher for your work, obtain invitations to speak at conferences, etc.

- Sessions for senior faculty that focus on how to be a mentor, what constitutes successful mentorship, the value of mentorship for junior faculty members, senior faculty members, and the institution.
- Recognition of and rewards for mentoring, e.g., recognizing mentoring as important departmental service, establishment of a mentor-of-the-year award, recognition of a mentor's contributions when acknowledging the success of a junior faculty member (similar to the way in which dissertation advisors are recognized).

Ultimately the success of a mentoring relationship depends on the commitment of the individuals involved. A good mentor does some or all of the following:

- Meet regularly with his or her mentee.
- Act as an advocate for the mentee.
- Assist the mentee in developing a professional plan of action.
- Provide advice and support on grant-writing and publication.
- Introduce the mentee to colleagues both on and off campus.
- Invite the mentee to collaborate on projects that might result in publication and/or grants or paves the way for the mentee to collaborate with others.
- Provide teaching advice and guidance, volunteer to observe the mentee's classes and provide feedback, share teaching materials, invite the mentee to serve on graduate and/or undergraduate honors committees.
- Make sure the mentee is aware of the many resources available on campus, such as the Center for Faculty Excellence, the Provost's Website with critical promotion and tenure information, junior faculty development grants, etc.
- Recommend the mentee for activities that will help him or her establish a national reputation, such as speaking at conferences and participating in symposia workshops.
- Help the mentee determine which types of service activities are best to undertake at each stage of his or her career.
- Assist the mentee in identifying colleagues at other institutions who might eventually serve as external reviewers for promotion and/or tenure.
- Provide advice on the composition and compilation of the mentee's promotion and tenure dossier.

3. Recommendations

A. Learning more about current practices

The first step in improving the mentoring environment on campus should be to gather data about the current state of mentoring. The results of the 2005-07 COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) survey of job satisfaction among junior faculty, indicated room for improvement in the quality and availability of mentoring on the UNC campus. A new survey of assistant professors in their fourth and/or fifth years — more detailed and targeted than COACHE survey — would be useful in ascertaining not only what the mentoring environment is on campus but also

what the mentoring expectations and needs of junior faculty are. Alternative sources of mentoring information might come from focus groups or interviews with junior faculty.

Recommendation:

A survey of junior faculty (perhaps those in their fourth or fifth year) should be conducted to determine what is the mentorship environment on campus as well as to identify the mentoring needs and expectations of junior faculty.

B. Improving mentorship

Junior faculty rely on their department chairs and school deans for information and guidance about tenure and promotion procedures, and the department chair's letter is one of the most important parts of the tenure dossier. Consequently, unit heads should receive guidance on tenure and promotion practices and procedures and how to present effective promotion and tenure dossiers. In addition, chairs and deans should receive guidance on how to create a culture of mentorship within their units, develop a mentorship plan and reward mentorship. The existence and effectiveness of a departmental mentorship plan should be part of the chair's regular evaluation.

Effective mentoring requires widespread faculty commitment and effort. Consequently, campus-wide mentorship awareness and training are needed. The Center of Faculty Excellence may be the appropriate entity to undertake this effort. Workshops, panel discussions, written materials, and online training and discussion boards are just a few of the vehicles that might be used. Deans and chairs should be encouraged to devote a portion of the first faculty meeting of each academic year to a discussion of mentorship. New faculty orientation, at both the university and unit level, should include discussion of the need for and functions of mentoring. New faculty must be urged to seek out and develop strong relationships with mentors of their choice.

Recommendations:

- Regular workshops on how to prepare a promotion and tenure package and how to encourage and ensure mentoring of junior faculty should be provided for all department chairs and school deans.
- Each academic unit should have a mentorship plan in place.
- Campus-wide mentorship programs and workshops for senior faculty should be provided.

C. Rewarding mentoring

Mentorship should be recognized as an important aspect of departmental service. Tenured faculty should view mentoring as part of their service obligation. Mechanisms for recognizing and awarding outstanding mentoring should also be created. The Faculty

Mentoring Award, given since 2006 by the Carolina Women's Leadership Council, is a great start but needs to be supplemented by other awards and recognitions, both on a campus and departmental or school level. Just as all Ph.D. graduates in a given year are invited to nominate their doctoral advisors for the Graduate School's Faculty Award for Excellence in Doctoral Mentoring, all faculty members tenured during an academic year could be invited to nominate senior faculty who mentored them for recognition.

Recommendations:

- Faculty members should list their mentoring activities as part of their departmental or school service.
- Mentoring awards should be instituted by the University, College, schools and departments.

DRAFT

Roster

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