

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR TENURE REVIEW  
FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TRACK FACULTY  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

**OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

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## PREFACE

*Several different groups and committees that have recently looked at faculty issues at the University of Michigan have recognized that promotion and tenure processes in the various schools and colleges differ widely both in procedural details and in the degree to which their practices support the ideals of transparency and accountability. In the recent reaccreditation of the University by the North Central Association, the panel of consultant/evaluators commented on our lack of institutional consistency in tenure and promotion processes and the degree to which we are an outlier among our peer institutions.*

*Following is a proposed set of institutional guiding principles. These principles have been drawn from the recommendations of several recent faculty committees, primarily the Tenure Committee Report endorsed by Senate Assembly on January 24, 2000, and the institutional self-study Working Group on Faculty prepared for the 2000 NCA reaccreditation.<sup>1</sup> While recognizing the diversity of academic and educational cultures in this complex institution and the need for individual schools and colleges to adopt promotion and tenure guidelines that work for them, it is also important that we have an institution-wide set of norms and expectations.*

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<sup>1</sup> The complete text of these documents is available on the following Web sites:  
<http://www.umich.edu/~sacua/tenure-jan00.htm> and <http://www.umich.edu/%7Eprovost/slfstudy/sess/index.html>

## **PREMISE**

*The awarding of tenure to a member of the faculty is one of the most important decisions that the University makes. This decision serves multiple purposes. Since the quality and the strength of an academic institution depend largely on the composition of its tenured faculty, the decision to award tenure must take into consideration the long-term goal of building institutional quality. However, each specific decision affects an individual, to whom we have a responsibility to be fair and accountable. The following principles are intended to encourage an institutional process that will provide a balance between these dual goals.*

*Tenure is an earned privilege, not a right. The faculty member who is a candidate for tenure has a responsibility to develop professionally, to become a valued member of the academic community, to strive for excellence in research and scholarship, teaching and service, and to seek advice and counsel from the senior faculty members and academic leadership of their unit.*

*The fundamental premise underlying the guiding principles outlined below is that a multi-level review sequence, which embraces the open participation of the candidate, strengthens the integrity of the promotion and tenure review process and builds institutional commitment at each step, without creating an adversarial process.*

## **STATEMENT OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Clear and comprehensive, written procedures and standards for promotion and tenure evaluation.**

- Develop a clear set of written procedures with specific deadlines and lists of responsibilities of the candidate.
- Develop a clear set of written procedures with specific deadlines and lists of responsibilities of each relevant department/program/ academic unit.
- Ensure that these written procedures are made available to all new appointees on arrival and at several stages during their pre-tenure years.
- Develop standards and criteria for assessing the quality of scholarship and teaching, with special attention to the unique features of interdisciplinary/collaborative activities.
- In cases of joint appointments, rationalize and coordinate the procedures and standards for promotion among the multiple units of appointment.

### **2. Appropriate and multi-faceted opportunities for faculty to receive on-going guidance and feedback on their progress toward achieving promotion/tenure.**

- Develop mechanisms to ensure that faculty have a clear understanding of expectations and that this information is communicated early and repeatedly.
- Provide the opportunity at appropriate intervals for periodic review and discussion of an individual's progress.
- For pre-tenure faculty, conduct a more formal review at an intermediate point in the probationary period (typically after the end of the third year), and provide oral and written feedback that includes candid evaluations and constructive suggestions. Ensure that the message conveyed is an accurate, balanced and complete assessment of the candidate's record of accomplishments and the areas that need improvement.
- Recognize that individuals have unique needs and that they require and respond best to different types of mentoring arrangements. Provide a range of mentoring programs that recognize this diversity of needs.
- Provide advice and guidance to the candidate in preparing the materials they provide for the promotion casebook.

### **3. Transparency in the promotion/tenure review process.**

- Allow the candidate to suggest names of external reviewers and names of those whom they would prefer not be asked to provide letters of recommendation.

- At an appropriate stage in the review process, according to the practices of the appointing academic unit(s), provide the candidate a summary of the essential points in the casebook on which the recommendation will be based, and allow the candidate an opportunity to submit a written response.

#### **4. A multi-layered promotion/tenure review process.**

- Establish specific process and procedures used to review promotion casebooks, in accord with the nature of the academic disciplines in the school or college.
- If the school or college includes departments or programs, review recommendations for promotion (both positive and negative) at multiple levels.
- For candidates with joint appointments, ensure that the initial review committee has representatives from each appointing unit. In the original offer letter to the candidate, provide detailed outlines of the joint review process, the expectations of each appointing unit, and the criteria to be used for the evaluation.
- In cases in which a decision not to promote would result in a notice of termination of appointment (i.e., a negative tenure decision), forward the promotion casebook and the recommendations of each evaluating level to the Provost/EVPAA.
- In reviewing both negative and positive recommendations for tenure and promotion, the Provost/EVPAA may accept the recommendation or send the case back to the school or college for reconsideration. The Provost/EVPAA and/or President may decline to endorse a positive recommendation from the school or college after thorough discussion with the dean. In cases in which the final recommendation from the school or college is negative, a positive recommendation to the Regents by the President and Provost/EVPAA would occur only after thorough discussion with the dean and only in exceptional circumstances.

#### **5. Explicit safeguards to ensure consistency in the evaluation process at each level of review for all individuals.**

- Ensure that senior faculty, department chairs, and administrators, who are responsible for carrying out these policies, know that they must act in good faith and they must conform to institutional and unit requirements.
- Provide mechanisms to encourage senior faculty, department chairs, and administrators, who are responsible for carrying out these policies, to regularly engage in a dialogue about their respective roles and responsibilities.

For example, an annual meeting to review institutional issues can accomplish a great deal to ensure compliance and consistency.

- The Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for ensuring the academic integrity of the promotion and tenure process at the institutional level.