

Report of the A & S Senate Promotion and Tenure Committee
September 26, 2011
Presented by Ned Landsman, Chair PTC
(Report prepared by Gary Matthews, Chair 2010-2011)

2010-2011 Committee:

- Gary Matthews, Chair – Neurobiology and Behavior (Natural Sciences & Mathematics)
- Vitaly Citovsky – Biochemistry (Natural Sciences & Mathematics)
- Izabela Kalinowska-Blackwood – Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies (Humanities and Fine Arts)
- Ned Landsman – History (Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- Eduardo Mendieta – Philosophy (Humanities and Fine Arts)
- Suparna Rajaram – Psychology (Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- Ayesha Ramachandran – English – non-tenured member

Organization and functioning:

The committee met regularly during the 2010-2011 academic year, with excellent attendance. All committee members are dedicated and hard working. They take their position seriously and behave in a professional, ethical, and confidential manner. The committee functions very well as a group, demonstrating cohesion and respect for all members. The committee also considered two cases during the 2011 summer session. Summer meetings are frequently necessary to deal with pressing issues, such as new hires whose appointments begin in September.

Philosophy and process:

The PTC plays an important role in the Arts and Sciences Senate. The PTC represents the faculty in providing independent assessment of cases of tenure and promotion and makes advisory recommendations to the Dean or other appropriate administrative officer. The faculty members who make up the committee are critical to its functioning and success, and it is important to continue to elect strong members to serve on the committee.

The PTC has maintained a strong level of continuity in process with prior years. We continue to adhere strictly to the Policies of the Board of Trustees, and to focus decisions on scholarship, teaching, and service. We recognize that every case is different and make certain that we take into account diversity in scholarly and creative achievements across departments, schools, and programs.

In making decisions, the main question that we focus on is whether a candidate's scholarly or creative activity is having an impact in the field of scholarship. Our ability to assess this hinges on the clarity with which this is presented in the dossier, and we rely heavily on the views expressed in outside letters and in the chair's letter. A few comments about each are in order. Regarding outside letters, those that come from individuals who do not have a close professional relationship with the candidate are essential, because they are likely to be least biased by personal connections. The minimum number of such independent letters is five, but it is strongly

advisable to solicit substantially more than that number. Regarding the chair's letter, it is critical that it express and discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of the case, particularly those pointed out by outside letter writers or in the reviews of teaching. Providing a clear rationale for the departmental vote is also extremely important. If there were "no" votes or abstentions, it is important to clarify the reasons for such votes. Chair's letters that simply reiterate or quote from outside letters, or that present a run-down of the faculty discussion of the case are least helpful to the PTC and can be a disservice to the candidate.

Regarding the assessment of scholarly ability for promotion to Full Professor, the PTC feels that promotion should not be awarded just for significant administrative or other nonscholarly accomplishments, but should be awarded only to those who show true excellence and a strong reputation in creative and scholarly activities. However, teaching and service do matter, and weight is placed on the extent to which candidates for full professor have shown initiative in contributing to the future of their department and their field.

Caseload and actions:

From September 2010 through June 2011, the PTC acted on 26 cases. Of these, 15 were cases for promotion from assistant professor to associate professor with tenure, 1 was a case of tenure only for an individual already hired as full professor without tenure, 5 were cases for promotion from associate professor to full professor, and 5 were new appointments with tenure (1 at associate professor and 4 at full professor). Five of the cases were from SoMAS (note that the CAS Dean does not act on these cases).

Excluding new appointments, the departments/programs voted in favor of promotion and/or tenure in 20 of the 21 cases. The PTC disagreed with the departmental recommendation in three instances, including the one case in which the departmental recommendation was negative. The PTC voted in favor of appointment at senior rank with tenure for all five of the new appointments. Therefore, the PTC agreed with the departmental recommendation in 23 of 26 cases.

Recommendations by the Dean and the Provost agreed with departmental recommendations in all instances (with one exception involving withdrawal of a file, described below), and in 25/26 cases, the President followed the Provost's recommendation in making the final decision. Notification of the President's action on a case considered by the PTC in June has not yet been received at this writing. In two of the three instances where the PTC voted contrary to the departmental recommendation, the President ultimately decided in line with the department's recommendation, as did the Dean and Provost. In the third case in which the PTC did not agree with the departmental recommendation, the file was withdrawn prior to being forwarded to the President.

Other Activities:

1. The guidelines governing promotion and tenure procedures were revised to clarify the process to be followed for resubmission of files in the year following a negative outcome. The revised guidelines were approved by the Senate in April, 2011 and are now posted at the Senate website.

2. Electronic submission of PTC files has been available for one year, and in 2010-2011, seven files were submitted at least partly electronically. These included all 5 of the SoMAS files, which were submitted in their entirety as PDF portfolios. However, most departments continue to submit files only on paper, and the PTC would like senators to encourage their departments to provide as much of each file as possible in electronic form. At the very least, the candidate's biographical section should be submitted as a PDF, which is trivial to generate using the editable Word template available at the Senate website.

3. A Lotus Notes mail-in database was set up for secure access by PTC members to materials submitted electronically. The address for submission to the database is CAS PTC within Notes, or CAS_PTC@notes.cc.sunysb.edu if accessed by an alternative e-mail system.