



# **PROMOTION TO THE RANK OF ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR WITH TENURE**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



**UtahStateUniversity**

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# PROMOTION TO THE RANK OF ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR WITH TENURE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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# INTRODUCTION



Promotion to the rank of associate professor<sup>1</sup> with tenure is an important milestone for university faculty and is an honor that is earned by evidence of a strong and compelling record of professional accomplishment. Universities benefit by the tenure and promotion of worthy faculty because such scholars become the backbone of any institution of higher education and are the catalyst behind creating a stimulating intellectual and academic environment. Moreover, outstanding resident scholars enhance the reputation of the institution.

Even though Utah State University defines the criteria and procedures for tenure and promotion at this institution in Section 400 of the University Policy Manual (often referred to on campus as the “faculty code”), probationary faculty members often have questions about the tenure and promotion process that go beyond that document. Compiled here is a list of frequently asked questions about tenure and promotion with brief answers to help probationary faculty and others (e.g., members of our Tenure Advisory Committees) develop a better understanding of this vitally important process at Utah State University. The content of the answers to the most frequently asked questions in this document is in no manner legally binding, nor should this document be construed as a substitute for the official university policy language found in Section 400 of the University Policy Manual. Answers, where appropriate, are supported by relevant sections of faculty code and reflect consistent best practices in the opinion of the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost at Utah State University.

I hope that you find this document helpful in clarifying some of the nuances of the promotion and tenure process at Utah State University. A document such as this must be a living and dynamic text. Therefore, I welcome your feedback and reactions so that we can continue to sharpen and improve our communications about these important proceedings. While this document has been enhanced and improved by the input of many colleagues who reviewed and commented on earlier drafts, any remaining errors are entirely the responsibility of the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

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*Vice Provost*  
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1. Throughout this document, the use of the phrase “associate professor” is understood to encompass the equivalent ranks of “associate librarian,” “associate extension professor” and “associate extension agent.”

## CRITERIA & EXPECTATIONS



### *1. What are the fundamental expectations for a candidate to achieve tenure and promotion at Utah State University?*

The faculty of Utah State University is a diverse and heterogeneous group of professional academicians for which there can be no “cookie-cutter” approach to tenure and promotion or a list of specific requirements that would apply uniformly to everyone. For example, the measures of successful productivity of a faculty member in the basic biological sciences will be very different from a faculty member in the performing or creative arts. Similarly, the expectations for a librarian are different from that of a mathematician or a psychologist from that of a soil scientist. Because of this intellectual diversity, the tenure advisory committee, the department head, and the dean are key sources of information regarding the level of professional achievement necessary in a disciplinary area to achieve tenure and promotion. At the same time, valuable insights into university-wide perspectives on standards for promotion and tenure can be gained through consultations with past members of the central promotion and tenure committee as well as central administrators who serve on that body (e.g., the Executive Vice President and Provost; the Vice President for Research; the Vice President for Extension and Agriculture; and the Vice Provost and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies).

Ideally, pre-tenure probationary faculty members have set their academic ambitions high and are committed to the goal of becoming respected experts and national leaders among their peers. If they achieve that goal, their record of performance is likely to exceed perceived minimums for tenure and promotion. Fundamentally, Section 400 of the Utah State University Policies Manual (commonly referred to as “the faculty code”) states that tenure and promotion are awarded depending on the performance of the faculty member in the context of his or her role statement. In addition, the code states that the faculty member must demonstrate excellence in his or her area of emphasis and effectiveness in all other areas of his or her assignment. Specifically, Section 405.2.2 of the code states:

*Although tenured and tenure-eligible faculty members are expected to carry out the major university functions of teaching, research/creative endeavor, extension, and service, individual emphasis will vary within and among academic departments as described in each faculty member’s role statement. Each candidate must present evidence of effectiveness in all of the professional services which he or she performs, and must present evidence of excellence in the major emphasis of his or her role statement. (Underlining added for emphasis)*

## 2. What is the general outline of the process that is employed at USU to review a candidate for consideration for promotion to the rank of associate professor with tenure?

Consistent with our peer institutions, the internal promotion and tenure process at Utah State University (USU) involves multiple levels of review by a wide range of university colleagues before a final decision is made by the Board of Trustees. At USU, five internal levels of peer review are completed and recommendations from each level are recorded. While the reviews are completed independently, they are interconnected in that the recommendation of each level is added to the materials reviewed by subsequent levels.

The five levels of review occur in the following sequence:

1. Tenure advisory committee
2. Department head
3. Deans
4. Central promotion and tenure committee
5. President



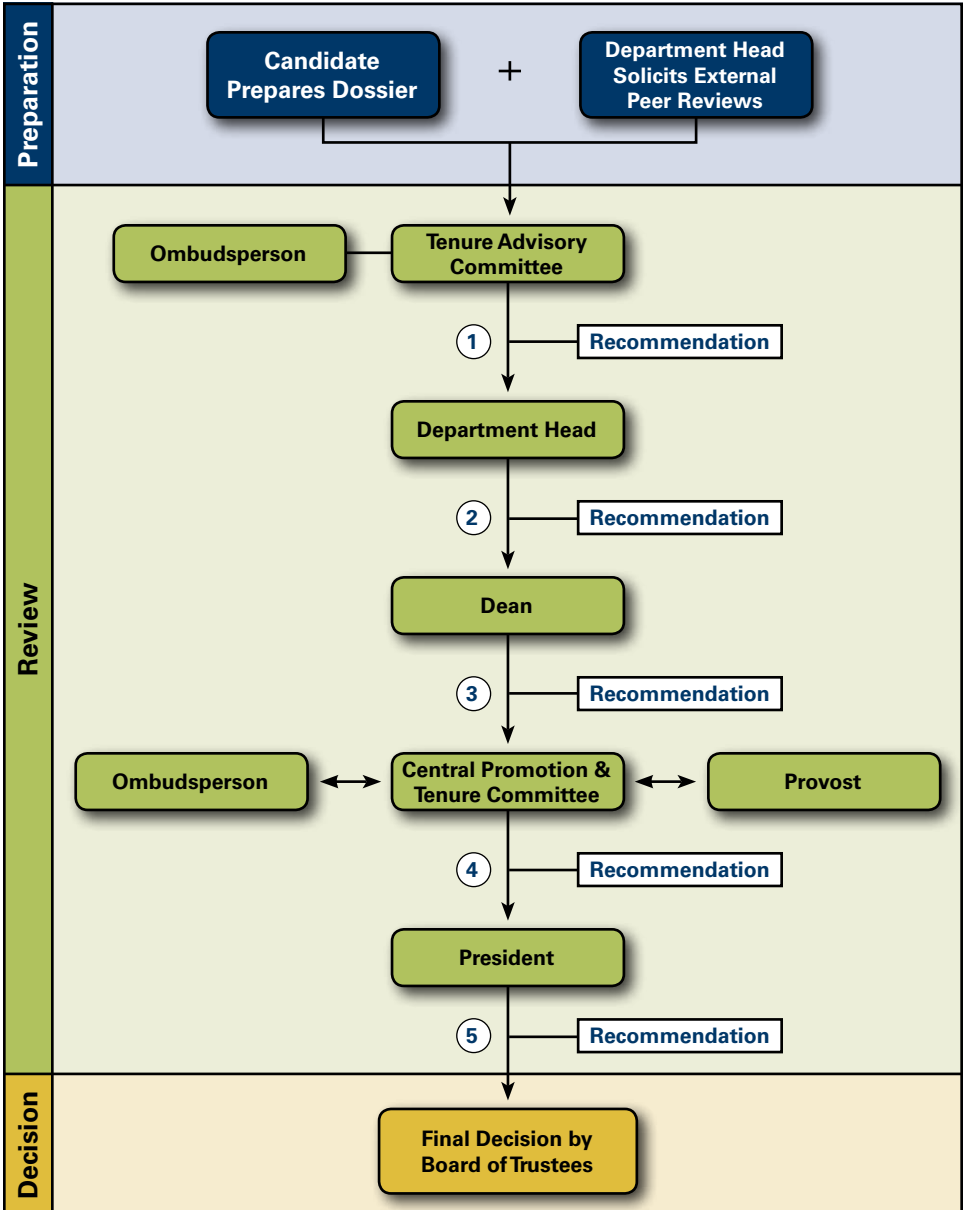
The materials that are reviewed by these multiple persons comprise a dossier compiled by the candidate and a series of external reviews that are solicited by the department head. Starting with the department head review, the recommendations of the previous levels of review are all included in the materials. For example, by the time that the dossier is reviewed by the central promotion and tenure committee, it includes the original dossier compiled by the candidate, the external peer reviews solicited by the department head, plus the written recommendations of the tenure advisory committee, the department head and the dean.



*Graph 1 on the following page is a visual approximation of the promotion and tenure process at USU.*

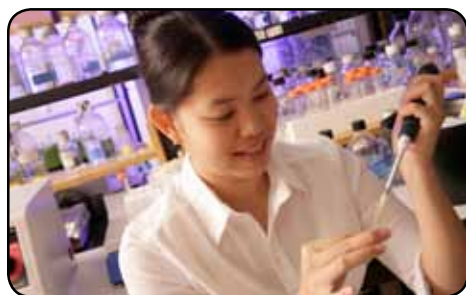
Graph 1

### Visual Approximation of the Tenure and Promotion Process at Utah State University



### 3. Is it reasonable to expect that all levels of review in the promotion and tenure process will agree?

No. At Utah State University, as in the vast majority of institutions of higher education in the United States, tenure and promotion procedures are multi-leveled and involve professional colleagues from many different parts of the institution. Each of the professionals involved in the review brings their own experience, background and judgment to the task and, therefore, it is not uncommon to experience differences of opinion. The goal of these multiple reviews is to solicit the independent input and perspective of many different colleagues to determine if there is a consensus (not unanimity) of professional opinion as to whether a candidate is deserving of tenure and promotion. In the same way that individual professionals may have divergent opinions of a particular example of scholarly work or a creative performance, it is conceivable that individuals at various levels of the tenure and promotion review may judge the performance of the candidate differently. Of course, what a candidate is striving for is a demonstrable record of professional achievement during their probationary period that is so compelling that it elicits positive endorsements from a wide range of individuals at multiple levels of the tenure and promotion review process.



### 4. My role statement includes percentages for each area of professional service, e.g., teaching, research, service, extension, librarianship and/or service. What do these percentages mean?

Department heads are required by code to prepare a role statement for each faculty member and must include percentages for each area or domain of professional service. Specifically, the text in Section 405.6.1 states:

*“A role statement will be prepared by the department head or supervisor, agreed upon between the department head or supervisor and the faculty member at the time he or she accepts an appointment, and approved by the director (where applicable) or dean. The role statement shall include percentages for each area of professional service (404.1.2). These percentages will define the relative weight to be given to performance in each of the different areas of professional service.”* (Underlining added for emphasis)

As defined in the code, the percentages reflect the “relative weight” that is assigned to the performance of the candidate in each of the domains of professional service. The percentages provide the faculty member, as well as those responsible for evaluating the faculty member, with a relative weighting schema to judge the performance of the candidate. The domains of responsibility that are assigned higher percentages are afforded more relative weight when evaluators review the performance of the candidate. The domain with the highest percentage is considered the major area of emphasis and the documentation of performance in that area of professional service is expected to achieve the standard of excellence.

The percentages are NOT an indicator of the amount of time or effort that candidates should be devoting to each of the areas of responsibility. Certainly there is a correlation

among time, effort and relative weight. But, the relative weight is more related to outcomes (scholarly productivity) than it is to input (time and effort).

Several examples may help to illustrate this relationship. First, consider the case of two students required to write a term paper that is weighted as 50% of the final grade for a class. One student may be able to write a quality term paper in a relatively short amount of time; while another student might have to spend much more time to produce a term paper of equal or comparable quality. The final grade of the two students is not a reflection of how much time and effort each devoted to the project; rather, their final grade is weighted as a function of the quality of the paper (the product of their scholarship). Similarly, one faculty member may be able to create quality professional products in less time than it takes another faculty member. But again, the evaluation of the scholarly output of a professor is not measured by the amount of time and effort they have expended but, rather, by the scholarly productivity they have produced relative to the weight assigned in his or her role statement to each area of professional service.

In the final decision regarding promotion to the rank of associate professor, performance in the various domains of responsibility will be weighted according to the percentages assigned to each. Again, the code (405.2.2) clearly states that the expectation for a faculty member's performance in the domain that is the area of emphasis must reach the level of excellence and their performance in all other areas must reach, at least, the standard of effective.

### 5. Can changes be made to the role statement of a pre-tenure probationary faculty member?

Yes, the faculty code allows for revisions to a faculty member's role statement. The specific language in the code for this is found in 405.6.1:

*“Any subsequent revision may be initiated by either the faculty member or the department head or supervisor. Any revision of the role statement should be mutually agreed to by the faculty member and department head or supervisor and approved by the director (where applicable) or dean. If agreement cannot be reached, individual department, college, and/or University appeal or hearing procedures should be used to resolve disagreements before transmitting revised role statements to Promotion and Tenure committees. At the time of the appointment a copy of the role statement, and any later revisions, will be provided to the faculty member, the department head or supervisor, director (where applicable), the dean, the Provost, and the members of the tenure and/or promotion advisory committee.”*

It is not unusual to change the percentages of evaluative weights of professional services in the role statement in light of major changes in the responsibilities and professional activities of a faculty member. For example, a faculty member might assume greater research or scholarship responsibility as a consequence of a major grant award and it would be reasonable that a shift be made to reflect greater weight in research or scholarship than was previously indicated. It's also possible that significant circumstances warrant a change in the faculty member's major area from research or scholarship, to teaching, or vice versa. Whatever kind of change to a faculty member's role statement is sought, though, it must be mutually agreed to by the candidate and the department head, approved by the dean, and the provost must be notified.



**6. If I provide evidence of excellence in my major area of emphasis, will I be granted promotion to the rank of associate professor with tenure?**

Not necessarily. The code states clearly that: “Each candidate must present evidence of effectiveness in all of the professional services which he or she performs, and must present evidence of excellence in the major emphasis of his or her role statement” (Section 405.2.2). Thus, while a candidate’s record of performance may be judged excellent in their major area of emphasis, they will be denied tenure if their performance in another domain of performance does not reach the standard of effectiveness.

Two other perspectives should be shared in this context. First, “effectiveness” is not a low or inconsequential standard. To be considered effective, a candidate must provide compelling evidence that their performance reflects professional standards in their discipline and is consistent with the performance of other professionals at their stage of development. Second, campus

folklore can sometimes suggest to candidates that if their performance in research is excellent, nothing else matters. As the code suggests, and as practice documents, this is simply not true. Each faculty member at Utah State has a role statement that describes their domains of responsibility and the evaluation weight (percentage) that is associated with each domain. When dossiers are reviewed, the candidate will be expected to present evidence of *“effectiveness in all of the professional services which he or she performs, and must present evidence of excellence in the major emphasis of his or her role statement.”* Anything short of those expectations will be deemed insufficient for promotion to the rank of associate professor with tenure. Do not be distracted by “hallway talk” or “rumors;” rather, understand the faculty code and set as your goal achieving and documenting the standards defined therein.

Your role statement is an excellent general articulation and overview of the most significant accomplishments that will be used to judge the evidence of your performance.

### 7. Can a candidate be considered for early promotion and tenure?

While the faculty code contains no language that specifically addresses “early” consideration for promotion and tenure, there are provisions in the faculty code that allow a department head, dean, provost or president to recommend the granting of tenure at a time other than the mandatory sixth-year tenure and promotion review. Having said that, “early” tenure and promotion does not occur very frequently and as one might expect, the case for this unusual action would need to be exceptional. There is also no text in the faculty code that suggests that failure to be awarded early tenure and promotion would prevent the candidate from seeking tenure and promotion again on the regular schedule of the sixth year of probationary service. Since an early promotion or tenure recommendation is the prerogative of administrators (and not the initiative of the candidate), a candidate could only be considered for early promotion and tenure if their department head or dean recommended such an action or if the provost or president

would recommend that an early review be initiated. If an administrator wanted to propose an early consideration of promotion and tenure, the faculty code indicates that such a proposal would be referred to the tenure advisory committee and the normal review process would begin.

*Section 405.7.3 (1) Administrative nominations for tenure.*

*The department head or supervisor, director (where applicable), dean, vice president, Provost or President may propose the granting of tenure. Such a proposal shall be referred to the tenure advisory committee for consideration and all procedures of policy 405.6 and 405.7.2 shall be followed with the exception that the timetable therein may be waived.*

*Section 405.11.5 Exceptional Procedures*

*The department head or supervisor, director (where applicable), dean, or vice president for Extension, Provost or President may propose the granting of a promotion. Such a proposal shall be referred to the promotion advisory committee for consideration.*





## 8. What is the relative importance of the third year review?

Every annual evaluation of a pre-tenure probationary faculty member is important. However, according to faculty code, special significance is applied to the review that takes place in the third year of service at Utah State University. Whereas annual reviews of pre-tenure probationary faculty members in the first, second, fourth, and fifth years is performed at a minimum by the tenure advisory committee and the department head as described in the code, the third year review, like the sixth year tenure and promotion review, involves the dean, provost, and president. Also, similar to the sixth year tenure and promotion review, candidates prepare a dossier for the third year review that contains appropriate materials for a thorough assessment of their performance to date; except that letters from external peer reviewers are not required. This review process involves multiple levels, takes place in the fall semester of the candidate's third year, and the code requires that the president notify candidates of non-renewal of appointment by December 10 of that year. If a notice of nonrenewal is issued by December 10, the candidate completes his or her third year of service.

## 9. Can a candidate be granted tenure without being promoted to the rank of associate professor?

This very rarely happens in modern, research-oriented universities like Utah State University. It would take extraordinary circumstances and a very compelling argument to grant tenure without promotion to associate professor as described in the following code language:

*405.1.3 Except for extraordinary instances, when specific and persuasive justification is provided, tenure will not be awarded to faculty members prior to their advancement to the rank of associate professor, associate librarian, Extension associate professor, and associate Extension agent. Exceptions may be made in order to fulfill the mission of the University, but require petition to and approval by the President.*

If a committee or administrator would recommend that an assistant professor be tenured but not promoted or promoted and not tenured, the burden would be on them to make the argument for the special circumstances that merit a separation of tenure from promotion.



**10. If a faculty member has an administrative assignment and responsibilities, where does that count in the consideration for promotion and tenure?**

First, it would be relatively rare for a pre-tenure probationary faculty member to be assigned significant administrative responsibilities. If however, that should be the case, the faculty code (405.1.3) is quite clear that for those individuals in administrative positions “Appointments to all administrative positions are without significance for the achievement of tenure.”

Sometimes, a faculty member may have an instructional assignment that involves oversight of some teaching component in their department, e.g. director of all laboratory sections for a course. While some may consider this type of responsibility to be “administrative,” it would be more appropriately placed into the teaching realm of professional service. Similarly, while major externally funded research projects certainly may include some administrative tasks and oversight, those responsibilities are more appropriately placed in the research realm of professional service.



**11. What actions can a candidate take to ensure that they have a good sense of the progress they are making toward promotion and tenure?**

Honest and forthright communication among the pre-tenure probationary faculty member and his or her tenure advisory committee, and the candidate and his or her department head, are critical in ensuring that the faculty member understands the progress they are making toward tenure and promotion. In fact, the faculty code requires the faculty member to meet annually with both of these sources of feedback (see below).

In addition to regular meetings with their tenure advisory committee and their department head, it would be prudent for probationary faculty members to also meet at least annually with their dean, although this is not required by the faculty code. This is because the dean is responsible for renewing a probationary faculty member’s contract each and every year and will ultimately be responsible for making a recommendation regarding promotion and tenure. Thus, it is important that the candidate elicit and understand the perspective of the dean on his or her progress toward tenure.

Pertinent sections of the code regarding this matter include:

*405.7.1(2) Evaluation and recommendation by the tenure advisory committee.*

*After the initial meeting, the tenure advisory committee shall meet with the candidate at least annually and review the candidate’s file and supplementary material to evaluate progress toward tenure. An ombudsperson must be present at all meetings of the tenure advisory committee in accordance with policy 405.6.5. The committee will submit, each year, a written*



report to the department head or supervisor. This report shall be submitted by December 1 for first-year and second-year appointees, by October 26 for third-year appointees, and by December 1 during subsequent years (see Table 405.1.4). Except in the year in which the tenure decision must be made, the report shall include an evaluation of the candidate's progress toward tenure and identify areas for improvement in the candidate's performance as necessary. The report shall also contain a recommendation regarding the renewal or nonrenewal of the appointment (405.6.2(1); 407.7). Copies of all reports signed by the committee members shall be provided to the candidate, the department head, or supervisor and the director (where applicable), the dean, or vice president. A copy shall be placed in the candidate's file.

405.7.1.(3) Evaluation and recommendation by the department head or supervisor.

The department head or supervisor shall, after receiving the tenure advisory committee report, meet annually with the candidate to review

fulfillment of the role statement and the role assignment and evaluate progress toward tenure. For meetings held between either the department head or supervisor and the candidate to review the committee's evaluation and recommendation, the candidate or department head or supervisor may request the presence of an ombudsperson in accordance with policy 405.6.5. Subsequently, the department head or supervisor shall submit in writing to the director (where applicable), dean, or associate or assistant vice president of extension an evaluation of the candidate indicating where satisfactory progress is being made and where improvement is needed. The department head or supervisor may recommend the nonrenewal of the appointment of the faculty member. This report shall be submitted by December 18 for first-year and second-year appointees, by November 10 for third-year appointees, and by December 18 during subsequent years. Copies will be provided to the candidate and the tenure advisory committee. A copy shall be placed in the candidate's file.

**12. Can collegiality be a factor in tenure review?**

If collegiality is to be considered as a factor in the promotion and tenure process, it must be in the context of its impact on the candidate's performance of his or her role statement. For example, a candidate's lack of collegiality, defined as the ability to collaborate and cooperate constructively, might impact teaching if it impinged on his or her ability to work with colleagues in advising students or in preparing them for prerequisites for more advanced courses, or in preparing them for group activities required of the academic discipline. Or, it could have an impact on research and scholarship when it impinges on the candidate's ability to work collaboratively with colleagues in developing research or creative activities, or in creating grant proposals or organizing conferences. Or, it could impact appropriate Extension programming as a result of limiting opportunities to develop and provide research-based information. Or, it could impact service when it prevents departmental committees or programs from functioning as they should. But, in all cases, for collegiality to be a factor in a tenure review, it must be linked with performance in the domains of responsibility described in the role statement of the candidate.



**13. Can a faculty member be terminated prior to the completion of his or her pre-tenure probationary period?**

Yes, tenure-eligible faculty members may be recommended for non-renewal at any time during their pre-tenure probationary period. Specifically, the text of the code states:

*407.7.2 Non-renewal prior to the end of the pre-tenure probationary period for tenure-eligible faculty is an administrative decision of the department head, director, dean, or vice president and must be approved by the Provost and President. In making a decision regarding non-renewal, the department head, director, dean, or vice president is to take into consideration the most current and all previous reports from the Tenure/Promotion Committee when making a decision regarding non-renewal (Policy 405.6.2(1)).*

*407.7.3 For tenure-eligible faculty appointments, non-renewal must first be preceded by the following minimum notice (Table 407.7.3): (a) not later than March 1 for first-year and second-year appointees; (b) not later than December 15 for third-year appointees; (c) no later than January 29 prior to the issuance of a terminal year appointment for fourth-year and fifth-year appointees, except in the case of denial of tenure (see Policy 407.7.1), where minimum notice shall be not later than April 15.*

# THE TENURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE



## 14. What is the role and responsibility of the Tenure Advisory Committee?

The university policy describing the Tenure Advisory Committee (TAC) was modified during the Academic Year 2009-2010 by the Faculty Senate and their recommended changes were approved by the USU Board of Trustees. The “faculty code” now makes it clear that: *“The role and responsibility of the Tenure Advisory Committee is to provide an annual evaluation of a faculty member’s progress toward tenure and promotion.”* (Section 405.6.2 (1)). That section of the code further indicates that each year of the probationary period, *“The TAC is responsible for providing feedback to the faculty member with regard to progress toward tenure and promotion, and shall recommend (a) to renew the appointment or (b) not to renew the appointment (407.2.1(5)).”*

[NOTE: The recommendation of the TAC is not the final decision but, rather, the initial step in the review process. See Question #13, for further details regarding termination during the probationary period.]

In the final year of the probationary period, the role of the Tenure Advisory Committee remains focused on evaluation, but the recommendations of the committee then focus on the decision to award promotion and tenure. Specifically, Section 405.6.2 (1) states:

*In the final year of the probationary period, the committee shall recommend (a) awarding promotion and tenure or (b) denying promotion and tenure (407.2.2 (5)).*

In unusual circumstances, the Tenure Advisory Committee may be asked to consider a proposal by an administrator for an “early tenure” decision on a candidate (see Question #7). If that were to occur, the faculty code describes the role of the TAC in the following manner (Section 405.6.2 (1)):

*At any time during the probationary period, the committee can be asked to render judgement on an administrative proposal to grant promotion and tenure in accordance with Section 405.7.3 (1) of the Faculty Code. Under those circumstances, the TAC shall recommend (a) to award promotion and tenure or (b) to continue the probationary period.*



**15. Who creates the tenure advisory committee and can there be changes made to it?**

The department head has the primary responsibility to create and maintain the tenure advisory committee in consultation with others (including the pre-tenure probationary faculty member). While probationary faculty members will be consulted in all changes to the composition of their tenure advisory committee, they do not have the authority to dictate precisely who serves on their tenure advisory committee. Specific language from Section 405.6.2 (1) regarding the composition of the tenure advisory committee states:

*For each new tenure-eligible faculty member who is appointed, the faculty member's department head or supervisor shall, in consultation with the faculty member and with the approval of the director (where applicable), dean, or vice president appoint a tenure advisory committee. All tenure advisory committees will be appointed during the faculty member's first semester of service. The committee shall consist of at least five members, at least one of whom is from outside the academic unit. The department head or supervisor will designate the chair of the committee.*

The appointing authority for each committee shall fill vacancies on the committee as they occur. In consultation with the faculty member and the director (where applicable), dean, or vice president, the department head or supervisor may replace members of the tenure advisory committee. The candidate may request replacement of committee members subject to the approval of the department head or supervisor, the director (where applicable), and the dean, or vice president.

**16. Do all of the members of the tenure advisory committee have to be present each time the committee meets?**

Yes, Section 405.7.1.1 of the faculty code states:

*All tenure advisory committee members shall participate interactively in all committee meetings, either physically or by voice conferencing, at the appointed date and time.*

The code makes no provision for temporary substitute members on tenure advisory committees. All changes to the composition of a tenure advisory committee must comply with the policies and procedures described in the previous question (see Question #15). If a member of a tenure advisory committee is on sabbatical or leave and is unable, or unwilling, to participate by voice or video conferencing, the candidate or the chair of the tenure advisory committee should notify the department head so that a replacement can be assigned following the policies and procedures identified in the code. If a member of the tenure advisory committee cannot be present for a specific meeting, alternative arrangements will have to be made (i.e., the meeting rescheduled or arrangements made for the person to join the meeting via voice conferencing).



**17. When and how often should an ombudsperson attend meetings of the tenure advisory committee or meetings with the department head?**

The faculty code is quite explicit that an ombudsperson must be present at all meetings between a faculty member and their tenure advisory committee. In contrast, in meetings between a faculty member and their department head where the committee's evaluation and recommendation are being discussed, an ombudsperson "may" be present if either party requests it. The relevant sections of the code state:

*Section 405.6.2 states: An ombudsperson must be present at all meetings of a promotion committee or a tenure committee.*

*Ombudspersons must receive adequate advance notice of a committee meeting from the chairperson.*

*Section 405.7.1 states: For meetings held between either the department head or supervisor and the candidate to review the committee's evaluation and recommendation, the candidate or department head or supervisor may request the presence of an ombudsperson....*

*Section 405.7.1 states: Ombudspersons must be present in person, with the exception of meetings for field based Extension faculty, when they may participate by voice conferencing.*



## EXTENSION OF THE PRE-TENURE PROBATIONARY PERIOD



### 18. What is the mechanism for extending the pre-tenure probationary period?

The faculty code provides a means for extending the “tenure clock” for a variety of personal reasons such as a medical condition or family responsibilities. The faculty code language for such actions can be found in Section 405.1.4 (4):

*...at any time during the tenure process a tenure eligible faculty member can request an extension of the pre-tenure probationary period for one year for reasons including, but not limited to, medical needs of the faculty member or a family member or family responsibilities (including birth of a child or adoption). This extension may be requested up to two times, so long as the total pre-tenure probationary period does not exceed nine years. Upon recommendation from the faculty member’s department head or supervisor, director (where applicable), and the dean or vice president, the Provost may approve an extension of the faculty member’s pre-tenure probationary period. During the year in which the pre-tenure probationary period extension is granted, faculty responsibilities may be negotiated. When the faculty member that has extended the pre-tenure probationary period goes forward for tenure, research expectations will be no greater than if the tenure extension had not been utilized.*

Two key points in this section of the code are important to note. First, the extensions to the “tenure clock” cannot bring the total pre-tenure probationary time (at USU or in combination with credit given for service at another university) to greater than nine years. Second, the expectations of the faculty member in the area of research at the time of tenure and promotion review cannot be inflated because the candidate received an extension. At the same time, though, if teaching responsibilities are among those negotiated during the extension period, it should be expected that the faculty member will perform their teaching obligations responsibly and that those courses are subject, at least, to routine evaluation.



**19. What is the difference between a “leave of absence” and an extension of the “tenure clock” in terms of their effect on the tenure and promotion expectations for a pre-tenure probationary faculty member?**

In Sections 405.1.4(3) and (4) of the faculty code, the text indicates that there can be an overlap between “leaves of absence” and extensions of a pre-probationary faculty member’s tenure period. First, Section 405.1.4(3) contains the following definition:

**Leaves of Absence**

*An academic year(s) in which leave without pay is taken will not count as part of the faculty member’s pre-tenure probationary period. When a tenure-eligible faculty member is on any leave of absence with pay for one or more semesters in an academic year, upon recommendation from the faculty member’s department head or supervisor, director (where applicable), and the dean or vice president, the Provost may approve an extension from the faculty member’s pre-tenure probationary period in cases such as, but not limited to, Family and Medical Leave, Sick Leave, Military Leave, and Jury and Witness leave.*

In other words, there is leave with pay, or leave without pay. If the leave is without pay, there is an automatic extension of the tenure clock. If the leave is with pay, the extension is not automatic but can be requested by appropriate administrators (i.e., department heads, supervisors or directors with the concurrence of the appropriate dean or vice president) and requires the approval of the provost.

In addition, a faculty member can have an extension of the “tenure clock” without taking paid or unpaid leave and that language in the code language is contained in Section 405.1.4(4):

**Extension of Pretenure Probationary Period**

*Even if a leave of absence is not taken, at any time during the tenure process a tenure eligible faculty member can request an extension of the pre-tenure probationary period for one year for reasons including, but not limited to, medical needs of the faculty member or a family member or family responsibilities (including birth of a child or adoption). This extension may be requested up to two times, so long as the total pre-tenure probationary period does not exceed nine years. Upon recommendation from the faculty member’s department head or supervisor, director (where applicable), and the dean or vice president, the Provost may approve an extension of the faculty member’s pre-tenure probationary period. During the year in which the pre-tenure probationary period extension is granted, faculty responsibilities may be negotiated. When the faculty member that has extended the pre-tenure probationary period goes forward for tenure, research expectations will be no greater than if the tenure extension had not been utilized.*

So, there may be valid and justifiable reasons to extend the “tenure clock” other than taking a paid or unpaid leave of absence. In all cases and under all circumstances, a request for the extension needs to be approved by the provost. It is important to note here that even though an extension of the pre-tenure probationary period (“tenure clock”) may have been granted, the faculty member can be, and usually is, still engaged in selected duties and responsibilities (that are “negotiated”) and the record should reflect those activities -- although those reviewing the candidate cannot have greater expectations of research productivity during the total (now extended) pre-probationary period.

**20. If a candidate is granted an extension of the pre-tenure probationary period, should he or she address that in their tenure and promotion dossier?**

Follow this simple rule, if you have done it, address it - don't pretend it didn't happen. If you are granted an extension of your probationary period, that will be evident in your official record and experienced reviewers who read the documents included in your dossier will make note of that. So, don't try to hide that fact. Indeed, candidates are encouraged to address the extension directly. An extension of the probationary period is a right of a faculty member. Therefore, if you have been granted an extension, your record of performance should be comprehensive and complete and should include any accomplishments that were achieved during that period.



**21. How does previous experience at another institution of higher education influence the pre-tenure probationary period at USU?**

An agreement regarding previous service must be negotiated at the time of the appointment at Utah State University and requires the approval of the department head, dean and provost. There are two specific stipulations that must also be applied. First, the previous experience must be in a tenure-eligible position at an accredited college or university. Second, the total period spent in a probationary appointment (i.e., the credited time at the previous institution plus the total time at USU before an “up or out” decision needs to be made) cannot exceed nine years.

Specifically, Section 405.1.4 (2) (titled “Previous Service”) states:

*The pre-tenure probationary period at USU is 6 years, but up to 9 years of total probationary period will be allowed if the candidate was in a tenure-eligible position at another accredited college or university. At the time of appointment to a tenure-eligible position at USU, candidates who have served in a pre-tenure probationary appointment at another accredited university or college can negotiate with the department head or supervisor, the application of that prior service to the USU pre-tenure probationary period. If an agreement is reached between the department head or supervisor and the candidate on the acceptance of prior service, the pretenure probationary period at USU shall not exceed 5 years. Therefore, candidates cannot apply for more than 4 years of prior service in a pre-tenure, probationary period at another college or university. The agreement must be specified in writing and approved by the department head or supervisor, the director (where applicable) or vice president, college dean and the provost.*

## EXTERNAL PEER REVIEWERS



*22. Are external peer review letters required for the third-year review?*

External peer review letters are only solicited when a candidate is being reviewed for a tenure and promotion decision, typically in the sixth year. External peer review letters are not solicited for any other annual review that is completed during the pre-tenure probationary period.



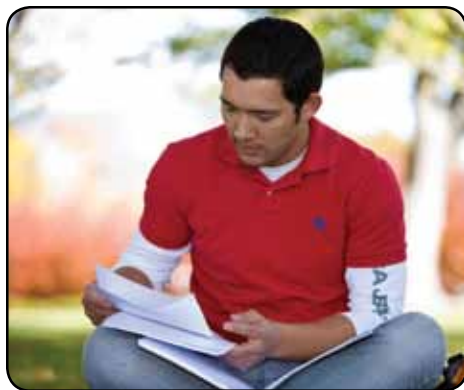
*23. In the sixth-year review, who should be selected as external peer reviewers? Must they always be faculty at some academic institution?*

According to the faculty code in Section 405.7.2(1), external peer reviewers “*must be external to the University and must be held with respect in academe.*” Appropriately, these broad criteria allow for considerable latitude in the selection of external peer reviewers. While there are certainly professionals outside university settings that are “held with respect in academe,” the vast majority of external peer reviewers will most likely come from peer institutions within the academy. It is important that all reviewers, regardless of their professional affiliation, possess the background and record to judge the performance of the candidate in the context of a faculty member employed at a research-intensive university. It is strongly recommended that reviewers be selected from peer institutions or higher. However, it is recognized that outstanding professionals in a field sometimes reside at lower tier academic institutions. Whatever the background of the reviewer, the dossier should contain (as a preface to the letters included in the dossier) a concise and clear rationale for why each external peer reviewer was selected.

**24. How are external reviewers chosen?**

The candidate, the department head and the tenure advisory committee all participate in the process of selecting external peer reviewers as described in the code language below. The candidate creates a list of external peer reviewers from which ultimately, the department head must select at least half of the total number with the agreement of the tenure advisory committee. Section 405.7.2(1) states:

*Prior to September 15, the department head or supervisor will make a single solicitation of letters from at least four peers of rank equivalent to or higher than that sought by the candidate. If fewer than four letters arrive, additional letters will be solicited only to attain the minimum of four letters. The reviewers must be external to the University and must be held with respect in academe. The candidate will be asked to submit the names of potential reviewers and to state the nature of his or her acquaintance with each of them. The number of names should be at least equal to the number of letters to be solicited. At least one-half of the reviewers must be selected from the candidate's list. The department head or supervisor and the tenure advisory committee shall mutually agree to the peer reviewers from whom letters will be solicited. A summary of the pertinent information in his or her file initially prepared by the candidate and a cover letter initially drafted by the department head or supervisor with final drafts mutually agreed upon by the candidate, the tenure advisory committee, and the department head or supervisor shall be sent to each reviewer by the department head or supervisor. Each reviewer should be asked to state, at the very least, the nature of his or her acquaintance with the*

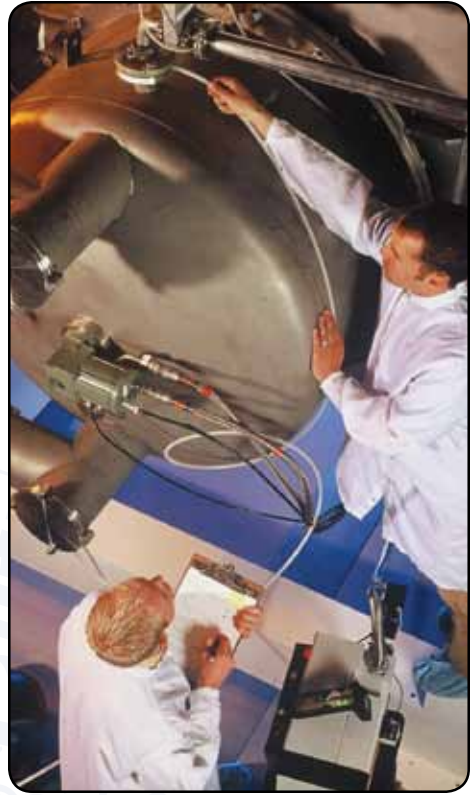


*candidate, and to evaluate the candidate's published work and/or creative endeavors, and recognition and standing among his or her peers. Copies of these letters will become supplementary material to the candidate's file.*

While the code indicates that external peer reviewers should be “of rank equivalent to or higher than that sought by the candidate,” candidates are encouraged to submit a strong list of senior scholars who can comment on the submitted record to date. External reviewers should be respected scholars in the discipline of the candidate and should be of a rank that provides them with a broad and experienced perspective to judge the record of the candidate and compare it to others in the field of equivalent experience. Candidates are encouraged to recommend colleagues who can serve as objective evaluators; i.e., not a former mentor, former collaborator, close friend or former classmate. Ideally, we should be seeking external reviewers who are not invested in the career of the candidate but, rather, who have sufficient distance to serve as an objective external reviewer. Candidates are encouraged to avoid any appearance of close personal relationships with individuals chosen as reviewers.

**25. Is it appropriate for candidates to contact external reviewers who may be asked by the department head to write a letter of assessment for them?**

Although the code is silent on this point, established best practice is that candidates do not initiate any contact with external reviewers concerning their potential roles in the review process. Those units that conclude that it is a matter of courtesy for potential reviewers to be called in advance of receiving a letter requesting an assessment should make such calls through the dean or department head. Of course, any such contact with a potential reviewer should not give any indication of whether a positive or negative evaluation is desired.



**26. Is it appropriate for the recommendation letters from internal evaluators (i.e., the tenure advisory committee, the department head or the dean) to quote directly from external letters?**

Recommendation letters from USU internal evaluators (i.e., the tenure advisory committee, the department head or the dean) may choose to excerpt quotes from the letters of external reviewers. However, no reference should be made to the name of the referee, their institution of affiliation or any other information that would violate the anonymity of the external reviewer.

## THE DOSSIER (PROMOTION & TENURE BINDER)



### 27. Where can I find out the organization of the tenure and promotion dossier?

This can be found on the website of the Executive Vice President and Provost at:

[http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/promotion\\_and\\_tenure/doc/Promotion\\_and\\_Tenure\\_Procedures.pdf](http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/promotion_and_tenure/doc/Promotion_and_Tenure_Procedures.pdf)



### 28. Who is responsible for the preparation and accuracy of the tenure and promotion dossier?

The candidate is responsible for the preparation and accuracy of the tenure and promotion dossier. It is imperative that candidates keep their files current and complete since this is the primary source of information and evidence about their professional efforts, activities and accomplishments. The tenure advisory committee will use these files to conduct annual evaluations of the progress of the candidate. The dossier should include thorough documentation for each of the domains of responsibility listed in the role statement. It is the responsibility of the candidate to tell his or her story to the tenure advisory committee, the department head, the dean, the central committee, and the president. The dossier is the mechanism to tell that story. Although the code does not state a deadline by which the dossier must be delivered to the tenure advisory committee, the committee is required to submit their tenure and promotion recommendation of the candidate to the department head by December 1. Thus, it is expected that the candidate will submit the dossier to the committee at a date which will provide the committee with ample time to review its contents, deliberate, and prepare a recommendation before their December 1 deadline. The candidate should consult with the tenure advisory committee to determine an appropriate date to submit the dossier.

### 29. Can candidates add material to the dossier once it has been submitted to the tenure advisory committee?

No. Once the dossier has been submitted to the tenure advisory committee for official review leading to their recommendation to the department head, no materials from the candidate can be added. As the dossier progresses through the internal university review process, letters of evaluation and recommendation are added from the external reviewers, the tenure advisory committee, the department head, and the dean. The intent of not adding additional material is to ensure that the dossier reviewed by the various internal levels of evaluation remains constant except for the materials described above. Every internal level of evaluation of the dossier, therefore, reviews the same essential material and bases their independent respective judgments on those materials. As described in the faculty code, external peer review letters are kept confidential from the candidate but are available to the tenure advisory committee members and all subsequent internal reviewers who evaluate the dossier (i.e., department head, dean, members of the central promotion and tenure committee, and the president). Thus, it is the responsibility of the candidate to ascertain that all relevant documentation is contained in the dossier before it is submitted to the tenure advisory committee.



### 30. Who has responsibility for writing the tenure advisory committee recommendation letter for the tenure and promotion dossier and what should it include?

The chair of the tenure advisory committee has the responsibility for composing a recommendation to be forwarded to the department head. Section 405.7.2 (2) of the code states:

*The tenure advisory committee shall review and evaluate the candidate for tenure, based on the information in his or her file including external peer reviews. The committee shall make a decision with respect to its tenure recommendation by a majority vote and the names of those for and against shall be recorded. The committee will support this decision with a letter to the department head or supervisor, and shall include in that letter a report of the committee vote by name along with appropriate summaries and interpretations of the documents, and may include both majority and minority views, if any, on which their decision was made. The letter is to be prepared by the chair of the tenure advisory committee, presenting the committee's decision, and is to be signed by the committee, and sent to the department head or supervisor prior to December 1, except that for third-year appointees the date is October 26 (see Table 405.1.4). Minority positions, if any, may be documented in separate letters. A copy of the tenure advisory committee's letter shall be sent to the candidate and placed in his or her file.*

Thus, the recommendation letter should include summaries of the opinions of the members of the tenure advisory committee based on a thorough review of the documentation in the dossier. If there are dissenting votes among members of the tenure advisory committee, they have the choice, but not an obligation, to write a minority opinion.

### *31. Are candidates being considered for promotion to the rank of associate professor with tenure required to create and submit a “teaching portfolio?”*

The faculty code requires that the candidate be responsible for the “thorough documentation of teaching” (Section 405.6.3) in their professional file but the code does not require this documentation to be in the form of a specific “teaching portfolio.” Whatever format the candidate chooses to use in providing a thorough documentation of their teaching, it is strongly recommended that it includes the following types of information: (1) a teaching philosophy statement that communicates the candidate’s approach to instruction and describes his or her primary goals as a teacher, advisor and mentor; (2) a description of curricular revisions that have been developed by the candidate; (3) selected course syllabi and other documents that communicate the candidate’s expectations for students; (4) documentation of teaching improvement activities; (5) student course rating data and documentation of how student feedback has been used to improve instruction; (6) systematic, repeated and regular peer evaluations of teaching; (7) documentation of the candidate’s engagement with students outside normal classroom activities; and (8) documentation of student outcomes. For those candidates where teaching is their primary area of responsibility and who, therefore, will be expected to reach the standard of excellence in this domain, evidence of contributions to the scholarship of teaching is very compelling. For example, evidence of peer-reviewed contributions to the literature regarding pedagogy or evidence of leadership in the development of the teaching skills of other instructors or evidence of the adoption of teaching methods by other professionals are all important indicators of instructional excellence.

### *32. Is the candidate’s self assessment letter in the dossier an important document?*

The candidate’s self assessment letter is one of the most important elements in the tenure and promotion dossier. This document is the place in the dossier where each candidate can provide context for the proposition that he or she is a valuable member of the faculty at the institution, and the academy as a whole, by virtue of their documented professional accomplishments. The self assessment letter should not be just a summary of the curriculum vitae but, instead, should discuss the significance of the candidate’s professional accomplishments during their probationary period within each of the areas of responsibility described in his or her role statement. The self assessment letter should be written in terms understandable by colleagues outside of the immediate discipline as the document will be read by a wide-range of individuals during the course of the review process. In this respect, it might prove worthwhile to have a colleague outside the immediate discipline read a draft of the self assessment letter to offer an opinion about its clarity. It must be understood, however, that the candidate is ultimately responsible for the letter’s final content. Candidates should invest considerable effort in writing the self assessment letter as it will play a vital role in persuading evaluators that their achievements in their area of emphasis have reached the level of excellence and in the other areas of professional activity, that the candidate has reached the level of effectiveness.

**33. *If my record of professional activity has irregularities such as inconsistencies in productivity or occasional unimpressive student ratings, what, if anything, should I do about that?***

Not every faculty member's record of professional accomplishment is likely to be one of consistently high productivity and quality. For example, there may be "gaps" in a faculty member's record; a "gap" defined as a period of time, perhaps a year or more, when there are no publications or evidence of scholarly activity. The question that a reviewer of the dossier may naturally ask then is – "why?," resulting in a search of the dossier by the reviewer for reasons that explain such an irregularity in the candidate's record. There can be perfectly legitimate explanations for such potential deficiencies and it is the responsibility of the candidate to address that kind of issue in their self-assessment letter. Perhaps the worst approach in this instance is to ignore an inconsistency and gamble that no one recognizes it. As a rule, dossiers are reviewed very thoroughly and it would be prudent on the part of the candidate to provide context for what might be perceived as a deficiency, rather than allow a reviewer to speculate as to the cause.



**34. *Can a tenure and promotion dossier be withdrawn after it has been sent forward for review?***

A pre-tenure probationary faculty member submits his or her tenure and promotion dossier because it is necessary for their mandatory sixth-year review. Withdrawal of the dossier would occur then only if the candidate decides that he or she does not wish to be considered for tenure and promotion at Utah State University. There may be valid reasons why a candidate reaches the conclusion that it is in their professional interest to not move forward with tenure and promotion consideration at the time of the sixth-year review and that decision may follow consultation with the tenure advisory committee, department head, or dean. In any event, a withdrawal of a submitted dossier would only be allowed if the candidate first makes clear in writing his or her intention to resign their position at Utah State University.



# PROMOTION & TENURE EVALUATION



*35. If candidates disagree with statements in the letters of recommendation prepared by the tenure advisory committee, the department head and/or dean, may they write a rebuttal?*

There is no provision in the faculty code that grants the right for a candidate to submit a rebuttal in response to the copies of the letters that they receive that are written by the tenure advisory committee, the department head, or the dean as part of the promotion and tenure process. While the code is silent about such rebuttals, it does state in Section 405.7.2 (2) that *“the tenure advisory committee [and subsequently the department head, dean, central committee, etc.] shall review and evaluate the candidate for tenure, based on the information in his or her file including external peer reviews”* (Underlining added for emphasis). Since a rebuttal statement prepared by a candidate after the review process has begun is, by definition, not part of the dossier/file that was submitted for review, it would logically follow that it could not be part of the information upon which the decision is based.



*36. What is the “Central Promotion and Tenure Committee” and how does it function?*

Once tenure and promotion dossiers come to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost from the college deans, they are then available for review by the members of the central promotion and tenure committee. Section 405.7.2 (5) of the faculty code states the following about the composition of the central promotion and tenure committee:

*The Provost shall convene a committee including the Vice Presidents for Research and Extension, the Dean of the graduate school, and others of his or her choosing. The President may attend and participate in meetings of the committee. All members must hold the rank of professor with tenure.*

In theory, the central promotion and tenure committee could consist of only a very few members should a provost so choose. In practice, however, provosts at Utah State have, for some time, made the reasonable and responsible choice of appointing tenured professors from across the academic colleges to serve on the central promotion and tenure committee, thus, providing significant representation from the faculty ranks. Incidentally, former members of the central promotion and tenure committee are a rich resource of information about its operations. The list of the central promotion and tenure committee members is made public each year and the names of current members can be

found on the provost's website at [http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/promotion\\_and\\_tenure/members.cfm](http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/promotion_and_tenure/members.cfm). In addition, ombudspersons drawn from the ranks of USU emeriti faculty are present during the course of deliberations by the central promotion and tenure committee.

The central promotion and tenure committee begins to review dossiers as soon as they arrive in the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and has several weeks to do so. The central promotion and tenure committee sets aside several days in February or early March to discuss each individual dossier. Although all members of the central promotion and tenure committee are required to thoroughly review every dossier, one member of the committee is assigned to be the first reviewer and another member is the second reviewer for each dossier. At committee deliberations, the first and second reviewers describe what they perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence in the dossier that the candidate's performance has or has not reached the level of excellence in their major area of emphasis or has or has not reached the level of effectiveness in the other areas of responsibility. After these initial reviews, the entire committee joins in a discussion of the case. Using this process, every dossier is discussed to the point when the committee is prepared to render a recommendation. According to the faculty code, the provost then reports "the collective action of this committee to the President" (405.7.2(5)). Because of the severe time limits under which the central promotion and tenure committee operates, combined with the large number of candidates that are being reviewed, no written summary of the committee's recommendations is prepared.

**37. During the time that the central committee deliberates, I've heard there are sometimes "clarification meetings." What are clarification meetings?**

Occasionally, when the central promotion and tenure committee has questions about the materials contained in a dossier, it will invite others who have participated in the review (such as the chair of the tenure advisory committee, the department head, and the dean) to meet with them and discuss the record of the candidate before it communicates its recommendation to the president. Others should not interpret such invitations as a signal that the committee has made a decision on the case. Rather, the invitation is simply an indication that the committee would like to clarify one or more questions about the materials contained in the dossier and believes that other participants can help provide the needed clarification. The invitation to appear before the central promotion and tenure committee is not intended as an opportunity to rebut judgments or statements made by previous reviewers; rather, it is an opportunity for the central promotion and tenure committee to clarify a question or an issue that has emerged as a result of their deliberations.



# TIMETABLE CONFIDENTIALITY THE FACULTY CODE



## *38. When are candidates informed about the tenure and promotion decision?*

By code, the president must notify candidates of tenure and promotion decisions by April 15th each year. Specifically, Section 405.7.2 (5) states:

*The President shall notify the Provost, director (where applicable), dean, or vice president, department head or supervisor, tenure advisory committee, and the candidate in writing of the President's decision to deny tenure no later than April 15.*



## *39. What is confidentiality in relation to the promotion and tenure process?*

Confidentiality regarding the promotion and tenure process is to be respected forever, not just during the particular year of review. Internal colleagues who are involved in the promotion and process participate with the understanding that all matters related to their deliberations remain confidential. In addition, faculty candidates under review are discouraged from approaching committee members at any time concerning the disposition of their review and should understand that inquiries of this type are deemed entirely inappropriate.

## *40. Where can I find the "faculty code"?*

"Faculty code" is a colloquialism for Section 400 of the Utah State University Policies Manual. It can be accessed on the website of the USU Human Resources Office at: <http://www.usu.edu/hr/html/policies/faculty-policies>.



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