

**PROPOSAL FROM TENURE/TENURE TRACK FACULTY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**April, 2017**

Tenure and promotion decisions are among the most important responsibilities of the Provost's office, both in terms of the future of the University and in the lives of tenured and tenure-track faculty. It is essential that these decisions be based on fair and transparent procedures that are developed in collaboration with key stakeholders. We commend the Provost on his willingness to share important information, such as the membership of UCAPT panels and the lists of promoted faculty. We also thank him for his efforts to meet individually with all newly-promoted faculty members to offer congratulations on their accomplishments.

As with all procedures, we believe that some improvements are possible in areas in which faculty have expressed concerns. In the spirit of collaboration and shared governance, we recommend that:

- **the Provost's Office be required to consult with the Academic Senate Executive Board and with appropriate Senate committees, as determined by the Executive Board, about any substantive changes in the UCAPT Manual or in tenure and promotion procedures.** It is our understanding that changes currently are decided upon by the Provost's office in consultation with members of UCAPT panels. We believe that the process of establishing new guidelines and procedures should include the input and approval of faculty who have been chosen to represent their colleagues in these matters, as is the case with the Faculty Handbook. Those faculty would provide valuable counsel beyond the individuals who are already involved in the decision-making processes.
- **greater clarity be provided regarding the standards for tenure and promotion.** We understand that it is neither possible nor desirable to offer inflexible criteria for tenure and promotion that could apply to the vast range of scholarly and artistic work conducted by USC's faculty. Nonetheless, feedback from various sources suggests that the current guidelines could be clearer and more helpful. We make two specific recommendations.
  - We ask that the Provost's office require all deans to submit a document describing the standards for promotion and tenure in his or her school, with a level of detail as appropriate for the school, unit, or department. These documents should articulate clearly the principles and criteria used for nominating a faculty member for tenure and promotion consideration within the context of each school. They are not meant to provide rigid guidelines for counting or for limiting scholarly or artistic freedom of expression. In schools where there are tenure/tenure-track faculty with different profiles (for example, scholars and artists), separate standards should be documented for each group. These documents should be developed in consultation with the school's faculty, approved by the Provost's office and, then, distributed to faculty. Some schools have already developed such documents (Marshall School of Business and the School of Dramatic Arts, for example). The guidelines provide valuable information for the faculty in those school and for the members of UCAPT who are considering dossiers submitted by the school. We request that the Provost require all schools to submit such documents using best practices from those already approved, as applicable.
  - We ask the Provost's office to provide more detailed and clear guidelines regarding promotion to the rank of full professor. The current criteria as described in the UCAPT Manual are brief and vague, leaving associate professors uncertain as to when they have reached the threshold required for promotion. We further recommend that deans

be required to conduct regular reviews of the tenured associate professors in their schools and provide feedback with regard to determining whether there are faculty who are at a level of scholarly and teaching excellence to be put forward for promotion. We recommend that this review occur at least once every three years, with a goal of promoting faculty as soon as they meet promotion criteria.

- **every faculty member who has been evaluated by UCAPT receive written feedback on his or her case.** Each dossier for tenure and promotion represents an enormous amount of work by the faculty candidate, outside reviewers, departmental and school-level faculty committees, deans, UCAPT members, and the Provost. We believe that the candidate for tenure and promotion, whether successful or unsuccessful, should receive a summary of the outcomes of the review to the fullest extent possible. Such a letter would comment on the significance and impact of the individual's work, noting the major contributions (or lack thereof) and their importance for the field. Any valuable feedback from outside reviewers could be paraphrased and provided in a form that might benefit the faculty member's future work, without compromising the confidentiality of the letter writer. Most candidates who are not promoted request and receive such letters, although they appear to vary across schools in terms of their level of detail and usefulness. Here we recommend that given that the decision is at the university level, the Provost should provide a minimum set of criteria for information to be included in feedback. For those candidates who are promoted, there often is little or no feedback provided in a systematic fashion. In those cases, the proposed letter is intended to mark an important moment of recognition and appreciation from the university leadership for the faculty member's unique and important contributions to USC and to the field more broadly. These letters should avoid general boiler plate language and focus, instead, on the specific results of the individual faculty member's review.

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Chair, Beth Meyerowitz, Dornsife College/Psychology

Members:

Jeff Chisum, Co-Chair, RTPCFAC, Dornsife College/Writing Program

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