



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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To: Department Chairs
From: Michael D. Smith *Mike*
Date: February 17, 2010
Re: FAS Ladder Appointment and Promotion Voting Policies

Department Chairs have asked me to clarify FAS voting policies and procedures for ladder faculty reviews and external appointments. A vote on an appointment represents the official record of the wishes of a department or committee. This record is used by reviewing bodies – including the Divisional Deans, the Committee on Appointments and Promotions, myself, the Provost, and the President – to help judge the wisdom (in terms of quality, need, fit, direction of the department, etc.) of making the appointment. None of the reviewing bodies have the full benefit of the conversation that took place before the vote. Therefore, it is in a department or committee’s interest to present a clear message.

In light of these considerations, the FAS has voting policies for promotions and appointments that are predicated on three guiding principles: (1) to make decisions with the benefit of wide consultation; (2) to consult tenure-track colleagues and include them among the voting faculty when appropriate; and (3) to vote on clearly stated motions and to record the precise results of those votes. When these principles guide our actions, appointments and promotions are given the best chance for long-term success, both for the individual under consideration and for the program as a whole.

I want to highlight some specific issues that are related to these principles.

The policies regarding recorded votes specify that:

- Tenured faculty vote on all reviews (promotions) and external appointments (hires)
- Associate professors vote on external appointments at the assistant- and associate-professor level
- Assistant professors vote on external appointments at the assistant-professor level

In the case of external appointments, tenure-track faculty members have important contributions to make and should be asked for their views independent of the rank of the appointment. However, they should not be asked to vote publicly in cases above their rank because it has the potential to put them in the unsettling position of voting on an individual who may later participate in their reviews. Instead, a chair should ask for the opinions of tenure-track faculty in confidence.

Engaging tenure-track faculty in the consideration of internal promotions can place them in awkward situations vis-à-vis their peers and should be avoided.

The mechanism for voting should be determined locally by the department or committee. For example, this may include an open roll-call vote, an email vote, or a secret ballot, though in this latter case the dossier still needs to record each vote by name. Although departments may wish to try a new system from time to time, I strongly encourage departments to find the best local mechanism and stick with it; frequent changes may lead to concerns regarding fairness.

Also, in many cases, our departments and committees rely on the expertise and participation of faculty across departments, centers, and Schools. While the recorded votes of all members of a department or committee (in the appropriate rank) are required for a candidate's dossier, chairs of departments and committees are also welcome to record votes from other Harvard faculty members (in the appropriate rank) who have participated in the discussions.

In all cases, the vote produced for a dossier must provide the reviewing bodies with a clear understanding of the outcome desired by the FAS members of the department or committee. If the perspective of the FAS members of the department or committee is not clear in the full dossier, the FAS Dean may ask these faculty members to discuss the case again and vote.

Departments should pay special attention to the motion on which they are voting when considering multiple finalists. Although departments are welcome to provide a ranking for the candidates, it is important to record up or down votes on each candidate separately. This procedure enables reviewing bodies to understand the outcome desired by the department or committee.

As always, any Harvard faculty member (of any rank and in any School) is welcome to write a letter to the Dean with his or her views on an appointment or promotion. I would be grateful for these letters.

To help our appointment and promotion cases run smoothly, I ask department and committee chairs to discuss these policies and procedures with all faculty participating in ladder faculty appointments and reviews.