



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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To: Department Chairs
From: Michael D. Smith
Re: Promotion to Tenured Professor in the FAS
Date: June 29, 2009
Cc: Jeremy Bloxham, Stephen M. Kosslyn, Diana Sorensen, Frans Spaepen, Cherry Murray, Michèle Lamont, Allan Brandt, Evelyn Hammonds, Judith Singer, Nina Zipser

In 2005, the FAS formalized its commitment to a tenure-track system and dedicated itself to hiring and mentoring tenure-track faculty who are outstanding both in their scholarship and teaching. Over the last four years, the FAS has progressively embraced the cultural changes necessary to ensure the success of a tenure-track system. This memo provides another step in this direction by clarifying the process for evaluating promotions to tenure and by announcing a renewed effort to develop discipline-appropriate mentoring programs for all tenure-track faculty.

A Tenure-track System

The FAS recognizes that a strong and well-understood system for attracting, supporting, and promoting the best tenure-track faculty in all disciplines is essential for Harvard to be a leading university in the twenty-first century. Procedurally, having a tenure-track system means that all tenure-track faculty who are successfully promoted to Associate Professor can expect to be reviewed for tenure in the penultimate year of their associate term. When a comprehensive review for tenure is successful, the candidate will be offered a tenured professorship within the FAS. When any part of the review indicates that the candidate does not meet the FAS standards for tenure, our tenure-track system does not obligate departments or the FAS to continue the review.

As described in the *FAS Promotion and Appointment Handbook*

[<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~facaff/>] a candidate meets the standards for tenure if he or she is a scholar of the first order of eminence who has demonstrated excellence in teaching and research and who has the capacity to make significant and lasting contributions to the department(s) proposing the appointment. The foremost criteria for appointment are: scholarly achievement and impact on the field, evidence of intellectual leadership and creative accomplishment, potential for future accomplishments, teaching and advising effectiveness in a variety of settings with both undergraduate and graduate students, and the individual's potential contributions to the University and broader scholarly communities. These standards are the same for internally promoted and externally appointed faculty.

In the past, many departments sought to hire only faculty teaching at other universities who had demonstrated they had met the standards for FAS tenure. In some cases, we rehired scholars who had been junior faculty here and had then been appointed to a tenured position at another institution. The goal of a tenure-track system is to attract outstanding junior faculty and then promote and retain those who have clearly demonstrated excellence in teaching and research. As hard as we try to identify outstanding talent, we all realize that there will be tenure-track faculty who do not meet the FAS standards for tenure at the time of their tenure review and who will not be promoted.

The Promotion Process

The multi-step process for promoting a faculty member to a tenured Professor is summarized below. Full details can be found in the *FAS Appointment and Promotion Handbook*.

- 1) The Department Chair asks the candidate to provide a dossier including a *Curriculum Vitae*, copies of all publications or other scholarly materials, teaching and advising materials, a teaching statement, and a research statement.
- 2) The department compiles a summary teaching chart and gathers material on the candidate's performance as an adviser of undergraduates and mentor of graduate students. Although the department may speak with or write to students about a candidate's teaching and advising, the department chair should inform the candidate that he or she should not solicit letters from students for inclusion in the dossier.
- 3) The Chair proposes review committee members to the Divisional Dean.
- 4) After approval from the Divisional Dean, the Chair appoints the review committee.
- 5) The review committee considers the candidate's dossier. After the committee reviews the dossier, the tenured faculty in the department meet to discuss its strengths and weaknesses and decide whether the case warrants further review. If not, both the candidate and Divisional Dean must be notified of this decision in writing, with the letter to the candidate first reviewed by the Divisional Dean.
- 6) If further review is recommended, the department sends a letter to the Divisional Dean (copying the FAS Dean) requesting written authorization to collect external evaluation letters. With this request, the department submits drafts of the promotion review letter, comparison list, and recipient list for review by the Divisional Dean.
- 7) Upon receiving written authorization, the Department Chair sends the finalized review letter to the finalized recipient list.
- 8) Once the external letters have been received and the review committee has written a draft case statement, the department reviews all of the candidate's materials, discusses the strengths and weaknesses mentioned in the external evaluations, and votes on whether the case is strong enough to proceed. If not, both the candidate and Divisional Dean must be notified of this decision in writing, with the letter to the candidate first reviewed by the Divisional Dean.
- 9) After a favorable vote, which does not have to be unanimous but must comprise affirmative votes by a significant majority of the tenured faculty in the department, each member of the department writes a confidential letter to the FAS Dean regarding the case.
- 10) The Department Chair, in cooperation with the review committee, finalizes the case statement. The finalized case statement should include a summary of the review

process, a justification of the comparands and external experts, a description of the candidate's area and how it fits into the department's academic plan, and a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate's case as noted in the external evaluations and the internal conversations. This statement should be forwarded with the candidate's dossier to the FAS Dean.

- 11) The Committee on Appointments and Promotions (CAP) reviews the dossier and advises the Dean on the next steps for the dossier, which can range from forwarding the case to the President to determining that the case is not strong enough to put forward for further review.
- 12) The President or Provost reviews the case, gathering input as necessary. This input often, but not exclusively or necessarily, takes the form of an *ad hoc* committee, presided over by the President or Provost. If requested by the President, an *ad hoc* committee and set of departmental "witnesses" is assembled.
- 13) The President decides whether to approve the promotion to tenure and announces her decision. Because the President may seek additional input in making her decision, there is no simple formula for how long this last step may take.

Over the course of the last year – in consultation with the President – the academic deans and I have made changes to a few key steps in this process. In particular, we have adjusted steps six (the purpose of the review letter), eight (the procedures for departmental deliberations), eleven (the CAP review), and twelve (the assembly of an *ad hoc*). These changes are intended to better align the objectives of a tenure-track system with our goals for tenured faculty appointments at Harvard.

In step six, the department drafts a promotion review letter, develops a comparison list for the letter, and creates a list of letter recipients. The external letters are intended to provide evidence for whether or not a candidate for promotion has had a significant impact on his or her field and is on a trajectory to be among the very best scholars in the field.

We have recently modified the letter soliciting evaluations from external scholars. The most important change is that the review of a candidate for promotion is no longer timed to coincide with a targeted search. The new promotion review letter states:

"The Department of XXX is considering the possible promotion to tenure of [NAME] in the field of [FIELD]. As you may know, Professor is the only rank that conveys tenure in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard. This letter outlines our standards and process for promotion to tenure, which mirror those for externally appointed candidates, adjusted for career stage.

The counsel we receive from you and other distinguished colleagues is an essential part of our process, and we would be most grateful for your assistance with our review. Our foremost criteria for both external appointment and promotion to tenure are: scholarly achievement and impact on the field, evidence of intellectual leadership and creative accomplishments, potential for future accomplishments, teaching and advising effectiveness in a variety of settings with both undergraduate and graduate students, and contributions to the University and broader scholarly communities.

Comparative evaluations play a central role in our process to appoint outstanding scholars and teachers, and we seek your frank advice and candid evaluation of the following scholars (listed alphabetically), including Professor [NAME], both in absolute terms and relative to one another, taking into account differences in career stage when framing your reflections...” [For the full text of the letter please see the *FAS Promotion and Appointment Handbook*.]

Because the letter does not make reference to a targeted search, the comparands listed in the review letter are not candidates for the position. The comparands are listed solely as benchmarks for the candidate undergoing review. For this purpose, the comparison list should consist of scholars in the candidate’s field who span a range of experiences from the strongest recently tenured scholars to full professors who are well-established leaders in the field. Furthermore, the most useful comparison list consists of scholars who themselves meet the standards for tenure at FAS.

With a comparison list that includes the top scholars in the field at varying career stages, it is not necessary for the candidate to be ranked first in absolute terms among the comparands. However, it is essential that the external reviewers believe that there is sufficient evidence that the candidate compares favorably to the comparands in intellectual leadership and creative accomplishment, quality of scholarship, and potential for future impact on the field.

Because the external reviewers need to evaluate the candidate’s impact on the field and future trajectory, it is important that they have a very good understanding of the field and the scholars within it. For this reason, the external reviewers should, ordinarily, be active scholars who are full professors within the field or fields in interdisciplinary cases. In science and engineering cases, some of the external reviewers may be senior researchers from prestigious research institutes rather than universities. In certain arts and humanities cases, some of the external reviewers may be well-established museum curators or artists.

In step eight, the tenured members of the department evaluate all of the materials in the dossier and vote on whether to put the candidate forward for tenure. Having a tenure-track system does not obligate a department to put a candidate forward for tenure. It rather obligates the department to seriously, systematically and objectively evaluate all of the evidence for the candidate. After reviewing all of the evidence – including the external letters – the entire tenured faculty should discuss both the strengths and weaknesses of the case. If a large number of the tenured department members do not believe that the candidate warrants tenure at Harvard and thus vote against the case, the case should not be forwarded to CAP.

If a significant majority of the tenured members of a department vote in favor of the case, then the department chair should forward the case to CAP for review (step eleven). At this point each tenured faculty member in the department writes a confidential letter to the Dean, which will be included in the dossier reviewed by CAP.

After evaluating a candidate’s dossier, CAP may suggest one of the following recommendations to the FAS Dean: (1) the case is sufficiently strong to forward to the President, (2) CAP needs further information or the department needs to modify the case statement before the Dean decides whether to forward the case to the President, or (3) the case is not strong enough and CAP advises the Dean to turn down the tenure case. CAP may make this last recommendation even in cases in which a department votes unanimously for a

candidate, if there are aspects of the case (such as the substance of the internal letters) that are not sufficiently strong.

If the Dean, on the advice of CAP, recommends forwarding the case to the President, the President decides on the type of review. In most cases, the President or Provost will preside over a review by an *ad hoc* committee. In step twelve, the *ad hoc* committee is assembled by the Divisional Dean in consultation with the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, who must approve the membership on behalf of the President. The committee, ordinarily, consists of three scholars from outside Harvard, two Harvard faculty members (from a department other than the one making the recommendation), the President or Provost, the Dean of the Faculty, the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, and the Divisional Dean responsible for the case.

For the same reason that the external reviewers should be active scholars who are full professors, so should the members of the *ad hoc* committee. When appropriate, an external member may be a senior researcher from a prestigious research institute, a well-established artist, or a renowned museum curator. In considering the *ad hoc* membership, the Divisional Deans and the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity try to avoid external letter writers because the dossier already includes the views of these scholars. They also endeavor to ensure that the *ad hoc* members do not have a conflict of interest with the case, including having collaborated with or mentored the candidate or having been considered for a similar position at the FAS.

Ultimately, the President makes the final decision regarding all tenure appointments. An *ad hoc* review is one aspect of this decision-making process. The President may also consult with internal and external scholars who are not involved in the *ad hoc* review to provide greater context for her deliberations. In order to protect the candidate and the integrity of the process, all aspects of the President's deliberations, including the timing and the type of *ad hoc*, are strictly confidential.

Mentoring

In addition to a well-understood and rigorous review process, our commitment to a tenure-track system requires that we mentor all of our tenure-track faculty. Actively supporting their intellectual and professional development will help to insure that they remain on a strong upward trajectory. Although some departments have made great strides in the mentoring of their tenure-track faculty, I have asked Michèle Lamont, Senior Advisor on Faculty Development and Diversity, to work with each department to strengthen mentoring across the FAS. To be clear, I do not believe that there is a single approach to mentoring that is appropriate across the wide range of disciplines in the FAS. Where clearly articulated mentoring programs do not exist, we will work with the department to adopt or develop one. Where successful mentoring programs exist, we will look for opportunities to strengthen them. In all instances, I encourage department chairs to adopt the following practices that can help to support and advance the careers of our tenure-track colleagues:

1. Meet informally with each tenure-track faculty member once or twice a year to hear about what the faculty member is doing, talk about specific plans for future

publications and other activities, offer advice about how to use one's time most effectively for maximum impact, discuss topics such as upcoming reviews, teaching, grading, and staff support, and answer any questions.

2. Insure that departmental mentoring plans are implemented and that individual mentoring plans are in place and assessed each time tenure-track faculty are reviewed.
3. Introduce tenure-track faculty when they join the department as well as at selected public events to increase their visibility and assert their intellectual presence in the department.
4. Celebrate recent achievements of our tenure-track faculty by announcing new grants or publications to the departmental community and by organizing discussions around new findings or contributions.
5. Encourage senior faculty to be inclusive of tenure-track faculty by getting them involved in conferences, research projects, and other collaborative endeavors.
6. Encourage senior faculty to help tenure-track faculty connect with colleagues at Harvard and beyond.
7. Consult tenure-track faculty members about their committee work at the start of the year, while being mindful that women and underrepresented minorities tend to be asked to serve on more committees than other colleagues.
8. Avoid scheduling official departmental meetings and functions before 8:30 a.m. and after 5:00 p.m. in consideration of faculty with dependent care responsibilities.

Together we can create an environment that attracts and promotes the very best tenure-track faculty. These efforts will ensure that Harvard remains an institution with the highest standards for teaching and research.