Demystifying the Promotion & Tenure Process

Assistant Professor Perspectives

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WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
Themes

- Drive to 25 led by quality faculty.
- World-class faculty are crucial to a world-class university.
- Faculty review is detailed and thoughtful, not arbitrary and capricious.
- WSU will accelerate the development of a preeminent research portfolio.
The goal of faculty review is to *develop and recognize* world-class faculty.
Resources

- **Faculty Manual** – 
  https://facsen.wsu.edu/faculty_manual/

- **Provost’s Instructions for P&T** – 
  https://provost.wsu.edu/promotion-and-tenure/ (revised annually)

- **College and Department Handbooks**

*READ AND STUDY!!*
More Resources

- Department chair
- Department & college guidelines
- Colleagues
- Mentors
- Examples of prior reviews
- Kelly Ward (kaward@wsu.edu or call (5-5581).
Key Points

- Promotion and tenure are one part of a system of performance review.
- In most cases, promotion follows logically from prior reviews.
  - No surprises
- New annual review process ties AR and promotion and tenure.
Key Points

- Procedures and standards vary across departments, colleges.
  - Get the appropriate guidelines.
PROCESS DETAILS
Mentoring

- All pre-tenure faculty assigned mentors to guide the P&T process.
- Multiple mentors can help support the promotion process.
- Provide feedback on review materials and provide suggestions.
- Ask chair to appoint a mentor to support the promotion process.
Appointment Letter

- Specific job responsibilities stated (e.g., 40% teaching, 40% research & 20% service)
- Revised workload expectations accordingly so clear and current
- Provide a guide for P&T process
Annual Review

- Responsibility of the department chair
  - The chair can use a committee
  - Input from senior faculty
  - Input from campuses/centers

- Conducted annually

- Calendar year review
Annual Review

- Abridged
- Comprehensive
- Intensive

Establish a record of performance.
Annual Review

- Used for raises
- Faculty sign to indicate they read the review
- Faculty may write a response
Annual Review

- Should be formative and evaluative
- Address progress toward promotion
- Feedback to prepare for promotion
- Faculty report activities using Activity Insight
Two types of annual reviews for pre-tenure faculty
Comprehensive Reviews

- Done annually (except the 3rd year)
- Serves as the annual review and progress toward tenure review
- Ratings:
  - Especially meritorious
  - Strong performance beyond satisfactory
  - Satisfactory
  - Some improvement needed
  - Substantial improvement needed
Intensive Annual Review
3rd Year Review

- Required for pre-tenure faculty
- Formative review to prepare for promotion
- Procedure similar to P&T process so ideal for getting feedback from department, college, and provost
Intensive Annual Review

- Results in one of four categories:
  - Well Prepared
  - Satisfactory
  - Improvement Needed
  - Unsatisfactory (would typically result in non-renewal)
Promotion Review

- Thorough review
- Consideration usually after 6 years (end of 5th)
Promotion

- Decision should be consistent with prior annual reviews

- Exact procedures vary by department and college (know thy guidelines)
Promotion Procedures

- The faculty member assembles a file (May-August)
  - Curriculum vitae
  - Teaching portfolio (limited to 5 pages)
  - Context statement (limited to 2 pages)
  - Research/scholarship statement (limited to 2 pages)
  - Exhibits

*See Faculty Manual and unit handbooks for specifics—vary by units.*
External Letters

- At least 4 external letters are solicited by chair (summer)
  - The candidate submits a list.
  - The chair adds names.
  - The candidate cannot veto names.
  - Letters become part of the P&T file.
External Letters (continued)

- Senior professors from peer or aspiring peer institutions (e.g., Michigan State, Penn State).
  - No personal relationship with the candidate or other conflict of interest.
  - Writers receive the file prepared by the candidate.
External Letters (continued)

- **External reviewers:**
  - Evaluate the quality and quantity of the candidate’s work
  - Compare the candidate’s work to the unit’s requirements
  - State whether the candidate would receive tenure at their institution
The Department Considers the File (August – September)

The file now contains:

- The candidate’s curriculum vitae
- Teaching portfolio
- Context statement
- Research/scholarship statement
- Past reviews
- External review letters
- Exhibits (e.g., articles, presentations)
Faculty Recommendations

- Each senior faculty provides input on whether to grant or deny promotion
  - Shared governance.
  - Recommendations should be consistent with past reviews.
  - At least 5 faculty recommendations
Exceptions to Recommendations:

- Anyone who will participate later in the process (e.g., chair, dean, vice-chancellor).
- Anyone who has a personal relationship with the candidate or other conflict of interest.
The Chair’s Summary (September-October)

- Consults with the Academic Director for campus/extension faculty.
- Interprets the case for those outside the field.
- Addresses disagreements in the faculty recommendations.
- Makes a personal recommendation to grant or deny promotion.
  - A recommendation that is inconsistent with the faculty should be explained.
The Dean’s Summary (October – November)

- The Dean consults P&T Committee (and the Vice-Chancellor for campus faculty).

- The Dean makes a recommendation and interprets the case for those outside of the college.

  - A recommendation that is inconsistent with the department should be explained.
The Provost Considers the File (December – January)

- Consults the Provost’s Advisory Committee and some Vice Provosts
- May ask the Deans for additional information
- Can disagree with the prior decisions, but rarely does
If Promotion is Granted

- The candidate receives a letter by March 1.
- The candidate receives a 10% raise effective in the fall.
- The candidate is recognized at the Celebration of Excellence Banquet at Showcase.
If Promotion and Tenure Denied

- Issued a letter with terminal year notification.
- Resign within 90 days with no record of the denial and (usually) one more year at WSU.
- Appeal to the Faculty Status Committee (FSC) within 30 days.
  - Inadequate consideration
  - Violations of academic freedom
  - Substantial procedural irregularities
  - Not: Merits of the case
Appeal to FSC

- A subcommittee investigates.
- FSC makes a recommendation to the President.
- The President accepts or rejects the recommendation.
- The President does not usually grant promotion. The case will be reconsidered.
POINTERS
Standards for Promotion

Excellence in teaching, scholarship & service (relative to job description).
Promotion Materials

- Tie contributions to unit and WSU standards and expectations
- Narrative statements that show contributions in teaching, research, and service.
- Tell the story of the body of work.
- Tie contributions to the key areas of the university (Drive to 25)
Promising Packets

- Tell the faculty story
- Clearly convey involvement in teaching, research, and service
- Clearly leads reader through materials
- Stand alone in terms of descriptions
- Clearly describe excellence and unique contributions
Pitfalls

- Incomplete information
- Unclear and unedited writing
- Confusing presentation of materials
- Lack of clear descriptions of contributions in all areas.
A few myths…

- **A majority “vote” leads to promotion.**
  - Recommendations not votes.
  - Promotion is based on many factors (e.g., recommendation forms, summaries of dean and chair).
  - Majority does not rule.
    - Thoughtful recommendations carry more weight.
    - Some faculty recommendations count more than others.
    - Faculty members that make positive recommendation while writing negative recommendations are counted as negative.
Tenure is a right. I will receive tenure if I do a reasonable job.

- Tenure is a long-term commitment for the University.
- The University expects better than average performance.
Getting tenure is tough. Most faculty do not get tenure.

- Faculty are hired on the assumption that they will receive tenure.
- More than 90% of those who come up for tenure receive it.

- Some faculty members leave the University before standing for tenure.
The administration prefers to deny tenure especially during tough budget times.

- Denying tenure is very costly in terms of time, energy and money
  - Recruitment time and cost
  - Start ups
  - Mentoring
  - Threat of a law suit
Only research and grant funding count.

- Performance in teaching, scholarship, and service all count.
- The exact factors and their weights vary by department and appointment.
  - Learn about your department.
If one faculty member is against me, I won’t get promoted.

- Negative recommendations may not be decisive.
- Many successful faculty members receive some negative “votes”.
Faculty opinion alone decide promotions.

- The process would terminate at the departmental level if that were true.
- Most Provost's prefer that the faculty make the decision.
  - Provosts step in when the faculty abdicate.
- Retaining an unsuccessful faculty member does him/her no favor.
If you’re well liked, you’ll get promoted; if not, you won’t.

- Promotion will not be granted if your behavior interferes with the functioning of your unit.
- Faculty members who are well-liked may have an easier time
“If Professor X got promoted, I surely will!!”

- Cases are judged on their merits relative to standards, not in comparison to others.
- You may not know everything about Professor X.
- Standards change over time, etc.
Sage Advice From Senior Scholars

- Time is shorter than you think. Set yearly goals so that you remain on track to achieve the milestones (publications, teaching evaluations, grants) needed at the time of promotion, in accordance with the expectations as per your position description.
More sage advice

- Get involved in national associations so people start to get to know you and your work.
- Cultivate a list of external reviewers well in advance.
When writing your narratives, do not just summarize what is in your vita. Use this space to “tell your story” and show how and why your work has made a difference. This applies to all narratives (teaching, service, research). Highlight the key accomplishments up front (e.g., number of pubs, big grants), perhaps in a bulleted list (I find this particularly helpful). This way readers do not need to work to find the summary data, and then move on to the story.
More advice—Create a research program

- Show you are building a program...not just short-term goals of “getting federal funds” or “publishing two papers a year” or “recruiting PhD students”. ... be strategic so publications are not a series of one-off, un-related topics but a progressive building of research. Grants are actually an input into your program and not an output. You realize that grants are needed to conduct the work you are trying to do and that publications and students are the output which then help you get more grants for new projects and fund additional students.
Don’t worry about tenure. Make choices that create the kind of career that you want to have. If you do that, work hard, and are successful in your own mind, you’ll either get tenured or you won’t. If you get tenured, great. Keep working. If you don’t, you will have discovered that your current institution doesn’t have the same focus/values as you do and you’ll be better off to have learned that lesson early and had the opportunity to find a better fit.
FAQs

What should be in the context statement?

- Explanations of any unusual challenges or opportunities
- Context statements are not required
FAQs

How does early promotion work?

- Performance must be exceptional, not just meet our standards
- Only with the Provost’s prior approval
FAQs (continued)

- Can the tenure clock be stopped?
  - Yes
    - by giving birth (up to 2 years)
    - by serious illness
    - by family emergency
    - by taking leave without pay
  - All requests must be made to the Provost by September 1.
FAQs

Can a candidate add to their file after the file leaves the department?

- Only minor modifications are allowed (e.g., the full citation of a paper listed as in press).
- If a submitted paper (grant) is accepted, the candidate can request reconsideration of the file by the department.
FAQs

- Is early promotion and/or tenure permitted?
  - Performance must be exceptional, not just meet our standards
  - Only with the Provost’s prior approval
FAQs

Can excellence in one area mitigate lesser performance in another area?

- Evaluations are completed based on letters of appointment.
- Well rounded faculty that advance research and education at WSU.
QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONCERNS??
The End