

Resolution on the visibility of the chair's letter to the dean in tenure cases

Sponsor:

Faculty Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Status of the Faculty

Background

The chair's letter to the Dean represents the views of the faculty and provides a synopsis of the discussion of the candidate's suitability for promotion. To facilitate transparency, accountability, and accuracy of representation, while ensuring confidentiality of individual faculty members' comments, the chair's letter should be made available to faculty upon request.

The chair, as a member of the section, has the right to confidentially communicate their personal perspective of the candidate's performance to the Dean. There is precedence for this practice, having been implemented in the College of Arts and Science, as excerpted from their tenure promotion documents:

"Before submitting the dossier to the dean, the chair's letter should be made available to the tenured members of the department for review. The purpose of this review is to allow tenured members to verify that the letter accurately reports the department's proceedings and deliberations. The letter should not be disseminated in any form to tenured faculty but it should remain in the chair's office at all times and be made available for viewing there. The chair may then revise the letter in light of comments received from tenured members of the department.

In addition to writing a covering letter for the tenure dossier, the chair is required to provide his or her own judgment on the case. This may be done in an appendix to the chair's cover letter which is clearly distinct from the chair's account of the department's proceedings and deliberations and marked as the chair's own assessment, or in a separate letter. If it is included with the chair's cover letter, it should not be made available to the tenured members of the department for review along with the rest of the chair's letter."

The Resolution

Whereas departmental deliberations are a crucial component of the tenure review;

Whereas it is essential that these deliberations are transparent and accurately communicated to the dean;

Be it resolved that the summary of the promotion discussion in the chair's letter be made available for review by the voting faculty upon request;

Be it further resolved that faculty eligible to vote can request to see the letter after votes on the promotion have been submitted to the chair;

Be it further resolved that each College establish their own guidelines for implementation of this process.