

2015-2016 URPTC Annual Report
Summary of the Review Process, Identified Issues and
Recommendations

URPTC Members

Robert Abt, Chair	Natural Resources
Don Brenner	Engineering
Robert Clark	Management
Cathy Crossland	Education
Dennis Daley	Humanities and Social Sciences
Jesse Grimes	Agriculture and Life Sciences
Lunardi Leda	Engineering
Robin Moore	Design
Abdel-Fattah Seyam	Textiles
Barbara Sherry	Veterinary Medicine
Leonard Stefanski	Sciences
Jenny Xiang	Agriculture and Life Sciences
David Zonderman	Humanities and Social Sciences

Preface

The two-year staggered term appointment structure of the URPTC means one-half of the committee membership has one year of experience in service and the other half is new to the role of membership. Each committee member holds the rank of Professor and therefore has served in the role of department voting faculty and also on college RPT committees at some point in our career (and most have served as chairs of our college RPT committees). However, this committee's charge is fundamentally different. Each member of the URPTC is required to transcend the perspective of individual departments and colleges to represent a university-wide perspective. It is a critical assignment because it is this perspective that makes the inconsistencies in interpretation and implementation of procedures obvious.

The role of the University Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee (per appointment by the Provost) is to evaluate the RTP process, including the associated academic regulations (PRRs) and the RPT website, review the assigned faculty dossiers from each college make observations and report major findings, conclusions and recommendations in the format of a written report from the committee. The URPTC is advisory to the Provost.

This committee assignment is unique in the amount of information that must be acquired and applied to ensure due diligence in this important process. It involves a significant amount of professional and personal time. This year the URPTC invested over 200 hours of faculty time in meetings, and even more hours in document review and report preparation. I mention this to underscore that the faculty have invested substantial effort and diligently pursued the full scope of our charge.

To address this broad charge with a better historical perspective, we read the reports of our committee predecessors for the past several years. We learned that most of these reports identify the same issues and make the same recommendations year after year. There are clearly good-faith efforts and documented improvements in the SME, DVF voting procedures, evaluation of teaching, reporting of external support and peer-reviewed publications.

Annual Reports of the URPTC traditionally document procedural issues in the RPT process and suggest corrections/improvements in the process. We decided that the 2015-2016 Annual Report should go beyond the identification of procedural issues and suggested improvements to recommend that the university to rethink several tenets and aspects that of the RPT procedures

For example, the State of Mutual Expectations (SME) has been consistently identified over the years as an area of major concern in each of the Annual Reports of the URPTC. It was first implemented in 1999. In the ensuing 16 years, it has become increasingly difficult to understand or explain how it should be developed and used, particularly in the RPT process. **Overall, the experience of this year's URPTC indicates that the SME is poorly understood by faculty and administrators, yet has evolved into the central document that drives the most important process through which NC State faculty are evaluated.**

The review of 19 SMEs this year confirms that there are at least 19 ways to execute an SME, often with negative impact on the candidate. Some are detailed, some are brief. Some are prescriptive,

some are descriptive. Some are specific, some are generic. Some focus on guidance, some focus on evaluation. The outcome of the RPT process at the department and college levels appears to be directly related to the skills and experiences of the department head to mentor faculty and guide the development of the SME and the skills and experiences of the DVF in using the SME as context for evaluation. The members of the URPTC cannot discern with certainty what represents a correctly developed SME.

The academic integrity of the university is directly linked to how faculty scholarship is fostered, measured, and rewarded. **Our committee believes the SME and its implementation should be assessed directly, including an examination of alternatives.** Committee opinions on this topic ranged from options where the SME is simply a statement of time allocation and departmental measures of achievement are independently documented in departmental guidelines to options requiring more consistent, specific and prescriptive guidelines across the university.

Though time consuming, our job would have been much more difficult without the efficient access to work materials and prompt response to our many inquiries provided by Amy Jinnette, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dr. Katharine Stewart, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. We gratefully acknowledge their efforts on our behalf.

For the committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. C. Allen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R" and "A".

Dossier Issues by Section

I.A. Cover Page

Cover Issue 1. The item labeled "ALL PREVIOUSLY HELD POSITIONS WITH RANK AT ANOTHER INSTITUTION" is often overlooked, even in cases of "early" promotion to Associate Professor, where time and performance at another institution is often a relevant factor.

Recommendation: Either delete this section; or require the department to complete it with "N/A" for those cases where it is truly not applicable.

Cover Issue 2. On one dossier a hand-drawn column was added to the CRPTC vote distribution boxes to include the category "Abstain." It is unusual to alter a university form for any reason, particularly in such an important activity as RPT. It is also unclear whether the member abstained or was recused, based on the written assessment of the CRPTC. There is a difference between these two actions by a Committee member at any level of the RPT.

Recommendation: The three boxes for recording the CRPTC vote should be expanded to four (add #Recuse) and preferably five (add #Recuse and #Abstain), and CRPTC members should be careful to distinguish between "abstain" and "recuse." Explanations for abstentions or recusals should be unambiguous. A statement attesting to the fact that double voting has not occurred should be required.

Cover Issue 3. The university's *Department and College RPT Liaisons Guide to NC State's Reappointment,*

Promotion and Tenure (RPT) Process https://www.provost.ncsu.edu/promotion-tenure/College_Dept_RPT_Liaisons_Guide.php states "The signature of the Department Head and Dean verifies that the contents and format of the dossier are original and in compliance with the Academic Tenure Policy, university regulations, and college and department rules." On at least one dossier someone other than the Dean signed on the line labeled "Dean Signature." This also raised the question of whether the Dean's report (section IX B.) was written by the Dean or by a proxy.

Recommendation: The university should clarify when it is appropriate for a proxy to prepare and sign for the Dean.

I.B. Statement of Mutual Expectation (Dossier Section I.A.)

SMEs: General Concern

SMEs are consistently the most contentious issue in the RPT process. This is a consequence of their central role in defining expectations and their perceived contractual standing. When combined with inconsistent implementation across realms of responsibility, academic disciplines, and participants in the review process (Department Voting Faculty, Department Heads, College RPT Committee,

Deans, and external reviewers) it is easy to understand why SME issues are so prominent in contentious RPT cases. In some cases the SME seems overly prescriptive while in others it provides little guidance.

SMEs: Historic Context

URPTC reports in each of the past five years raised serious issues concerning SMEs. While specific recommendations were made each year for SME improvements, there was sufficient concern about SME flaws that in 2013-14 the URPTC report considered removing SMEs from the RPT process. It is therefore especially discouraging to note that there have been marginal improvements, but not significant progress, in making SMEs an effective tool for both faculty guidance and evaluation in the promotion and tenure process. This likely reflects the difficulties in formalizing and standardizing a process that is being applied to a diverse and dynamic academic portfolio.

SMEs: Ramifications for the Future

NC State University launched the Chancellor's Faculty Excellence Program initiative in 2011 with the goal of hiring a large number of faculty clustered into interdisciplinary research areas. The successful hiring of over 75 faculty stimulated a second round of recruitments launched in 2014. These interdisciplinary faculty, whose roles are explicitly across department and sometimes college boundaries, face an even greater challenge than their predecessors in understanding their academic responsibilities and rights. The SME will either clarify or confuse the issues for not only the candidates but also other participants in the review process. Accordingly, we have our recently-hired and future interdisciplinary faculty as well as conventional single-department faculty in mind as we offer our recommendations.

It is the university's responsibility to provide a system that provides guidance and accountability. The current implementation of SMEs has not been effective in providing either. Rather than continuing a series of ineffective marginal changes, the URPTC feels that ***it is time to consider fundamental changes or alternative approaches***. In that context we offer the following suggestions.

SME Issue 1: The role of the SME in the RPT process remains unclear.

Cases where promotion is denied provide litmus tests for the role, performance, and effectiveness of the SME in the RPT process. In each of multiple such cases reviewed this year, the candidate pointed to the SME and argued passionately, if not persuasively, how s/he had met or surpassed all of the expectations in her/his SME. A candidate's SME-based defense of his/her record of accomplishments is understandable in light of passages in ***REG 05.20.27.1***: "The Statement of Mutual Expectation (SME) is a written description of the mix of the individual faculty member's realms of responsibility and the mutually-agreed-upon expectations from both the faculty member and the department during the faculty member's appointment. ... Together with the annual faculty activity report, the SME provides the principal basis for annual evaluation of the performance of the faculty member. For reappointment, promotion and conferral of tenure, the responsibilities described in the SME will be evaluated in light of the standards defined in the university's Academic Tenure Policy" In one such case the Dean supported his/her recommendation against promotion

by invoking the last sentence of University **REG 05.20.27.1**: “Fulfilling the responsibilities defined in the SME is necessary but not alone sufficient for reappointment, promotion and conferral of tenure;” (not quoted: “... the RPT dossier must include evidence of the faculty member’s level of achievement in each area.”).

If the SME is the principal basis for annual evaluation, then should it not also be the principal basis for cumulative annual evaluation, i.e., for promotion decisions? If fulfilling the responsibilities defined in the SME is necessary but not alone sufficient for reappointment, promotion and conferral of tenure, is something other than including “evidence of the faculty member’s level of achievement” required? The language in **REG 05.20.27** makes it is easy to see how the SME becomes a contentious focal point in disputed automatic cases.

Recommendation: **REG 05.20.27** should be edited to clarify the role of the SME in the RPT process. Importantly, this clarification will be moot if the SMEs themselves are not improved as recommended below.

SME Issue 2: The format and content of the SME are encouraged rather than mandated.

REG 05.20.27.2 states “The faculty member and department head are encouraged to consider the following in development of the SME.”. This implication that SME contents and format are optional likely contributes to the poor relationship between **REG 05.20.27** SME best practices and the SMEs included in RPT dossiers. This year, some of the SMEs in RPT dossiers were almost verbatim versions of the Departmental standards while other SMEs contained guarantees of student teaching scores (“and receive a 3.5 or better on a 5-point scale on student end-of course evaluations”); lists of journals in which to publish; expectations of per-year publication counts (“(1) publish either one peer-reviewed article and one book chapter annually, or (2) two book chapters annually”); or that were signed and dated as late as November, 2015 (raising the question of whether the SME was written to reflect past performance).

Recommendation: **REG 05.20.27.2** should be edited to provide a required format and content, or range of formats and contents, for SMEs. It is understood that the university includes a very diverse group of scholars and that Department Heads have a similarly wide range of leadership styles, however it seems unreasonable that the format and content of the RPT dossier itself is so specifically described and yet the document that is perceived as the contract between each faculty member and the university is free-form.

SME Issue 3: SMEs are dynamic documents that may change over the evaluation period yet the RPT process includes only the latest SME.

REG 05.20.27.1 states “The SME is to be reviewed periodically and changes instituted as necessary, especially when significant changes occur in expectations associated with the faculty member's appointment or in the professional life of the faculty member.” Indeed, over a period of six years and sometimes longer, a faculty member’s responsibilities can change substantially, particularly if the administrative supervisor has changed. These changes should be (but due to neglect often are not) captured in new or modified SMEs. Accordingly, a faculty member may have worked under two or more SMEs during the evaluation period, yet only the last of these appears in the dossier with no

evidence that expectations/responsibilities differed in the past. Thus SMEs lose much of their utility because they are either outdated, or updated without a time-indexed record of changes. Proper assessment of performance requires a good understanding of a candidate's responsibilities throughout the entire evaluation period. **REG 05.20.27.1** states "All substantive changes in the realms of responsibility are to be documented in the SME, including when the changes occurred and why such changes were deemed necessary", and **REG 05.20.27.2.4.9** states that the SME should contain a "Summary of substantive changes in the realms of responsibility" but these requirements are either unclear to most faculty and Department Heads or are considered optional.

Recommendation: **REG 05.20.27** should be edited to require inclusion of not only a signed and dated version of the latest SME but also a clear record of all SME changes and their timing since the beginning of the evaluation period. While **REG 05.20.27.1** states "Reviews of SMEs may also be appropriate when there are changes in department leadership...", the review and new signatures should be required in order to confirm consensus between the two parties. Tenure-clock extension, academic leave, or scholarly leave are examples of special cases, and **REG 05.20.27** should clearly state how they should be handled (e.g. should the SME be changed for that time period and then reverted at the end?). Should paid summer efforts including startup packages, endowed professorships, and retention packages that affect productivity be reflected in the SME?

SME Issue 4: SMEs should not be so specific so as to exclude any faculty efforts within the realms of responsibility.

While the contents of SMEs are only "encouraged" (see SME Issue 2 above), **REG 05.20.27.2** recommends that SMEs include a "List of appropriate mix of realms of responsibility agreed to by the faculty member, the department head representing the department and others as appropriate to the appointment, and the dean of the college, including approximate percentage distribution of effort expected in those realms listed." Since 100% of the faculty member's responsibilities should be described in the SME, then there should be no other productive efforts considered during the RPT process. This year the URPTC reviewed dossiers that included evaluation of efforts not included in the SME.

Recommendation: **REG 05.20.27** should be edited to clarify that only those activities that are included in the SME will be evaluated during the RPT process. Please note that almost *any* activity can be considered to be a part of the three university missions (teaching, research and service), but it is the faculty member and Department Head's responsibility to ensure that faculty efforts are placed in that context for review. SMEs should not be so specific so as to exclude any faculty efforts within the realms of responsibility.

SME Issue 5: In the SME, the stated teaching requirements must match the teaching opportunities and responsibilities.

The original SME and/or departmental policies may include a teaching requirement that is either no longer relevant or not possible for the faculty member to fulfill. For example, courses may have been discontinued and left the faculty member no alternative relevant teaching opportunities, or a faculty member may have bought out his/her teaching effort. This year the URPTC reviewed at least one dossier where this was a major issue.

Recommendation: A revised SME should indicate a reduced teaching effort and include corresponding increases in effort in other realms of responsibility.

SME Issue 6: SMEs must include references to department, college, and university policies and regulations.

REG 05.20.27.1 states “For reappointment, promotion and conferral of tenure, the responsibilities described in the SME will be evaluated in light of the standards defined in the university’s Academic Tenure Policy (NCSU POL05.20.01 - Appointment, Reappointment, Promotion and Permanent Tenure), the Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure (RPT) rules of the department(s) and college(s) in which the faculty member is appointed and active, and the faculty member’s performance in all areas of responsibility.” While the REG clearly requires the inclusion of these policies as part of the evaluation process, it does not require confirmation of this inclusion. This year the URPTC reviewed dossiers where the SME was not consistent with the Department’s standards.

Recommendation: **REG 05.20.27** should be edited to require a confirmatory statement that department, college, and university policies and regulations have been consulted and conformed to during the RPT process.

SME Issue 7: SMEs should be included in the dossiers sent to external evaluators.

REG 05.20.05.5 (Scholarly External Evaluations) does not include any mention of SMEs. **REG 05.20.27.1** states that “The Statement of Mutual Expectation (SME) is a written description of the mix of the individual faculty member’s realms of responsibility and the mutually-agreed-upon expectations from both the faculty member and the department during the faculty member’s appointment.” It seems unreasonable to ask an external evaluator to assess the candidate’s performance without a clear understanding of his/her responsibilities, which is not possible in the absence of the SME. This year, the exact content of materials sent to external evaluators was unclear, but in at least one case, confusion about expectations of the candidate led to conflicting evaluations and a contested condition.

Recommendation: **REG 05.20.05.5** should be edited to include a requirement that the SME be included in the dossier provided to external evaluators.

SME Summary

The points above indicate serious problems with the current implementation of SMEs at NC State. These have persisted over several years even with repeated attempts to improve the implementation as evidenced by previous URPTC reports. The 2016 URPTC is not confident that continuing to refine the current system will lead to better outcomes. We propose that the Provost’s office implement a task force with a charge to reconsider how NC State addresses guidance and accountability issues for faculty promotion and tenure. It may indeed be true that any guidance and

accountability system for evaluation by both internal and external reviewers will be contentious. But since all Universities must address this issue, we should reassess our approach before implementing another round of marginal changes.

I.C. Brief Resume (Dossier Section I.B.)

Issue: It is not always possible to determine when or where accomplishments listed in the brief resume occurred.

Recommendation: All candidates should clearly distinguish between accomplishments while employed at NCSU from accomplishments while employed elsewhere (if relevant). For promotions to Professor, candidates should clearly distinguish between accomplishments since their last promotion from those realized prior to the last promotion.

I.D. Teaching (Dossier Section II)

As measured by the amount and intensity of discussion among URPTC members, Section II of the dossier (TEACHING AND MENTORING OF UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS) lags behind only SMEs. This is due in no small part to the very relevant and too often overlooked fact that measuring teaching effectiveness is fraught with problems even under the best of circumstances. (For a recent contribution to the literature exposing flaws in student course evaluations see <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/09/26/345515451/student-course-evaluations-get-an-f>.) To this very fundamental assessment problem, add inconsistency, ineptitude, and selectivity in the reporting of factual information, and the URPTC's concerns about the utility and effectiveness of Section II in the promotion process are understandable.

Section II.A calls for a presentation and summarization of factual information: courses taught; student evaluations; and peer evaluations. Information poorly reported is of limited value and sometimes misleading, deliberately or not. In far too many dossiers the information contained in Section II.A is poorly reported, sometimes due to failure to adhere to established regulations, but just as often due to an overreliance on data dumps from ClassEval reports.

Teaching Issue 1. List of Courses Taught with Enrollment. There is little consistency in the reporting of this information. In some dossiers reporting this information spans as much as four pages due to single-column formatting and excessive line spacing, resulting in pages with up to 80% white space. In other dossiers a comparable amount of information is conveyed in a compact table requiring less than one page. In no cases is this information reported in a manner that makes evident trends over time (in both numbers of courses taught and enrollments). Nor is the teaching effort reconciled with teaching percentages reported in the candidates SMEs. In some cases a substantial proportion of listed courses have enrollments of just one or two students, contributing to the difficulty of assessing actual teaching effort.

Recommendation: In light of the importance of teaching, the university should invest in the development of a software add on to the ClassEval system that automatically summarizes the

information on courses taught and enrollments in a consistent *and informative* format and displays this information graphically making clear the totality of the information and facilitating the assessments of temporal trends. The candidate should provide a written interpretation of the graphical display in relation to the SME teaching percentages, including, especially, notes explaining when teaching effort deviated from the SME due to special circumstances.

Teaching Issue 2.1. Summary of Student Question Evaluations. As with the reporting of courses taught and enrollments, there is substantial variability in the reporting of the student evaluations. The minimalist (in terms of effort on the part of the candidate) approach simply dumps entire tables from ClassEval reports into the dossier, in one case using a full 16 pages of dossier. It is very difficult, in fact bordering on the impossible, to assimilate this much information spread out over so many pages. Candidates sometimes omit question labels/identifiers, resulting in pages of jibberish. No journal would accept such sloppy reporting of information, nor should the university. Other candidates do a very respectable job of reporting. The most effective dossiers of candidates are those that summarize responses from a few key questions, and present those summaries in tables, enabling the assessment of undergraduate and graduate teaching separately, and revealing temporal trends.

Recommendation: In light of the importance of teaching, the university should invest in the development of a software add on to the ClassEval system that automatically summarizes the information from student evaluations. The information should be presented graphically enabling convenient assessments of student evaluations by time and course, while simultaneously reflecting variability due to class size and response rate. The university collects a lot of course evaluation data each semester. Using good analytical tools and methods to analyze the totality of the campus-wide course evaluation data over several years would provide the university with a useful summary assessment of the state of teaching on campus; while at the same time providing an objective and statistically defensible means of computing instructor-specific evaluation summaries adjusted for key factors such as class size, course type (grad, ugrad, upper/lower division), etc.

Teaching Issue 2.2. Summary of Student Written Evaluations. Due to the free-form nature of student written evaluations, they can contain comments ranging from the very useful to the very irrelevant. Extracting the useful information is a challenging problem to which no good solution has been forthcoming to date. Allowing the candidate to "cherry pick" comments obviously biases the summary. Eliminating that bias by requiring the inclusion of all written comments is not a viable alternative due to the sometimes insensitive nature of irrelevant comments.

Recommendation: The University should consider having the information in student written evaluations summarized not by the candidate as is now done, but rather by the peer reviewer(s) of teaching. This approach has two major advantages. First, summarization by peer reviewers enables filtering of irrelevant comments without the bias (or the appearance of bias) when filtering is done by the candidate, at least to the extent that peer reviewers are themselves unbiased. Second, the peer reviewers of teaching are uniquely positioned to place student comments in context of what they observed in the classroom and in their overall assessments of the candidate's teaching. Having peer reviewers summarize student written evaluations in their reports has the potential of enhancing the utility of both types of information.

Teaching Issue 3. Summary of Peer Evaluations of Teaching. There is variability in the conduct and reporting of peer evaluations of teaching. Peer reviews do not always occur with the frequency and timing delineated in **REG 05.20.10 - Evaluation of Teaching**. At least as problematic is the practice of allowing candidates to (selectively) summarize the peer reviewer reports. **REG 05.20.20 - Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Dossier Format Requirements** calls for only "A summary of peer evaluations of teaching" to be prepared by the individual being reviewed. Allowing candidates to summarize the reviews of their teaching is fraught with the same problems as allowing them to selectively report student written comments.

Recommendation: In light of the importance of teaching, the university should do a better job of standardizing and enforcing the rules and regulations governing the frequency and comprehensiveness of peer evaluations of teaching by rank and time in rank. Dossiers should include peer evaluator reports unedited by the candidate. **REG 05.20.10 - Evaluation of Teaching** calls for a written assessment signed by the reviewer and the instructor to be submitted to the department head. These reports in their entirety should be included in the RPT dossier.

If the recommendation above relating to the summarization of student written comments is adopted, then the peer evaluations of teaching should have a section dedicated to the summarization of student written comments, including interpretation in light of the peer reviewer's other observations.

I.E. RADAR Reports (Dossier Section III.B)

Issues: The reporting of external funding information suffers from problems similar to those identified with the reporting of student evaluations. There is too much reliance on RADAR reports, to the exclusion explanatory text. RADAR reports do not always provide an accurate account of a candidate's funding since the full contractual amount is reported rather than the incremental funding.

With multiple-PI awards it is difficult to assess a candidate's contribution. In these cases it is critical that the candidate provide detailed explanation for any external funding that does not appear in the RADAR report. An effort should be made to ensure that the reporting of external funding is complete, accurate, and defensible. The listings of PIs created by RADAR are not always reliable.

Recommendation: To this end, candidates should be advised of the full statement regarding reporting of research funding in **Reg 05.20.20**: "Include a Research Administration Data and Reporting System (RADAR) report of your grant activity. Also list any external and internal support you have received for your scholarship that is not included in the RADAR report; indicate funding levels and duration; clearly identify whether submitted and under review, funded or not."

In particular, faculty should report their portion of any research funding listed in RADAR and provide project number detail if this does not show up in the RADAR report. Research funding from other ledger accounts should also be properly documented in the dossier. Candidates should explain their efforts and roles in multi-PI grants.

I.F. External Evaluations. (Dossier Section VII).

External Evaluations Issue 1. Not all departments include a specific and clear statement in their request letters to reviewers that a recommendation for or against the promotion is inappropriate. This problem occurred less frequently than last year, but it has not been eliminated. In one such case reviewed this year, all six external letters made very specific recommendations regarding promotion. Apparently, not all DHs are familiar with the Required Letter for Soliciting External Evaluations at <https://www.provost.ncsu.edu/promotion-tenure/example-letter.php>. Even when the template request letter text is used, external evaluators often make a recommendation regarding promotion.

Recommendation: Ensure that all department heads are familiar with and adhere to the format of the sample Required Letter for Soliciting External Evaluations especially with regard to the inappropriateness of making recommendations for or against promotion.

External Evaluations Issue 2. This year the URPTC reviewed cases where it was apparent that the external letter writers had access to information supplied by the department that was not included in the dossier. More generally, there is concern among the URPTC that the committee does not always know exactly what information is conveyed to the external reviewers. This is problematic for at least two reasons: 1) a reviewer's opinion of a case can be (might be) influenced by what is included or not included; 2) the meaning of certain comments in the reviewer's letters can only be conjectured when they refer to information not available to the URPTC. The Required Letter for Soliciting External Evaluations at <https://www.provost.ncsu.edu/promotion-tenure/example-letter.php> contains the sentence: "Please find enclosed the relevant materials for review." It is crucial that the CRPTC have access to the exact same "relevant materials."

Recommendation: The URPTC should be informed of and have access to all of the materials sent to the external reviewers.

External Evaluations Issue 3. Finding willing reviewers is not easy; finding willing reviewers with no conflicts of interests is harder; finding willing reviewers with no conflicts of interests, and whose opinions are valued by the DVF is harder still. Yet it must be done. In one case reviewed this year the DVF and the DH discounted favorable comments from external reviewers because they were made by faculty at universities deemed less prestigious than NCSU, or because there was a potential COI. In another case, one external reviewer was not a full professor (in violation of Department Rules) and the "blame" for this oversight was seemingly assigned to the candidate. Such problems are not the fault of the candidate, who has only the power to suggest candidates. The DH writes the request letters and thus it is his/her responsibility to vet the proposed reviewers for suitability,

Recommendation: There is a fundamental problem when deficiencies in the selected cohort of external reviewers are construed as deficiencies in the candidate's case. Greater attention by DHs to this crucial component of the dossier is required. It should be made clear to all involved that final responsibility for selection of external reviewers lies with the DH.

External Evaluations Issue 4. In one case reviewed this year, the DH incorrectly over-reported the candidate's distribution of effort in the realm of Discovery of Knowledge by a significant amount. This careless and preventable error had severe negative consequences for the integrity of the review process.

Recommendation: Greater attention by DHs to this crucial component of the dossier is required. Also, there should be a uniform procedure for informing reviewers of a candidate's distribution of effort.

External Evaluations Issue 5. External reviewers get a relatively rare glimpse into the inner workings of the university and the candidate's department in particular. Effective departmental mentoring and management of the process is essential to provide the candidate the best chances of success while also allowing the process to clearly identify strengths and weaknesses. One external reviewer commented on the hundreds of disorganized unedited pages of extraneous information. This reflects poorly on the on the candidate, the process, and the university. Beyond the merits of the case, it is not surprising this candidate received unfavorable external reviews.

Recommendation: Greater attention by the candidates and DHs to the materials sent to external reviewers is required. More specifically, greater attention should be paid to the summarization and organization of the material in a dossier. Grant proposals usually have strict limits on formatting and numbers of pages for key sections. Placing length and formatting restrictions on dossiers would make them easier to read and assess. Some universities make candidate promotion dossier information available to external reviewers via a secure website. Members of the URPTC have received such requests where the amount of information is much less than in some NCSU dossiers, and the instructions given reviewers far more specific. The university should consider the tradeoff between completeness and conciseness in dossiers for all reviewers. In many cases the dossier has become more of a compilation of raw data and less a synthesis of scholarly achievement.

I.G. Department Review. (Dossier Section VIII).

REG 05.20.05 - Consultation and Written Assessments, Recommendations and Responses in RPT Review, contains the following subsections:

2.3.2 Be inclusive in scope. Describe the range of clearly expressed peer viewpoints on the quality and impact of the candidate's work. It is not the role of the written assessment to represent only the viewpoints on which all or a majority of the members of the review group agree; rather, it should describe the range of viewpoints.

2.3.3 Refer only to the accomplishments of the candidate who is the subject of the review. Make no comparison or reference to any other individuals, by name or any other means by which those persons can be uniquely identified. Moreover, the written assessment should make no reference to

personal characteristics of the individual, but rather it should focus on the accomplishments of the individual.

DVF and DH Issue 1. The deliberations of the DVF and the report they produce should provide a fair and balanced assessment of all of the relevant information at their disposal. Yet in two cases reviewed by the URPTC this year, statements in the DVF report focused exclusively on negative comments in the external reviewers' letters, even though the letters were generally, if not unanimously, positive. By itself, this narrow focus on the negative is not necessarily damning. However, in one case the DVF report included partial quotations from the external review letters where the part omitted was crucial for proper interpretation. Regardless of the actual intent of the omission (if any), its effect was to give the appearance that excerpts from the review letters were "cherry picked" or taken out of context to bolster the DVF's argument against promotion. In another case reviewed by the URPTC this year the entire collection of six letters, none of which could be construed as positive, were completely ignored by the DVF. No mention of the letters at all. Regardless of the actual intent of this oversight (if any), its effect was to give the appearance that the external review letters were deliberately ignored to avoid weakening the DVF's argument for promotion.

Recommendation: It should be emphasized to DVFs and DHs that candidates deserve a fair and unbiased assessment. Attention should be paid to avoidance of bias and to the avoidance of an appearance of bias.

DVF and DH Issue 2. In small departments it is possible for a few individuals to have undue influence on the review of a candidate via their participation in both the DVF and CRPTC discussions, even when double voting does not occur.

Recommendation: Small departments (say less than five members) should consider seeking more independent output from outside NCSU or internally.

DVF and DH Issue 3. The letter of solicitation sent to external evaluators by the DH specifically includes the sentence, "...we do not ask for your recommendation about tenure and promotion (or only promotion)." It is illogical and inappropriate for the DH to then include a statement in his/her written assessment, that refers to such a statement from an external evaluator as justification for a decision.

Recommendation. Because the university has taken the position that seeking recommendations about tenure and promotion is to be avoided, it now needs to take a position on how such recommendations are to be used should they be proffered without solicitation.

DVF and DH Issue 4. REG 05.20.05 Section 2.3.3 cited above admonishes the DVF and DH reports to avoid reference to personal characteristics of the individual, and to focus on the accomplishments of the individual. Yet non-relevant comments, some of a personal nature, still find their way into these reports.

In one case the DVF report included the statement that the candidate had the "option to extend his tenure but chose not to." The URPTC didn't understand why such seemingly extraneous information was included in the DVF report. In the same case the DH raised the issue of "early" promotion even though this was not "early." More generally, comments about family leave and other tenure clock extensions are appropriate only if they actually happened. In one case reviewed by the URPTC this year the DH wrote that one external evaluator who is an associate professor "is going for promotion this year." This breach of confidential information puts the university at risk for revealing it to a larger audience. One DH report contained the comment "the promotion is essential if we are to retain [him/her] at NC State." The URPTC wondered whether retention issues should be discussed in the dossier as they seemingly have nothing to do with the formal reasons to promote an individual.

Recommendation: DVFs and DHs need better guidance and training as to what comments are and are not appropriate for their reports. The manner in which tenure clock extensions are reported and factored into the promotion process needs clarification and standardization. In addition to avoiding the term "early" when describing a promotion to Full professor, the reviewers at each stage of the process should focus on the body of evidence available for assessment and restrict their comments to its adequacy or deficiencies.

I.H. College Review (Dossier Section IX).

CRPTC and Dean Reports

College and Dean Review Issue 1. Many of the URPTC's comments and recommendations from the previous section (I.G. Department Review) are relevant to this section as well.

College and Dean Review Issue 2. In cases where the candidate has written an optional response to the college evaluation (DVF and DH), that response is available to the CRPTC and Dean. In some cases reviewed this year there was little or no acknowledgement of the optional response by the CRPTC or Dean. This raises the question of what purposes are served by the optional response.

Recommendation: The college review should be required to acknowledge an optional response to the department review and state whether and how it affected their assessment. Similarly, the URPTC review should acknowledge optional responses to the department and college reviews.

College and Dean Review Issue 3. In cases where the decision is negative for reasons of timing, the Dean, apparently in an attempt to soften the blow, sometimes suggests that promotion will be successful in the future. This is inappropriate. In one such case the Dean expressed hope that the case would be favorably reviewed "next year." Not only do such statements put the writer (DH or Dean) in a position that s/he might later regret, they are clearly inappropriate when the decision is mandatory, which usually implies that there is no "next year."

Recommendation: Deans should avoid making statements about the likelihood of future RPT outcomes.

One CRPTC report stated that all five external reviewers recommended promotion with tenure. There are two problems here: the first is a counting problem---only two of the five letters specifically recommended promotion with tenure; the second relates to the university's position that external reviewers should not make such recommendations, thus it seems inconsistent for the CRPTC or (or the Dean, DVF or DH) to use that information directly in their deliberations and reports

Because the university has taken the position that seeking recommendations about tenure and promotion is to be avoided, it now needs to take a position on how such recommendations are to be used should they be proffered without solicitation.

III. Optional Response Letters.

Issues: Candidates have the option of responding after each stage of the review process: after the department review; after the college review; and after the URPTC review. Apparently, there is no requirement for the college review to respond to, or even acknowledge, a candidate's response to the department review. In one case reviewed this year a well written, carefully crafted response to the department review was largely ignored in the college review. If optional responses are going to be ignored, to what purpose do they serve?

Recommendation: The URPTC notes that REG 05.20.05.4. OPTIONAL CANDIDATE RESPONSES, gives no specific guidance on this matter. However, REG 05.20.05.1.2 states that the formal documented basis for the consultation [of the DVF and CRPTC] will be the candidate's dossier ..." Because optional candidate responses become part of the dossier, it seems logical that the responses that are part of the dossier should be acknowledged and/or considered by the DVF and CRPTC and the URPTC. Thus the college review should be required to acknowledge an optional response to the department review and state whether and how it affected their assessment. Similarly, the URPTC review should acknowledge optional responses to the department and college reviews.