

**2016-2017 University Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee  
(URPTC) Annual Report  
Summary of the Review Process and Recommendations**

**URPTC Members**

Barbara Sherry, Chair	Veterinary Medicine
Jerry Bernholz	Sciences
Donald Brenner	Engineering
Robert Clark	Management
Cathy Crossland	Education
Joel Ducoste	Engineering
Michael Kanters, Chair-Elect	Natural Resources
Leda Lunardi	Engineering
Chris Mayhorn	Humanities and Social Sciences
Robin Moore	Design
Jon Rust	Textiles
Brian Whipker	Agriculture and Life Sciences
David Zonderman	Humanities and Social Sciences (past Faculty Senate Chair)

## INTRODUCTION

The University Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee (URPTC) is charged with evaluating the integrity of the RPT process. This is different from the charge to department and college RPT committees which instead evaluate the merits of the candidate. NC State University's faculty provide the teaching, research and service efforts that have earned the state's investment and the public's trust, and that have established us as a leading public university. The reappointment, promotion and tenure process lies at the heart of how we recruit and retain these faculty. By ensuring the integrity of the promotion and tenure process, we simultaneously affirm our faculty's faith in the system and reward our best and brightest.

Our committee is comprised of representatives of each of the ten academic colleges, most of whom have served as Chair of their college's RPT committee, as well as the current or previous year's Chair of the Faculty Senate. Our members are appointed for a two-year term with approximately half of the committee turning over each year.

The Provost requested that we review the dossiers of all candidates who received a negative decision as well as a collection of more than a dozen dossiers selected from all 10 colleges. The dossiers themselves totaled 1140 pages of dense information reviewed by every member of the committee. In addition, we consulted RPT standards for the 18 represented departments and the 10 colleges and related all materials back to the university's vast compendium of RPT regulations. More than 175 faculty hours were devoted to our meetings, which does not include the much greater time spent preparing our reviews.

It is in this context that we offer our recommendations to the Provost.

We are pleased that this year the Provost took steps to address two major procedural concerns expressed in the Annual Report from the URPTC last year. First, the Provost assembled a new Task Force to examine and recommend improvements to current procedures for generating, updating and using faculty Statements of Mutual Expectation (SMEs). Second, the Provost charged the standing Evaluation of Teaching Committee to examine and recommend improvements to current procedures for peer and student evaluations of teaching. We look forward to learning of the progress of these two groups, as concerns with SMEs and evaluation of teaching persist.

We identified one major new concern this year. **Specifically, the characteristics of collegiality and professionalism are being used as criteria for RPT decisions, but the standards of performance are vague, the tools used for measurement are not described in detail, and the metrics are not reported uniformly.** There is significant concern that these criteria are particularly vulnerable to subjective interpretation and bias. It is understood that collegiality and professionalism are explicitly mentioned as criteria for RPT decisions in multiple department and college standards, that they are used in RPT decisions at other universities, and that they may play an essential role in a faculty member's ability to fulfill his or her responsibilities. However a decision that a candidate has failed to meet acceptable standards

for collegiality or professionalism must be based on either evidence that a lack of collegiality or professionalism has directly impeded his or her ability to succeed in a realm of responsibility, or that it will preclude a candidate's ability to achieve promotion in the future. That evidence is not always provided in the dossier. **Therefore, the URPTC recommends that a Task Force be assembled and charged with examining the use of collegiality and professionalism as criteria for RPT decisions.** Please see more on this topic in the body of the review.

We appreciate the opportunity and responsibility for reviewing the RPT process at NC State. We would particularly like to thank Amy Jinnette, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and Katharine Stewart, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs for their thoughtful and timely help with our review process.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Sherry". The signature is written in black ink and has a fluid, connected style.

Barbara Sherry, Ph.D.  
Professor of Virology

---

## ISSUES – GENERAL

### ITEM #1: NC State's RPT Regulations – Online Format

**Issue #1:** *It is difficult to locate a complete set of RPT regulations to ensure compliance.*

**Recommendation #1:** It would be helpful to provide a concise summary of regulations as a single page with links to more detailed descriptions. While there are web pages that approximate this, they are numerous and they are not always what they seem (see below).

**Issue #2:** *Web pages and links for RPT regulations are not always intuitive.*

For example, the mandatory time lines for the RPT process are not in *REG 05.20.31* which is entitled “*Tenure Clock*” nor are they in a link on that site titled “*RPT Review Timeline Information*” or any other link from that site. Instead, the timing is indicated in “*Review Timeline Example*”, which surprisingly, is not linked from the “*RPT Timeline*” site but is instead linked from some other site which cannot be located at this time.

**Recommendation #2:** It would be helpful to take a fresh look at the links, their names, and their purposes. The task of renaming several links and adding a few new ones could have a major impact on RPT anxiety, and would not require changes in any regulations or standards.

### ITEM #2: NC State's RPT Regulations – Instructions

**Issue:** *The words “should” and “whenever possible” in instructions likely create more problems than they solve.*

**Recommendation:** It is understood that the words “should” or “whenever possible” provide a useful flexibility for our diverse faculty and departments. However they introduce an ambiguity that poses barriers to a homogenous review process and that can facilitate misuse. **Please note:** this was expressed as a concern for SMEs in the 2015-2016 Annual Review (SME Issue #2). This year it is a concern for External Evaluations (see below).

### ITEM #3: URPTC Orientation

**Issue:** *In any given year, half of the URPTC is new and the learning curve is rather steep.*

**Recommendation:** In the fall semester before dossiers are available for review, the Provost's office could provide an orientation session that includes navigation of the RPT online site and a representative of NC State's Office of the General Counsel to present “what if” scenarios. It would be preferable to combine this meeting with the fall meeting when the Provost provides his charge and his response to the previous year's annual report. A 2- or 3-hour meeting would be simpler than getting more than a dozen people together twice.

#### ITEM #4: Ownership of the RPT Process

**Issue:** *Some reviews were conducted using processes not included in university regulations.*

The RPT process is described by these regulations and candidates are evaluated based on their SMEs and university, college, and department standards. However some reviews used evaluation tools that are not clearly described in the above materials. Who determines whether those tools are appropriate for the RPT process, who assesses whether they are used uniformly, and who assesses whether the results include reasonable metrics?

**Recommendation:** We acknowledge that the Provost's office owns the RPT process. We recommend that no evaluation methods other than those specified in University guidelines be used in the RPT process unless the Provost's office has first reviewed and approved such methods. If there is a process used in a dossier that is not explicitly covered in the regulations, the Provost's office should review such standards prior to the beginning of the RPT process. The Provost should then communicate to all review levels that the process that is used by the department or college has been reviewed by the Provost's office and that it has been deemed permissible. Alternatively, the Provost could charge the URPTC with assessing such nonstandard procedures and providing a recommendation as to whether it is permissible. A disadvantage of this option is that the dossier will have already been reviewed and decisions made using potentially unacceptable evaluation methods and/or poor reporting of the results.

#### ITEM #5: Questions raised during the URPTC review process

**Question #1:** what is the scholarly activity for a candidate whose SME indicates 0% research?

**Question #2:** would each college benefit from a faculty member continuously serving on the college RPT committee as a "storehouse" of procedures and regulations?

---

## DOSSIER ISSUES BY SECTION

#### ITEM #1: Section I.A. Statement of Mutual Expectations (SME)

**Issue:** *SMEs do not always conform to requirements in REG 05.20.27.*

Half of the automatic cases did not include percent effort for each realm of responsibility. One third of the automatic cases had issues relating to changes in the SME. These SME concerns spanned multiple colleges and are therefore system-wide.

**Recommendation:** The URPTC is pleased that a new Task Force is tackling this, and looks forward to seeing their recommendations.

## ITEM #2: Assembly of the Dossier

**Issue:** *Some dossiers included extensive materials from prior institutions in section II.A.*

**Recommendation:** *REG 05.20.20.3 (preface)* indicates that only materials since the initial appointment are to be included in section II.A. The DH must emphasize to the candidate that s/he is responsible for following all regulations. Please note directly below that *REG 05.20.20.3* needs to be clearer about what is meant by “initial appointment”.

## ITEM #3: Section II.A.2.a. Student Evaluation of Teaching

**Issue #1:** *Some dossiers included evaluations of a candidate’s teaching at NC State prior to his/her tenure track appointment.*

**Recommendation #1:** *REG 05.20.20.3* needs to clarify what is meant by “initial appointment”.

**Issue #2:** *The CVM does not use ClassEval despite its requirement in REG 05.20.10.4.*

**Recommendation #2:** *REG 05.20.10.4* must be corrected to accommodate this exception. An example of the tool that the CVM uses must be available so faculty outside of the CVM can understand the process.

**Issue #3:** *The concerns related to Student Evaluation of Teaching indicated in the 2015-2016 Annual Report have not been remedied and the concerns persist.*

Issues 1 (the format for the list of courses taught is variable and generally difficult to comprehend), 2.1 (the format for the summary of student evaluations has similar concerns), and 2.2 (the summary of student written evaluations is variable and likely biased) do not appear to have been addressed.

**Recommendation #3:** See the 2015-2016 Annual Report.

## ITEM #4: Section II.A.2.b. Peer Evaluation of Teaching

**Issue #1:** *The department head (DH) and department voting faculty (DVF) do not always follow protocols described in REG 05.20.10.6.* For example, they may not be conducted at the appropriate time, there may be only one reviewer per course, or there may be too few reviews. **Please note:** this concern was expressed in the 2015-2016 Annual Report (Issue 3 in Section I.D.).

**Recommendation #1:** The DH and DVF would benefit from a reminder of the regulation, and perhaps a succinct description with a check-list. Also, see the 2015-2016 Annual Report.

**Issue #2:** *REG 05.20.20.3.II.2.b states the dossier should include a summary of peer evaluation of teaching, but this leads to variability in this important section of the dossier.*

Some evaluations are summarized as single sentences that cannot cover the complexities of teaching effectively. Other summaries are generated by the candidates themselves and therefore may be biased and dominated by “cherry-picked” comments. **Please note:** this concern was expressed in the 2015-2016 Annual Report (Issue 3 in Section I.D.).

**Recommendation #2:** Include peer evaluations in their entirety. If there is concern that this will substantially increase the size of the dossier, consider restricting the length of responses (and see Recommendation #3 below). Also, see Annual Report 2015-2016.

**Issue #3: *There is major variability in the tools that are used for peer evaluation.***

In one dossier, the three peer evaluations appeared to use three different tools, violating requirements in *REG 05.20.10.4.2*. This makes interpretation of the evaluations very difficult.

**Recommendation #3:** Offer a peer evaluation template or a set of templates to cover our diverse teaching efforts. In addition, efficiency could be increased by offering an online review process as some departments already do.

#### **ITEM #5: Section V.II. External evaluations**

**Issue #1: *External evaluators do not always appear appropriate for the task.***

In several cases, the selected individuals appeared inappropriate to serve as external evaluators, either because individuals who do not hold the rank of Full Professor were asked to comment on promotion to Full Professor, or because collaborators were selected such that they were critiquing the significance of their own research.

**Recommendation #1:** Remove the words “should” and “wherever possible” and replace them with “must”. The qualifications to serve as an external evaluator must be clear and required. **Please note:** concern about use of these words was expressed in the 2015-2016 Annual Report with regard to SMEs.

**Issue #2: *There is no requirement to provide external evaluators with the candidate’s SME.***

This defines the candidate’s responsibilities and seems essential for a fair review.

**Recommendation #2:** Require inclusion of the SME (and SME changes during the evaluation period) in materials provided to external evaluators.

#### **ITEM #6: Sections VIII and IX (peer and administrator reviews).**

**Issue #1: *The DVF does not always record the range of opinions expressed during their discussion, as required by REG 05.20.05.2.3.2.***

**Recommendation #1:** The DVF would benefit from a reminder of the regulation, and perhaps a succinct description with a check-list.

**Issue #2: *Peers and administrators do not always mention external evaluations, or selectively mention or interpret them to support their decision.***

**Please note:** this concern was expressed in the 2015-2016 Annual Report (Section I.G.).

**Recommendation #2:** Faculty and administrators would benefit from a reminder to do so, and perhaps a succinct description with a check-list. Also, see the 2015-2016 Annual Report.

**Issue #3: *Peer and administrator reviews do not always refer back to department and/or college standards, as required by REG 05.20.05.2.2.***

**Recommendation #3:** Faculty and administrators would benefit from a reminder of the regulation, and perhaps a succinct description with a check-list.

**ITEM #7: Section II.A.2.b, VIII, and IX (peer and administrator reviews).  
Collegiality and Professionalism as criteria for RPT decisions.**

***Issue: Collegiality and Professionalism are used as criteria for RPT decisions but complex judgements are required.***

One of the issues that the URPTC discussed during the deliberations this year relates to the issue of “collegiality” and “professionalism” and how this concept factors into the RPT process at the departmental, college and university levels of review at NC State. Of particular concern is whether the issue “collegiality” should be part of the RPT process and if so, how. The thrust of the discussions focused on the broad context of how the University creates and maintains a culture where faculty (Tenure Track and Non Tenure Track) are encouraged to be active participants in departments and colleges with the assurance that they will not be penalized for personality attributes in their interactions. The NC State Regulation on RPT sets a clear tone with the statement, “*NC State values, above all, excellence and distinction in creative scholarship that facilitates the increase and diffusion of knowledge, wisdom, and the moral dimensions of intelligence.*” There are six designated Realms of Faculty Responsibility that are part of the RPT Process. Scholarly contributions in an appropriate mix of these six realms must be — both in fact and in faculty perceptions — the principal criteria for decisions about faculty reappointment, promotion, and tenure. The nature of the “appropriate” mix is defined by each academic unit’s Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Rule and agreed upon in each faculty member’s SME. “Collegiality” is not one of the six Realms. However, several academic units (colleges and departments) have introduced the concept of “collegiality” into the RPT process, either as a Standard or through reference, (i.e., “*Faculty are expected to participate in a collegial manner.*”). For several reasons, the URPTC is concerned about the potential impact of such statements or standards that are not directly linked to faculty performance in a designated Realm.



The **policy of the University of North Carolina System** addresses the issue, at least indirectly, of “collegiality” (**section 604 B**)

<http://www.northcarolina.edu/apps/policy/index.php?pg=vs&id=s4434>

*“In no event shall a decision not to reappoint a faculty member be based upon (a) the exercise by the faculty member of rights guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, or by Article I of the North Carolina Constitution, or (b) any of the protected statuses included in Section 103 of The Code, or other forms of discrimination prohibited under policies adopted by campus Boards of Trustees, or (c) personal malice. For purposes of this section, the term “personal malice” means dislike, animosity, ill-will, or hatred based on personal characteristics, traits or circumstances of an individual.”* RPT Rules at the college and departmental level have the possibility of unintentionally violating this policy when discussion of personal characteristics, traits or circumstances become part of the RPT process without evidence how such traits have a measurable impact on the performance indicators that are part of the faculty member’s agreed upon role and responsibilities.

In 2016, the American Association of Professors (AAUP) issued a statement that takes a strong position against using “collegiality” as a self-standing standard because *“it is not a distinct capacity to be assessed independently of the traditional triumvirate of teaching, scholarship and service.”* The statement further expands, *“Historically, “collegiality” has not infrequently been associated with ensuring homogeneity and hence with practices that exclude persons on the basis of their difference from a perceived norm. The invocation of “collegiality” may also threaten academic freedom. In the heat of important decisions regarding promotion or tenure, as well as other matters involving such traditional areas of faculty responsibility as curriculum or academic hiring, collegiality may be confused with the expectation that a faculty member display “enthusiasm” or “dedication,” evince “a constructive attitude” that will “foster harmony,” or display an excessive deference to administrative or faculty decisions where these may require reasoned discussion.”* The URPTC strongly encourages NC State to address this issue in the light of current national and professional discussions as a means of clarifying the RPT process

**Recommendation:** The URPTC recommends that a Task Force be established to study the issue of “collegiality” and “professionalism” in the RPT process, with a specific purpose/goal of developing a statement or guidelines regarding how these concepts should be appropriately applied at the departmental, college and university levels of review. The Task Force should be composed in such a way to represent the interests of the faculty (Tenure Track and Non Tenure Track across ranks), academic administrators (department heads and deans) and the Faculty Senate. At least one member of the Task Force (from inside or outside the university) should be an individual with recognized expertise in faculty personnel decisions in higher education. If the individual is from outside, the primary role should be to provide consultation to the Task Force, without the voting privilege. The Task Force should also include a representative from the Office of the Provost who has faculty status and whose responsibilities include the RPT process. This member should serve as a full participant but in an *ex officio* role without voting privilege.