2014-2015 URPTC Annual Report

Summary of the Review Process and Issues Identified

Dossiers for review were posted by the Provost's Office staff on a secure website and access provided to the URPTC members via their university login. This process worked well and the Provost's office was most responsive in managing the secure website and posting dossiers and reviews in a timely manner.

1. The URPTC reviewed a total of 18 dossiers of which 14 were assigned to the committee randomly and 4 were assigned automatically due to a negative decision.

2. The implementation of the SME as the primary metric for the RPT process continues to create concerns due to the inconsistency of the level of detail in SMEs across the university. The presentation of the SMEs in the dossier does not always include the dates for which it was active, making the evaluation process difficult. In some SMEs, not all faculty efforts are included in the percentage effort.

3. For cases of promotion of non-tenure track faculty, the input from other non-tenure track faculty (their peer group) is uneven and inadequate. It also would be useful to solicit the input of non-tenure track faculty on the RPT process itself.

4. It is difficult to follow the implementation of the RPT voting regulations, to prevent double voting, based on the numbers reported on the dossier cover sheet. A clear explanation of how many faculty voted and the number that were ineligible to vote at a particular level would be helpful to the committee in the review process.

5. The template letter to be sent to external reviewers states that a judgement for tenure at the reviewer's institution is not requested, but does not explicitly forbid such statements. Some external reviewers do make such judgements, which could be prejudicial to candidate for promotion. Making the template more clear that judgements are not appropriate and potentially redacting such statements from letters could be useful.

6. There is inconsistency in the presentation of teaching evaluations across the dossiers. Including the questions for the student evaluations would be useful. Qualitative comments should be included on an all or none basis or in a manner that reflects balance rather than bias. Student evaluation data based on low response rates should not be reported. Finally, dossiers for candidates for Associate Professor should document the required annual peer teaching evaluation.

7. The layout of the NCSU RPT website is challenging to navigate when searching for specific departmental or college rules. Structuring all links on the website by administrative units would be make the search process easier. The website is often the first source of information for new faculty to learn the RPT process.

8. Significant discrepancies between the RADAR report of grant activity and the candidate's report of external funding sometimes occur. For these cases, a justification as to why the grant was not processed through the RADAR system would be helpful. Departments should also be encouraged to process grants through the RADAR system, when possible.

9. The amount of weight administrative efforts should hold in the evaluation process for candidates with an administrative appointment is unclear. This applies to both tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty. In some cases, the administrative responsibilities of a candidate are outside their department/college, making the evaluation process more difficult.

10. Finally, some dossier presentations are suggested: (1) in some cases, the contributions of candidates since the last appointment/promotion are not clear; (2) it is recommended that evaluators avoid the term "early" when review cases of Associate Professors and avoid making statements that indicate future promotion for negative decisions.

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URPTC Committee Members for 2014-2015

Class of 2013-2015
Kara Peters – Engineering, Chair, Appointed by the Provost and Chair of the Faculty
Duane Akroyd – Education
Denise Gonzales Crisp - Design
Eddie Grant - Engineering
Hans Kellner – Humanities and Social Sciences, Past Chair of Faculty
Roger Mayer – Management
Mark Papich – Veterinary Medicine

Class of 2014-2016
Bob Abt – Natural Resources, Chair-elect
Dennis Daley – Humanities and Social Sciences
Jess Grimes – Agriculture and Life Sciences
Lisa Guion Jones – Agriculture and Life Sciences, Appointed by Provost and Chair of the Faculty
Abdel-Fattah Seyam – Textiles
Leonard Stefanski – Sciences

General Comments
Dossiers for review were posted by the Provost's Office staff on a secure website and access provided to the URPTC members via their university login. This process worked well and the Provost's office was most responsive in managing the secure website and posting dossiers and reviews in a timely manner.

The URPTC met weekly from January 26 to March 30, with an exception for the weeks of March 9 and 16. The committee reviewed each Candidate's dossier and members from outside the associated college were assigned in pairs to lead the review of each dossier. Initial drafts of the reports were posted on a secure Google Drive to which all committee members had access. All committee members participated in the review of the cases during the meetings and had the opportunity to edit the written reviews on the Google Drive as well. Once consensus was reached for each case, the written reviews were forwarded to the Provost's office. No cases were reviewed this year for which URPTC members recused themselves from the discussion and from providing input to the written assessment. These reviews formed the basis for comments and suggestions contained in this report.

Overall, the URPTC considers that the RPT process at NCSU is a well-organized and documented system for reappointment, promotion, and tenure. This report makes suggestions to improve the current system. Included are also suggestions to anticipate issues that are likely to be raised in future RPT reviews and decisions. Persistent issues include the implementation of SMEs, reporting of voting, and how non-tenure track faculty are evaluated for promotion.

1. Dossiers reviewed

The URPTC reviewed a total of 18 dossiers of which 14 were assigned to the committee randomly and four were assigned automatically due to a negative decision.

Fourteen dossiers were randomly assigned by the Provost's Office. Five were submissions going from Associate to Full Professor, one was a submission going from Teaching Associate to Teaching Professor, six were submissions going from Assistant to Associate Professor as scheduled, and one was a submission going from Assistant to Associate Professor early.

Two of the four automatically assigned cases were related to promotion to Associate Professor and tenure, while two were related to promotion to Full Professor. Responses from three of the candidates were received.

2. Statement of Mutual Expectation (SME) issues

Issue 1

The signature date on the SME does not always indicate the development process, if any, of the SME (or several SMEs, if relevant).

Regulations
POL 05.20.01 - Appointment, Reappointment, Promotion and Permanent Tenure
Section 5.1 refers to the use of the SME in the assessment process for RPT.

REG 05.20.27 - Statements of Mutual Expectations
The SME is to be prepared during the initial year of appointment as a member of the faculty and is to be reviewed periodically and changes instituted as necessary. Together with the annual faculty activity report, the SME provides the principal basis for annual evaluation of the performance of the faculty member and post-tenure reviews.

Analysis
In some cases reviewed by the URTPC, it was not clear if the SME had been reviewed or modified after the initial appointment of the candidate. After a significant change in the candidate's appoint (such as a promotion) the SME should be updated to reflect their changing faculty responsibilities.

Conclusion
The URPTC recommends that the dossier indicate the dates for which each SME was active for the candidate.

Issue 2

Because the level of detail provided in the SME varies widely across the university, it is an inconsistent tool to evaluate candidates from different departments/colleges.

Regulations
POL 05.20.01 - Appointment, Reappointment, Promotion and Permanent Tenure
Section 5.1 refers to the use of the SME in the assessment process for RPT.

REG 05.20.27 - Statements of Mutual Expectations
Section 1 specifies that, together with the annual faculty activity report, the SME provides the principal basis for annual evaluation of the performance of the faculty member and post-tenure reviews. Some colleges/departments have additional requirements. For example, the Dept. of Poultry Science in CALS, requires that "All faculty members involved will be asked to meet with the Department Head and the Department's Extension Leader (if the individual has an extension appointment) in June of the year involved to review and update their Statements of Mutual Expectation and Self-evaluation, and to begin the documentation process". (see Section 7, of RUL 05.67.14 - Department of Poultry Science Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Standards and Procedures).

Analysis
NC State is a land-grant university. A standard split among teaching, research, and service does not fit all faculty members. For example, some faculty members have joint appointments for Extension and therefore do not reflect the typical teaching/research split. The actual split also differs among faculty members in association with specific positions. A broad definition of these differences is helpful to the process. However, the SMEs currently contain a level of detail and personalization well beyond that necessary to distinguish differing appointments. In some cases, they appear to be used as standards for promotion and tenure.

Further, SMEs may be a potential legal issue for the university. Some members of the committee believe that the SMEs as currently utilized may leave the university open to charges of discrimination via disparate treatment. The committee believes this matter should be brought to the attention of the General Counsel for evaluation. While the use of SMEs may be useful, the implementation needs scrutiny and closer management.

Conclusion
The UPRTC recommends that the Provost's office consider it a high priority to meet with department heads to discuss the implementation of the SME.

Issue 3

All required effort should be included in the percentage of faculty effort in the SME.

Analysis
In a few of the cases reviewed by the URPTC, the percentage of faculty effort in the different areas of research and teaching totaled to 100% in the SME. Then additional statements were made by the candidate and the evaluation committees (DVF, CRPTC) concerning service and outreach expectations that included efforts that went beyond the percent listed in the SME. These additional expectations fall within the three realms of tenure track faculty responsibilities and the percentage of effort expected for these expectations should be 100% faculty effort.

Conclusion
The URPTC recommends that the percentage effort in at least each of the three realms of research, teaching and service be included in the faculty percentage effort in SMEs and should accurately reflect the true percent effort of faculty responsibilities in these areas.

3. Promotion of non-tenure track faculty

Issue

There is currently inadequate and uneven input from the non-tenure track faculty (of higher rank) in the evaluation for promotion of non-tenure track faculty. These non-tenure track faculty represent the peer group for the faculty being evaluated.

Regulation

REG 05.20.34 - Non-Tenure Track Faculty Ranks and Appointments

Analysis

Because the role of non-tenure track faculty varies significantly from department to department, it would be useful to the URPTC to have a similar process of peer (non tenure track faculty) evaluations across departments. In addition, as the RPT process is continuously evolving it would be useful to solicit the input of non-tenure track faculty on the RPT process itself.

Conclusions

The URPTC recommends that the dossiers for non-tenure track faculty include peer evaluation from non-tenure track faculty of higher rank in their administrative department. Input from non-tenure track faculty on the RPT process should also be solicited.

4. Voting and accounting for the vote

Issue

To prevent double voting, there should be a clear explanation of all votes at the department and college level, with clarification when some faculty were ineligible to vote.

Regulations
RUL 05.67.706 - College of Sciences Standards and Procedures for Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure
Section 5.4. states that members of the CRPTC are not eligible to vote on cases from their home departments.

RUL 05.67.503 - Poole College of Management Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Standards and Procedures
Section 7.7 states that members of the college-wide committee shall only cast votes pertaining to the RPT of candidates at the college-wide committee, unless the rules at the college wide committee level preclude them from casting a vote. In that case members shall be eligible to vote at the department level. In any and all circumstances members may only have one vote for any candidate during the process.

RUL 05.67.853 - College of Veterinary Medicine Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Standards and Procedures

Section 7.3 states that members of the DVF should only participate in one voting process in the College as part of any Reappointment, Promotion or Tenure Process. Therefore if a DVF is also a member of the College RPT Committee they are ineligible to participate in the DVF vote. Associate Deans and Assistant Deans will participate in the voting process as members of the DVF of their home departments.

Analysis
The roles for faculty eligibility to vote at the department and college level when they serve both in the DVF and on the CRPTC vary from college to college. When faculty members are considered ineligible to vote at either the DVF or CRPTC level, they are not included in the numbers on the dossier cover sheet in some categories. URPTC committee members expressed concerns that double voting was still occurring and that such voting can be prejudicial to a candidate.

Conclusions
The URPTC recommends that, to prevent double voting, an explanation of the number of faculty who were considered ineligible be included in the written assessment from the DVF and CRPTC.

5. External reviewers and letters

Issue 1
Invitation letters to external reviewers state that the reviewers do not need to make a judgement as to whether the candidate would receive promotion and/or tenure at their institution. However, external reviewers sometimes include such a judgement in their letters.

Regulation
REG 05.20.05– Consultation and Written Assessments, Recommendations and Responses in RPT Review

Section 5.3.4 specifies that a required template for letters requesting external evaluations is available on the Provost's RPT website. The template includes the statement: "Decisions regarding promotion and tenure include considerations beyond documented scholarly work. Accordingly, we do not ask for your judgement as to whether the proposed action should be taken. Rather, we seek your professional judgement on the quality, originality, and impact of Prof. [Name]'s scholarly work….."

Analysis
The Provost's template fails to make clear that the judgements of the sort mentioned above are considered inappropriate and should not be included in the letter. Currently the removal of letters from the dossier for any reason is not permitted. Removing an entire external letter because of a single statement on the likelihood of tenure/promotion is not recommended because it would be detrimental to the RPT process. Obtaining a sufficient number of letters can be challenging and the letters often contain other valuable assessments. However, such judgements could be prejudicial to the candidate. The single statement could be redacted prior to distribution to the DVF.

Conclusion
The Provost's template should make clear that judgements as to whether a candidate would receive tenure at the institution of the reviewer should not be included in the letters. If they are included, such opinions should be redacted from the external letters. The reviewers could be notified in the invitation that such statements will be redacted.

Issue 2
Although the committee recognizes that finding the appropriate number of quality reviewers can be a significant challenge for some departments/disciplines, the choice of external reviewers should reflect a balance between those suggested independently by the candidate, the department head and the DVF.

Regulation
REG 05.20.05– Consultation and Written Assessments, Recommendations and Responses in RPT Review

Section 5.2.3 states that the candidate must be given the opportunity to suggest names of evaluators. These suggestions will be considered by the Department Head along with guidance from members of the DVF, the candidate's mentor(s), or others with expertise appropriate to the area of specialty of the candidate, including departments or units formally involved in joint or interdisciplinary reviews.

Analysis
In one randomly assigned case that the URPTC reviewed the candidate nominated all external reviewers. While the selection of all external reviewers by the candidate satisfies the RPT regulations, it does not indicate a balance in the external review process. This lack of balance may be negatively viewed at the college and university levels of review.

Conclusion
The UPRTC finds that a list of external reviewers entirely suggested by the candidate or the department head violates the spirit of the external review process.

6. Teaching evaluations and presentation in the dossier

Issue 1
The presentation of student teaching evaluation data is inconsistent across the dossiers.

Regulation
REG 0.5.20.10 – Evaluation of Teaching

Analysis
Guidelines are needed on how to report quantitative student evaluation data. For example, student evaluation data based on low response rates should not be reported. Further, the questions (not simply question numbers) should be provided for the student evaluation report tables. Without the question texts, this information is not useful to external reviewers. Further, questions may change from time to time. Distance Education courses have additional questions that are relevant to the DE environment. These questions are not included in the summary report. Further, the inclusion of selective qualitative comments chosen by the candidate does not give a full appraisal of student evaluations and could be biased.

Conclusion

The URPTC recommends the inclusion of question text in the dossier along with the quantitative scores. Additional questions relevant to the DE environment should be included in the summary report. Departmental voting faculty should establish, before student evaluations of teaching are administered, a reasonable minimum response rate. If the rate of response does not meet this level, the evaluations should

not be included in faculty dossiers, or utilized for any purpose. A more uniform method of reporting or not reporting qualitative comments should be developed for the dossier. Several of these conclusions are consistent with the 2014 University Standing Committee Evaluation of Teaching report.

Issue 2
Annual teaching assessments for Assistant Professors should be included in the dossier.

Regulation
REG 0.5.20.10 – Evaluation of Teaching

Section 3.3.3. requires that peer review of assistant professors be completed annually.

Analysis
The number of peer teaching assessments for candidates for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure varied significantly. In some cases, peer teaching evaluations were only provided for the year of the promotion action.

Conclusion
Documentation of annual teaching assessments for candidates for Associate Professors should be provided in the dossier.

7. RPT guidelines and NCSU RPT website

Issue
The NCSU RTP website, while generally well presented, can sometimes be challenging to navigate to find specific RTP rules at the college or departmental levels.

Analysis
In one case reviewed by the URPTC, from the Department of Landscape Architecture, the RPT regulations at the department level referred to those at the college level, while those at the college level referred to the department level. Secondly, the departmental and college RPT regulations are grouped historically rather than within academic units on some of the webpages. Noting that it was sometimes difficult for the URPTC to find the applicable regulations; it could also be confusing for new faculty attempting to navigate the RPT process.

Conclusions
The RPT regulations for the colleges and departments should be reviewed regularly to check consistencies. The URPTC recommends that the organization of the NCSU RPT website also be reviewed, and that it be structured by colleges and departments.

8. Reporting of external funding

Issue

It is difficult to judge external funding levels when there are significant discrepancies between the RADAR report of grant activity and the candidate's listing of external support.

Regulation
REG 05.20.20 - Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Dossier Format Requirements
Section 3 requires that candidates include a Research Administration Data and Reporting System (RADAR) report of their grant activity and list any external and internal support that is not included in the RADAR report.

Analysis
The URPTC reviewed two dossiers for which a significant portion of the external funding reported did not appear in the RADAR report. It is not clear to external reviewers and internal reviewers outside of the associated college why these grants are not processed through the RADAR system and therefore how much weight they should be given in the evaluation.

Conclusions
Candidates should include a justification for significant external funding that does not appear in the RADAR report. Further, colleges should encourage PIs to process all external funding through the RADAR system. In the preparation of a candidate's dossier, every effort should be made to ensure that the RADAR report is accurate.

9. Promotion of faculty with significant administrative appointments

Issue
How should administrative appointments be weighed in the promotion process?

Regulations
POL 05.20.01 - Appointment, Reappointment, Promotion and Permanent Tenure
REG 05.20.34 - Non-Tenure Track Faculty Ranks and Appointments

Analysis
Faculty can often have a significant administrative effort, as defined in their SME. The amount of weight this administrative effort should hold in the evaluation process is unclear. This appointment can represent a significant portion of their effort. In some cases (as in one of the cases reviewed this year) the administrative responsibilities of a candidate were outside the department/college, which made it difficult for the DVF and CRPTC to evaluate the performance. Because promotion in academic rank is a faculty responsibility, clarity in the various parts of a candidate's job is essential to proper evaluation.

Conclusion
The RPT regulations for tenure and non-tenure track faculty should be amended to address faculty with administrative appointments.

10. General RPT review process

Issue 1
Contributions of the candidate since the last appointment/promotion should be made clear.

Analysis
In most cases, the written assessments addressed the specific contributions of the candidate since the last appointment/promotion. However, in some dossiers, the contributions pre and post the last appointment/promotion are not well delineated. This is particularly critical for cases in which the candidate is put forward for promotion within a few years of the previous promotion.

Conclusions
The dossier should explicitly delineate between accomplishments prior to and after previous promotions.

Issue 2
The term "early" is sometimes used in the written evaluations to describe a promotion to Full Professor, for which the concept of an early promotion does not exist. The word early implies a rule, while the word premature implies a judgement.

Analysis
The RPT process does not define an early promotion from the rank of Associate to Full Professor. Using the term "early," which has a specific meaning in the context of promotion to Associate Professor, in written assessments can distract the reviewer from focusing on the substantive accomplishments of the candidate. Further, in two assigned cases reviewed by the URPTC, the dean indicated that there was some assurance that the promotion would occur in the future, or in the next few years. We urge the Provost to discuss with department heads and deans the implications of making such promises.

Conclusions
The URPTC recommends that evaluators avoid the term "early" in discussing accelerated time to promotion from Associate to Full Professor and that department heads and deans avoid statements that indicate future promotion for the candidate.