

University Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee (URPTC)
Annual Process Review
April 29, 2020

The University Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee (URPTC) reviewed a total of 24 dossiers from tenure and professional track faculty engaged in the spring 2020 RPT cycle. The reviewed dossiers presented actions for tenure, promotion, or both, at multiple ranks and from all ten colleges. This report summarizes recurring issues that emerged over the course of the review process that we believe warrant the attention of participants in the RPT process. The identified issues range from simple procedural inconsistencies that can be remedied through emphasis on existing policy, to more complex, systemic challenges that require extensive consideration prior to formulating potential solutions.

Inaccurate or Ambiguous Vote Reporting and Qualifications of Non-Voting Participants

One quarter of the reviewed cases (6/24) included mistakes associated with vote classification and reporting. Examples range from simple vote omissions on the dossier cover page to instances where eligible votes were not adequately accounted for among the designated voting categories. Further, written evaluations at department and college levels cite votes in qualitative statements that do not correspond to numeric data presented in the dossier. Examples include reporting votes as unanimous in instances where the tally included recusals and negative votes. Policy requires an explanation for missing votes be provided, which was not present in the document.

Policy guidance for voting is addressed in Regulation 05.20.05-Consultation and Written Assessments, Recommendations and Responses in RPT Review (Section 1.6) <https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-05-20-05/>. Evaluative committees, Department Heads and Deans should emphasize conscientious attention to vote reporting practices in all written evaluations. Further, explicit acknowledgement and explanation of DVF recusals and missing votes can decrease uncertainty for URPTC reviewers tasked with accurately interpreting diverse departmental procedures. Current policy requires the Department Head to record recusals but does not provide guidance for recording missing votes (REG 05-20-05, Section 1.6).

Issues Related to Department Voting Faculty (DVF) Written Evaluations

Various issues were noted during the review of DVF reports ranging from clear procedural deviations to questionable logic when weighing evidence in the written evaluation (7/24 cases). From a procedural perspective, an explanation to support early tenure was absent in one candidate's DVF evaluation. The applicable guidance is provided under Non-Mandatory Reviews at the following link: <https://provost.ncsu.edu/faculty-resources/reappointment-promotion-and-tenure/rpt-timeline/nonmandatory-reviews/>.

Furthermore, DVF reports repeatedly failed to mention required evidence in candidate dossiers such as external review letters. In contrast, other DVF reports appeared to overemphasize selected evidence without providing justification for this reasoning. The URPTC acknowledges that DVF reports cannot be standardized. However, justification for emphasizing or ignoring required evidence in a dossier should be addressed in the DVF report to maintain the integrity of the process. The DVF should be required to evaluate accomplishments in every relevant realm of scholarship based on candidates' effort allocations. Suggested report formats may be helpful for DVF report preparation.

Statement of Faculty Responsibility (SFR) and Statement of Mutual Expectations (SME) Guidance

Issues related to SFR and SME content, interpretation among evaluators, and temporal scope were persistent among the reviewed dossiers, generating questions with more than half of the cases. Though the university is currently replacing the SME with the SFR to reduce confusion, the URPTC identified issues that may persist beyond the transition.

In cases where multiple versions of the SME/SFR were provided, evaluators at different levels did not consistently apply the effective time frames. This issue arose among dossiers with both adequate and inadequate documentation of active SME/SFR history. The ability to connect SME/SFR documents to their corresponding periods of effectiveness is needed to ensure consistent interpretation of candidate performance.

Issues associated with interpretation of the defined realms of responsibility by departments and colleges also emerged. For example, SFR documents and written evaluations demonstrated inaccurate distinctions between activities related to professional service versus those related to extension, engagement, and outreach. This inaccuracy suggests a strong need to clarify the difference between these two realms. The URPTC underscores the particular importance of this distinction in light of the centrality of extension and engagement to our mission as a Land-grant University.

While within current policy, the URPTC questions the efficacy of attributing less than 5 percent of faculty effort to a single realm of responsibility. The URPTC noted that in instances where 1-2 percent of effort was allocated to a single realm, candidates consistently demonstrated impacts that appeared to exceed the allocations. In these cases, candidates ultimately received little recognition from this effort due to weighting.

Personal Identification of Individuals

In several cases, both candidates and evaluators explicitly revealed identities of individuals by name. For example, several DVF and CRPTC evaluations referred to external reviewers by name. Additionally, in their dossiers, some candidates listed principal investigators and grant titles that they had blind reviewed. Guidance for ensuring privacy in the process should be emphasized at all levels and for all members of the RPT process.

Lack of Consistency in Evaluating Interdisciplinary Faculty

Dossiers for interdisciplinary faculty, and in particular for cluster hires, suggested that evaluators at different levels applied different criteria to evaluate candidate accomplishments. The application of guidance for evaluating interdisciplinary faculty, who serve multiple units but are tenured in a single unit, was evident among DVF, IRC and Department Head evaluations, but often was not articulated nor even implied amongst CRPTC and Deans' evaluations.

In cases where an Interdisciplinary Review Committee was formed, evaluators at different levels of review failed to apply a consistent standard. The lack of consistency suggests a need for greater clarity regarding the standards to be applied for interdisciplinary candidates such as cluster hires. The SFR does not delineate the standards by which a faculty member is to be reviewed, but should include guidance for specific rules that apply to an interdisciplinary faculty member. Further, department and college rules should distinguish the standards for tenure track and tenured faculty from those for non-tenure track faculty who are eligible for promotion, including Clinical, Extension, Research, and Teaching Faculty and Faculty Of the Practice (**REG 05.20.34 Non-Tenure Track Faculty Ranks and Appointments**).

Lack of Objectivity among CRPTCs in Colleges with Few Departments

In limited cases, the URPTC identified CRPTC committees with too few members to ensure objectivity. Colleges with few departments or small committees should consider efforts to maintain objectivity in the CRPTC process to preserve the intent of an independent review. In addition to committee composition, terms of service with options for renewal may further hinder committee objectivity. CRPTC committees composed primarily of faculty from only two or three departments have the potential to perpetuate established biases which potentially serves as a barrier to faculty success in the promotion and tenure process. In addition, in these instances reconsideration of who participates in departmental or college committees is needed to assure that an objective assessment can be rendered.

Role of Teaching in Candidate Evaluation

The URPTC noted that teaching contributions are rarely emphasized to support candidate evaluations despite substantial proportionate effort allocations in the realm. In cases where discovery of knowledge and teaching are evenly allocated, internal evaluations as well as external letters tend to focus primarily on scholarship. The lack of teaching consideration can be observed in the university's standard letter to external reviewers as well as the current teaching evaluation process. The standard letter to external reviewers does not solicit feedback for teaching, which diminishes the importance of this realm to the candidate's overall contribution.

Internal evaluations of teaching at all levels of the review process indicated little or no consistency in weighing evidence for teaching performance, commonly resulting in

conflicting opinions based on differences in data interpretation. For example, a candidate's case of overwhelmingly positive student evaluations over many years of teaching garnered a *needs improvement* evaluation due to two below-average evaluations. Further, current student evaluation metrics resulting in negative scores for teaching do not provide adequate insight for candidates to formulate plans to improve.

The review also suggested that faculty who teach controversial or unpopular courses may be disadvantaged by the current methods for obtaining student feedback. The URPTC is aware of the body of research that suggests current methods for student evaluations of teaching are flawed. The committee encourages continued discussion among the Evaluation of Teaching Standing Committee as well as the Faculty Senate in an effort to capture meaningful and actionable student feedback.

Evaluation of Faculty Contributions and Performance

In considering NC State more generally, an increase in collaborative work among faculty can be a key element in positioning NC State to accelerate innovation and lead how education is conceived and delivered. The URPTC encourages reexamination of evaluation standards for teaching, research, and engagement. As higher education increasingly calls upon faculty to conduct interdisciplinary and collaborative work the need for new metrics and a culture shift are evident. Currently, research is measured by first authorships and principal investigator roles on grants. There can be only one first author. Similarly, in teaching, all evaluations are credited to the Instructor of Record. Unless evaluation processes are modified to reward interdisciplinary and collaborative work, faculty will be reluctant to invest effort, time, and energy in this work. Current evaluation processes discourage work with others, including supporting the scholarship of graduate students.

Enhanced Visibility of Policies, Rules, and Regulations

The URPTC recommends a search engine interface to the Retention, Promotion, and Tenure PRRs. We believe a search feature will enhance access for department heads, department voting faculty, college committees, and deans to more fully understand and apply correct policy in the RPT process.