

University Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee (URPTC)
Annual Process Review
April 23, 2021

The University Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee (URPTC) reviewed a total of 18 dossiers from tenure and professional track faculty engaged in the 2020 - 2021 RPT cycle. The reviewed dossiers of tenure and professional track faculty presented actions for tenure, promotion, or both, at multiple ranks and from all ten colleges and the Division of Academic and Student Affairs. 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 procedural inconsistencies that can be remedied through emphasis on existing policy, form modifications or resource development, to more complex, systemic challenges that require extensive consideration prior to formulating potential solutions.

Independent Reviews at Each Level and College Committee RPT Voting Record

The URPTC observed inconsistent college procedures as well as inconsistent and/or inaccurate representation of those eligible to vote. The two issues of concern are (a) independent review at DVF and CRPTC levels; and (b) voting record.

a) **Independent Discussions at DVF and CRPTC Levels.** URPTC members noted that currently, college rules governing participation in RPT discussions may change periodically in the absence of university-level uniform standards. In at least one College, faculty assigned to the college committee were previously restrained from participating in the DVF discussion and vote. The College's CRPTC rules subsequently changed to allow CRPTC members to participate in the DVF discussion but not the vote.

Recommendation: The URPTC, as expressed in its 2019-2020 report, remains interested in objective and independent reviews at each level, including the CRPTC. For those serving on the CRPTC, participation in DVF discussions creates the potential for transference of opinions and perspectives thereby reducing the opportunity for CRPTC objectivity. To ensure consistency in CRPTC procedures that support objective review likely requires university-wide mandatory procedures to standardize the separation of DVF and CRPTC participation. Specifically, that faculty participate as a reviewer at one level only for the discussion and vote. We recommend that this separation be expressed through policy from the Provost's office.

b) **Voting Record.** College rules stipulate where faculty should vote, either in the DVF or in the CRPTC. However, college rules do not currently specify how to indicate ineligible committee members. For example, the College of Design RPT rule states: "College RPT Committee members shall not vote as a member of the college committee on decisions impacting a member of their home department or school. In these cases they would only vote at the department or school level." Committees feel compelled to account for all their members and frequently do so by incorrectly recording members ineligible to vote as "recusals."

Recommendation: College Committees desire to account for their full membership and seem to be searching for how to indicate ineligible voters. The URPTC recommends that the “College RPT Committee Review Record” section on the dossier cover page be modified to include a box to indicate “# Ineligible.” The addition of this option will assist committees to properly record the membership and their actions. College rules could be modified to include a statement indicating that those who voted in the DVF are ineligible to vote in the CRPTC, and are to be recorded as “ineligible.” The current “# Eligible” box could be renamed as “# Members,” or remain as currently labeled.

The URPTC understands that faculty service on DVF and CRPT committees occurs on a regular, but infrequent basis. It is the URPTC’s view that committee members may benefit from a reference tool to be circulated by department heads at the beginning of the annual RPT cycle. The addendum to this report is a draft of a voting record guideline that would serve as a committee resource to aid in correctly recording committee composition.

Statement of Faculty Responsibilities (SFR) - Adoption Promotion

SFRs were recently implemented, and longtime faculty are still adapting to this method of framing and documenting their distribution of effort. In its review, the URPTC observed, to a minor degree, instances where a faculty member did not have a SFR in place. However, our central concern lies in the observation that faculty are not using the SFR’s “Explanation of Changes” section to their benefit. This section is provided as a mechanism to allow faculty and administrators to document significant changes in the faculty member’s distribution of effort. The URPTC believes that faculty are not aware of how to use this provision of the SFR to their benefit. There may also be insufficient appreciation of the SFR’s importance in the faculty evaluation process, to include Faculty Annual Review and Post Tenure Review (REG05.20.27, Sec. 16 Statements of Faculty Responsibilities, REG05.20.03, Sec. 2.1 Annual Reviews of Faculty, and REG05.20.04, Sec. 5.1.2 Post Tenure Review of Faculty).

Recommendation: Ensure there is an SFR in place from the time of hire or when SFRs were instituted, whichever is later. All faculty, but especially longtime faculty, may be in need of training to understand the type and magnitude of changes in their scholarly pursuits that warrant an update to the SFR, which will trigger an update to the “explanation of changes.” At present the Faculty Annual Review process, at least in some colleges, triggers the affirmation or update of the SFR. Yet, it is the URPTC’s sense that faculty are not making informed decisions to update their distribution of effort inside or outside of the annual review process. Thus, the intent for the “explanation of changes” to capture significant and cumulative changes in effort allocation is not being realized. Longtime faculty are accustomed to the former Statement of Mutual Expectations (SME) and may need more support than faculty who are recent hires. For newly hired faculty, New Faculty Orientation may be an opportunity to impress upon them to take responsibility for and to be proactive in managing the SFR for accuracy. Engaging faculty in understanding and interpreting the SFR may provide a platform for faculty self-reflection and periodic career review.

Training for DVF Review Committees

The URPTC found that the DVF and CRPTC Committees have, in some cases, deviated from departmental or college rules when administering the RPT process. Given the importance of accurate evaluation at each level of review, it is critical that review committees correctly apply standards and follow procedures.

Recommendation: At the start of each RPT cycle, it would be beneficial for Department Heads to advise the DVF to review their departmental rules in advance of DVF candidate assessment meetings. It is suggested that the DVF report capture the attestation of all DVF members to affirm having read the departmental standards. We recommend parallel procedures for the CRPTC.

Enhance POL05.20.01 Faculty Response to Written Assessments and Recommendations, Sec 7.4

Section 7.4 is an important step toward providing a fuller opportunity for recognition of faculty efforts which bear fruit during the RPT review process. Section 7.4 currently requires that, “The faculty member...shall be given an opportunity to provide a timely written response...and these responses shall become part of the documentation of the review for succeeding levels.” The policy intent is for the accomplishments brought forward in a Candidate Response at each level (Departmental and College) of review to be deliberated upon and evaluated for its contribution to the candidate’s having met or exceeded the pertinent departmental standards for the associated rank.

Recommendation: At present, succeeding levels of reviewers are not required to acknowledge substantive accomplishments added to the dossier through the Candidate Response procedure. To accomplish the full intent of Section 7.4, a policy revision to instruct succeeding levels of reviewers to provide a written assessment of their deliberation and evaluation of each substantive accomplishment added to the dossier through the Candidate Response process is required. The documentation of assessment at each level will serve well all reviewers and the candidate. Each succeeding level will have the benefit of the prior review, and the candidate can be assured that the final evaluation reflects the total body of work presented in the dossier. We recommend this policy change.

Enhanced Mentoring of URM Junior Faculty/URM Faculty

The promotion and tenure process in its early traditions relied on informal communication of community standards which were transmitted through a wide variety of interactions between junior faculty and those yet to be promoted. NC State invested in establishing RPT policies intended to reduce reliance on informal mechanisms and make visible to faculty the RPT process and its requirements; yet, the evaluation is governed by departmental and college standards. Thus, it is imperative that each part of the RPT process be transparent such that all criteria applied are known and understood by the faculty undergoing evaluation. NC State has been proactive in attracting diverse candidates with the goal of increasing its underrepresented

minority faculty (URM). In an environment of greater diversity and significantly expanded faculty duties, informal transmission of RPT culture is insufficient as a reliable, consistent, and equitable means of ensuring that all faculty are prepared for their tenure and promotion review.

The AAUP advances “teaching the promotion and tenure process (Section D) from the outset, department chairs should give new faculty members an explanation of the requirements for reappointment and tenure.” According to AAUP guidelines, “Probationary faculty members should be advised, early in their appointment, of the substantive and procedural standards generally accepted in decisions affecting renewal and tenure. Any special standards adopted by their particular departments or schools should also be brought to their attention.” (AAUP, Hiring and Promotion Legal Issues for Department Chairs, Section D

<https://www.aaup.org/issues/appointments-promotions-discipline%C2%A0/hiring-and-promotion-legal-issues-department-chairs>)

The annual faculty review process should serve junior faculty members with explicit identification of DVF concerns and associated remedies regarding the candidate’s potential for success in the tenure and promotion process. Early identification of issues and associated remedies offer faculty the best opportunity for eventual success. The University, College, and Department make substantial investments when hiring a faculty member, as do the faculty who decide to establish their career at NC State. Extending the institutional investments to include targeted mentoring for tenure success will serve the candidate and institution well. Explicit annual review communication (regarding progress toward tenure) and targeted mentoring will protect a faculty member from spending years unaware of needed corrections. In addition, a targeted mentoring team who are also members of the DVF can be witnesses to and advocates for the faculty member’s efforts toward the specified remedy(ies). In most cases, when a junior faculty member does not understand performance requirements, or metrics of relevance, the failure must be seen as largely that of the DVF and departmental leadership.

Recommendations: Junior faculty members are likely to benefit from broad discussions of the RPT process, the applications of standards, and patterns of concern for each of the Colleges across the University. A yearly panel designed for junior and URM faculty to allow an opportunity to ask questions and gain a broader perspective on the RTP process may be useful. Panelists for such a program should be carefully chosen as to reflect the diversity in expectations of the Colleges as well as the various stakeholders of the RTP process; *i.e.*, Department Heads, Deans, CRPTC and URPTC members, for example.

This concludes the 2020-2021 annual report.