

MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee on Faculty Affairs (CFA)
FROM: Steering Committee
RE: External Review Process for Faculty Promotions
DATE: December 6, 2017

Background:

The TCNJ Promotion and Reappointment Document 2015 (as well of the Promotion and Reappointment Document in recent years prior) indicates that candidates for promotion to full professor will be given access to external review letters but that the identity of the reviewer will be redacted. The document is silent as to whether the department PRC, the dean, the CPTC, the provost and the president will see the redacted or the unredacted letters. Current practice has varied across the campus. The draft of the revised Reappointment and Promotion Document shared with the faculty last April was similarly silent on this issue. At the open forum held in April, a dean raised a concern, indicating that he felt that it was essential for him to know the identity of the letter writer. In its Final Recommendation, CFA added a sentence to the RPD indicating that the unredacted letters would be shared with the dean, the CPTC, the provost, and the president. The then chairs of CFA, Abby O'Connor and Matthew Cathell, indicated in an email that the rationale was two-fold, both in response to the concern raised by the dean and out of concern that under current practice not all faculty candidates were being treated in the same way.

This fall, several faculty members have emailed Steering to raise concerns about this added sentence. All faculty members who contacted Steering were from the School of Humanities and Sciences, where current practice has been to share redacted letters with all reviewers. Since this change was made in response to testimony on CFA's preliminary recommendation, Steering feels it is appropriate to offer faculty the opportunity to provide testimony concerning this issue.

Charge:

Steering asks CFA to take testimony from the faculty and consider its decision to provide the original, unredacted external review letters to the dean, the CPTC, the provost, and the president. CFA should consider the language from the RPD recommended by CFA in May, 2017 and just approved by the Board of Trustees as its Preliminary Recommendation and should proceed immediately to Step 3 of the governance process, taking testimony from the faculty following Tier III procedures. CFA should also solicit testimony from the Dean's Council and from the Provost. CFA should then determine whether its recommendation from May, 2017 should be changed and complete a final recommendation. If CFA determines that this recommendation should be changed, the committee should make all edits necessary to Section IV of the RPD, and these should be included in the final recommendation.

Testimony Tier: Tier III for faculty, Tier I for staff and students.

Timeline: CFA should complete its work by the end of February, 2018.

TCNJ Governance Processes

Step 1 – Steering issues a charge

Step 2 - Governance prepares a Preliminary Recommendation

Step 3 – The Relevant Stakeholders provide Testimony

Once a preliminary recommendation has been completed, the standing committee or council should seek testimony from the campus community. The testimony should be gathered in accordance with the Testimony Tier (see below) assigned to the issue by Steering.

For issues that require public testimony from the campus community, the chair of the standing committee or council should approach the president of the appropriate representative bodies to schedule the next available time slot at a meeting of that body.

Testimony should be gathered in a way that allows stakeholders to weigh in fully on the issue. Members of the standing committee or council that wrote the preliminary recommendation should be present to hear and record the testimony.

Step 4 – Governance prepares a Final Recommendation

Once the standing committee or council has received appropriate testimony, it should revise the preliminary recommendation into a final recommendation. Once the final recommendation is complete, the standing committee or council should use sound judgment to determine whether or not more public testimony is required. If, in its feedback to the original preliminary recommendation, a stakeholder representative body requests to review an issue again, the committee or council is bound to bring it back to that body. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community.

When the committee or council has completed the final recommendation, it should forward it to the Steering Committee. The final recommendation should be accompanied by a cover memo that summarizes the initial charge, how testimony was gathered and the nature of that testimony, and how the committee responded to that testimony, including a description of how the preliminary recommendation evolved as a result of testimony.

Step 5 – Steering considers the Final Recommendation

Step 6 – The Provost and/or President and Board consider the Final Recommendation

Step 7 – Steering notifies the Campus Community

Testimony Tier I

The issue requires minimal testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant stakeholders before preparing the final recommendation, but there is no need for surveys or open fora.

Testimony Tier III

The issue requires a high degree of testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant individuals and groups in developing a preliminary recommendation. The completed preliminary recommendation should then be made available to the relevant stakeholder groups. Testimony should be solicited in the form of both written and oral feedback, as well as approval by the appropriate representative bodies.

Written feedback should take the form of a survey and/or email feedback. Oral feedback should take the form of public testimony at a meeting of the appropriate representative body or bodies (as identified by Steering). These meetings should be open to the general public, and publicized so that individuals not represented by that group but interested in the issue may attend. Following that meeting, the representative body may, at its discretion, issue a formal response to the preliminary recommendation, which should be sent to the relevant council or committee as well as Steering. On the completion of a final recommendation, this response should accompany the final recommendation to Steering, and it should be considered as part of Steering's final review.

For a complete description of all steps and of the other testimony tiers, see Governance Structures and Processes, 2017 Revision, pages 21 – 24.