

## **Preparing RPT Documents: A Few Suggestions**

### **Preparation for Process**

- Ensure that faculty understand timeline and encourage them to write applications early
- Distribute copies of criteria, directions, and format
- Encourage systematic, electronic record keeping with continual updates (annual reports, RPT, vita, etc.)
- Remind faculty to explain accomplishments without replicating (some are too modest; some overdo)

### **Writing Application and Supporting Papers**

- Emphasize format--clearly organized, thorough, well written
- Have a colleague or mentor edit before submitting
- Provide clarification as needed--monographs, proceedings, abstracts have differing value across departments
- Clarify roles in grants--evaluator, principal investigator
- Don't over-document; include only what is needed
- Present clear evidence and explanation to demonstrate that the applicant meets criteria ("promise as teacher," "pattern of research," "progress in teaching")
- Offer factual information about journals—circulation, acceptance rates, reputation
- Emphasize the impact of accomplishments--their value to department
- Describe unique duties and expectations related to teaching, research, and service
- Consider audience; committee members and administrators do not necessarily recognize and understand variation among departments and disciplines

### **Research**

- Schedule blocks of time on a calendar, daily or weekly
- Don't wait for big blocks of time; even ten minutes can be useful for some tasks
- Have several projects going at one time so there are no gaps or obstacles

### **Resources**

- Review annual evaluations frequently
- Review feedback from previous RPT decisions
- Get feedback from several official and unofficial mentors
- Consult university procedures and handbooks frequently

## Chair's Recommendation

Members of the senior faculty of the Department of English met in conference on [date] to discuss Professor Y's application for permanent tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor. Professor A, who is on leave, and Professor B, who is recovering from a serious illness, were unable to review Professor Y's application or to participate in the discussion. Professor C, unable to attend the meeting, submitted a written proxy.

Assembled members of the senior faculty voted seventeen to one in favor of tenure and eleven to seven in favor of promotion. Though obliged to present the reservations expressed by a minority of my colleagues—and I acknowledge the legitimacy and sincerity of their views—I want to make it unequivocally clear that I support tenure and promotion enthusiastically and wholeheartedly.

There is a clear consensus among the senior faculty that Professor Y far exceeds expectations in teaching and service. Her teaching record speaks for itself. Over the past six years, she has taught seventeen different courses, including almost every catalogue entry in the D curriculum, seven of which she introduced to the department. She has supervised five master's and three honors theses and served on seventeen other thesis committees. In thirty-five of thirty-eight classes, her SPOT scores for question 16 surpass the departmental mean, and her teaching effectiveness is similarly reflected in every other category of the survey. All members of the senior faculty have observed Professor Y in the classroom, and their written reports are uniformly commendatory. In her first three annual evaluations, her teaching was rated above expectations; since then it has been rated outstanding. She received the departmental teaching award for [year], and there is every reason to believe she will earn other, more prestigious awards once eligible to apply for them.

Given this exemplary record, members of the senior faculty expressed unanimous admiration for Professor Y's teaching. One colleague, herself an unusually gifted and demanding instructor, commended Professor Y's ability to engage learning while maintaining high expectations. Another described Professor Y's classroom performance as "the best teaching I've ever seen," concluding that her students "work at a level I wouldn't have thought possible."

I agree with these appraisals, and I also consider Professor Y indispensable to departmental efforts in outcomes assessment, applied learning, and interdisciplinary study. In the case of assessment, we could not have assumed leadership without her expertise and energy. In the case of applied learning, we would have been ill prepared to participate in a college-wide initiative were it not for the service-learning components of her E courses. Finally, no other member of our over-extended faculty combines comparable levels of expertise in both F and G. It is extremely difficult to recruit qualified faculty in these areas, and there is no doubt that the department's teaching mission would be severely compromised were Professor Y to depart.

In the area of service, Professor Y has contributed to this department in ways that are unique in kind as well as degree. In fact, I cannot exaggerate the importance of what she done for us. Six years ago, facing the loss of nearly half of our majors after the separation of creative writing, we called on her to mount an H program single-handedly, from the ground up--a huge undertaking for any faculty member, let alone an assistant professor fresh out of graduate school.

Nevertheless, she delivered. The number of undergraduate English majors actually has grown, despite further erosion after the separation of film studies. In retrospect, however, I must acknowledge that we placed Professor Y in an unfair predicament: on the one hand, senior colleagues advised her to do less service so as to devote herself to publication, yet on the other, she was one of only two faculty members whose training could grow the I program.

The one area of concern for several members of the senior faculty is Professor Y's publication record. Admittedly, it is less strong than those of other assistant professors who have come up in recent years. Nevertheless, it is very, very close to the unofficial, yet often cited, benchmark of four refereed articles in print. Although she has only one essay in print, two coauthored articles have been accepted by editors of anthologies under contract with an academic press, and a fourth article has been revised and resubmitted at the request of a journal editor. Although Professor Y and I had hoped that official acceptance of this article would coincide with her application for tenure and promotion, she has clearly accommodated the editor's recommendations. I am confident that this article will appear in print, because journals in English studies do not ask an author to revise an article that they are not seriously interested in publishing.

The argument against promotion holds that since the urgency of meeting the tenure clock and of addressing a series of admonitions in annual evaluations did not stimulate more productivity, Professor Y is unlikely to meet expectations for research-active faculty in the future. Those who oppose promotion also point out that her one published article appeared at the beginning of her appointment. These concerns are not easily brushed aside. Nevertheless, I must point out that Professor Y has been very productive during the past year—a fifth article is also under review—and reemphasize her extraordinary and vitally important accomplishments in the area of service. It would be a cruel irony if, after having devoted valuable time and energy to the urgent needs of the English Department, Professor Y were now to be denied promotion because those responsibilities have inhibited her scholarship.

In the final analysis, I am no more able to foresee the future than any of my colleagues, whose professional wisdom I trust and respect. However, it seems only fair to note that Professor Y has had to deal with a debilitating illness as well as the demands of starting a family. As these issues recede into the past, she has renewed energy as well as interesting ideas for resuming a research agenda. I am prepared to stake my credibility on the conviction that she will fulfill her scholarly potential over the course of time. She cannot reasonably be expected to do this without the distinction and privilege of an associate as opposed to an assistant—terms that are more than just symbolic. Furthermore, in my considered opinion, she has earned that title.

### Chair's Recommendation

The tenured faculty of the Department of English met in conference on [date] and discussed the application for promotion and tenure of Assistant Professor A. After that discussion, they recommended unanimously that Professor A be granted permanent tenure. The associate and full professors then met and unanimously recommended promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. On the basis of Professor A's record of teaching, scholarship, and service, as well as the faculty's full and frank discussion of that record, I heartily concur with both recommendations.

The discussion of Professor's A's teaching stressed her spectacular SPOT scores, which are consistently above the departmental mean in almost every category. What makes those scores all the more remarkable is that the courses she teaches in [subject 1] and [subject 2] (ten of which she herself introduced to the curriculum) deal with material that, in almost every sense, is "foreign" to most students. Not only has Professor A excelled in teaching this body of work with creative methods and approaches; also her research has transformed the pedagogical issues surrounding literary theory and practical applications in the classroom. That reflexive relationship between research and teaching makes Professor A a rare and extraordinary teacher, and this department is extremely fortunate to have such a colleague in this new and increasingly important literary field. Furthermore, Professor A's teaching goes far beyond the hours she spends in the classroom. She works closely with students in conferences and stays in touch with them after they have completed the courses she teaches. That dedication is reflected in student comments, laudatory peer evaluations, and several teaching awards.

Discussion of Professor A's scholarship focused on the quality of the journals where her work has been published or accepted for publication. *College English* is one of the premier journals in the profession. Founded in 1939, it has a circulation of 16,000 and is published eight times a year. It assigns four to six editorial reviewers to read each submission and accepts only one in ten of the 300 submissions it receives each year. *College Literature* is a major journal for articles on critical theory, textual interpretation, and pedagogy. Founded in 1974, it has a circulation of 800, assigns four editorial reviewers to read each submission, and accepts only one in nine of the 225 submissions it receives each year. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* has a circulation of 1,000 and assigns three reviewers to read each of the 400 submissions it receives each year, out of which it accepts only ten to twelve for publication.

The faculty discussed the fact that much of Professor A's scholarly publication has appeared only recently but felt that its appearance in such selective and prestigious journals will gain her significant professional visibility. Indeed she has already established herself in a field that requires enormous breadth and theoretical sophistication, and she has the clear promise of becoming one of its leading figures. Readers of the work she has submitted for publication, including members of the department who serve as referees for major scholarly journals, found her writings polished, intellectually engaging, and eminently publishable.

She has also presented numerous papers at such major international conferences as the Modern Language Association and African Literature Association, and these papers are now blossoming

into scholarly articles. She is on a clear vector of progress. The fact that she combines theoretical acumen with excellence as a classroom teacher makes her a rarity, and the entire faculty agreed that we are fortunate to have her as a colleague.

Professor A has performed excellent service at the professional, community, university, and departmental levels. Faculty praised her work on the Graduate Studies Committee (on which she continued to serve even while she was on her two maternity leaves) and considered her recent appointment to the Steering Committee a testament to the department's respect for her wisdom and leadership. Her accomplishments in teaching, scholarship, and service make Professor A as close to irreplaceable as a faculty member can be, and, on behalf of the department, I strongly recommend that she be promoted and granted tenure.