

## **Guidelines for Soliciting External Letters of Review for Promotion and Tenure\***

- Request suggestions of reviewers experienced in the candidate's discipline and/or area of expertise from all tenured faculty members in the academic unit. Depending on policies of the academic unit, the candidate may be asked to contribute names of potential reviewers with whom he or she has no personal or professional ties that could compromise the review.
- Compile a list of suggested reviewers sufficient in number to assure adequate and timely response. The list may be long with as many as 20 or so names if necessary. A minimum of three external reviews will be included in the credential file.
- Ask candidate to review the list from the faculty and identify individuals who pose a conflict of interest (mentors, co-authors, co-workers, friends, relatives--anyone he or she has worked with closely) and remove them from the list.
- Allow candidate two or three vetoes with no reasons or explanations required.
- Phone potential reviewers, when time is limited, to request participation in the assessment of the candidate's credentials. The conversation should follow a standardized script to model neutrality. Follow up the call with a confirmation letter clarifying the intent of the assessment. Phone calls are *not* substitutes for reviews, which must be submitted to the academic unit in writing.
- Write a standard letter to prospective reviewers asking for their assistance in measuring the candidate's abilities and professional impact in the form of an external review. The letter should clarify that the intent of the review is to obtain an objective, in-depth assessment of candidate credentials, and not merely a letter of recommendation, which is likely to be of a more personal and general nature.
- Explain to the reviewer that the substance of the review (not necessarily in this order) should focus on:
  - quality *and* quantity of the scholarly work and relative importance of each in the reviewer's assessment;
  - comparison of accomplishments in relation to those of other scholars in the discipline;
  - impact of the work on the discipline;
  - candid, objective evaluation of the candidate's *scholarly* strengths and weaknesses; and
  - explanation of how the reviewer knows the candidate, if applicable, without making *personal* assessments, either positive or negative.
- Do *not* ask reviewers to include a recommendation on the tenurability of the candidate.
- Request that reviewers submit a copy of their vitae to assist the tenured faculty understand their academic expertise and background.
- Include a statement regarding Ohio's Public Records Act in the letters to potential reviewers. The Office of General Counsel suggests: "Letters of evaluation are not confidential and may be disclosed under the Ohio Public Records Act." This law, however, does not preclude objective, professional assessment of scholarly accomplishments when personal reference and innuendo are excluded.
- Consult with the tenured faculty regarding the materials sent to reviewers. These may include vitae, a *sample* of articles, and statement on research. The department and college's promotion and tenure documents should be included to assist the external reviewer understand the parameters of the overall evaluation. Keep the review package tight and manageable.
- Encourage timely return of written external letters for the academic unit's assessment of candidate credentials and prior to the unit vote. Reviews do NOT have to be in by department deadline for submission of credentials.
- Remind candidates to exclude themselves completely from the external review process outside of providing names of potential reviewers and suggesting materials for inclusion in the review package when requested by the academic unit.

\* *Guidelines presented here are offered as suggestions only and are not binding. Approved promotion and tenure documents adopted by the colleges and/or their academic units take precedence over these procedures in application.*