May 2022

To: Deans, Department Chairs, and Directors
From: Rachelle Winkle-Wagner, Chair, Social Sciences Divisional Committee
Re: Tenure Reviews during the 2022-2023 Academic Year

We are writing to alert you to changes in, and recommendations from, our Social Sciences Divisional Committee, which are useful to know, even if you do not have any tenure cases coming up this year in your department/school.

1. **Expectation to include a copy of the department’s tenure guidelines in the candidate’s tenure dossier.** As described in Faculty Policy & Procedure 7.14.D, “Each departmental executive committee shall establish written criteria and standards it will employ in recommending the granting of tenure.” The Social Sciences Divisional Committee recognizes there may be variation among departments with regard to the benchmarks of excellence, and in the desirable indicators of quantity, quality, and impact of scholarship, teaching, and service. Inclusion of the specific departmental tenure guidelines in the dossier will help the committee to appropriately evaluate candidates, applying the Social Sciences Divisional tenure guidelines in the context of the local standards of the candidate’s department and discipline.

2. **Reminder to explicitly state, in the department chair’s letter, what the secondary area of excellence is and include a statement describing how excellence is defined, promoted, and assessed in the candidate’s department.** Criteria for excellence in research is often the primary focus of the chair’s letter, however, there is an expectation that candidates also demonstrate excellence in teaching and/or service. The committee needs to understand what activities, with relevant evidence constitute excellence in teaching/service in the home department and how the candidate demonstrates meeting or exceeding those expectations. This is not a new addition to the tenure guidelines, but the guidance has been moved to emphasize its importance.

3. **Reminder to clarify the candidate’s independent contributions to coauthored research, particularly for cases with a large number of coauthored publications.** Revisions to the tenure guidelines have been made to explicitly request clarification of contributions for coauthored publications. This is particularly important when a large number of the candidate’s contributions have been coauthored and independence from mentors or senior authors is not clear. Explicit information in the chair’s letter and the accompanying evidence in the dossier should be provided to clarify the candidate’s unique and independent contributions to collaborative research and the role of collaboration in the candidate’s sub-field or discipline.
4. **Reminder on external review letters being arms’ length and from primarily full professors at peer institutions.** For the 2022-2023 tenure guidelines, we have added more specificity to what is considered arms’ length for external review letters (marked as “NEW” below). Please note that the new guidelines maintain that “The departmental executive committee must ensure that at least five external review letters are gather and that these individuals: (a) are not and have not been UW-Madison faculty, (b) did not mentor the candidate (i.e. dissertation committee member or faculty mentor as a graduate student or post doc), (c) have not collaborated with the candidate (i.e. submitted research proposals or conducted research as co-investigators, published as a co-author, or other work relationship that may introduce bias in the candidate’s review), (d) (NEW) have not been colleagues in the same department at any point during the candidate’s career and have no personal interest in the candidate’s success or attainment of tenure. Files of extension/outreach candidates must include letters from recognized experts in the candidate’s field. The divisional committee prefers evaluation letters from experts at the rank of full professor (NEW) from peer institutions or departments (but letters from other scholars can be considered with a thorough justification); if letters from associate professors were solicited (NEW) or if letters from full professors from non-peer institutions were solicited, please give an explanation. For an integrated case, requests for letters could specifically request an evaluation of the faculty member’s integration of activities.”

5. **Reminder that peer evaluations of teaching are required for probationary faculty every year.** The 2022-2023 guidelines have changed to note that peer reviews of teaching are necessary starting in the (NEW) first year that the candidate is teaching. It is extremely useful for probationary faculty to receive feedback on their teaching so that they can make changes and document improvement over time. The peer evaluation should be conducted by a faculty member and based on both course materials and observation of teaching. Written documentation of the evaluation should be included in the tenure dossier. If constructive feedback is given in peer reviews, the next peer review and the chair’s letter should specify how the candidate used the feedback to improve their teaching. A sample peer evaluation form is available on the divisional committee website. [https://secfac.wisc.edu/documenting-scholarship/](https://secfac.wisc.edu/documenting-scholarship/)

6. **Integrated cases.** Although the nature and requirements of integrated cases have not changed, clarifications were recently made to the tenure guidelines to better describe how excellence is defined in these cases. In particular, the guidelines state that integrated cases are ones where “the three areas of achievement may be so closely integrated that it is not possible to unambiguously document and assign accomplishments to specific areas.” Further, the guidelines indicate-that “it is incumbent upon the department and candidate to demonstrate, with appropriate metrics and supporting documentation, how one activity synergizes with another in a way that creates novel tools, treatments, ideas or knowledge to generate an impact.” If you are considering presenting an integrated case, we recommend that you consult with the chair of the Social Sciences Divisional Committee as early as possible in the candidate’s tenure clock.
7. **Streamlined process for senior hires.** In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Social Sciences Division made available a new more streamlined process for senior hires who have already have earned tenure at peer institutions and who have very established research, teaching, and/or service excellence. See the tenure guidelines for details at [https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/social-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/](https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/social-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/). This is an opt-in process, so if you are making a senior hire and would like to take advantage of this new process, please contact the chair of the Social Sciences Division. For 2022-2023 the Divisional Committee requires that chairs of departments reach out to the Divisional Committee Chair to discuss these cases.

8. **Reminder about scholarly activity that enhances the Wisconsin Idea and new recognition for scholarly activity that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.** The tenure guidelines were revised in 2020-2021 included a section on scholarly activity that enhances the Wisconsin Idea, including both community engaged scholarship and scholarly activities to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. This focus does not alter the alternative paths to tenure outlined in Section IV of the tenure guidelines, but rather is another way that a candidate can document excellence.

9. **Reminder on COVID tenure clock extensions.** During the global pandemic between 2020-2022, the Divisional Committee created guidelines for tenure clock extensions for candidates whose reach, teaching and service activities may have been impacted by the pandemic. Both the candidate and the department chair have the option of providing a brief statement of impact, that would specifically focus on how the candidate’s accomplishments in their areas of excellence and/or significant accomplishment were affected by the pandemic. The Divisional Committee also recommends speaking to this in the request for external review letters if a candidate does take a COVID tenure clock extension.

Some other reminders and tips:

- **The department chair’s letter is the single most important document** in the dossier. Please take the time to write a concise yet comprehensive review according to the guidelines. More than half the cases that are denied by the Social Sciences Divisional Committee have weak chair’s letters that did not provide adequate context about the nature of the discipline, the candidate and a case for innovation and excellence in research, and excellence in teaching or service, and/or articulate reasons for support for the candidate’s promotion. Please also speak to the future trajectory of the candidate to continue innovation and excellence in research, teaching and service.

- All documents relevant to the submission of tenure dossiers to the Social Sciences Divisional Committee, including the updated, most recent version of the committee’s tenure guidelines and template letters are available at: [https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/social-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/](https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/social-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/)
A number of exemplary dossiers from past successful tenure cases are available for review. To arrange time to look over these dossiers, please contact Divisional Committees Coordinator Michaela Aust (contact information below).

Consider submitting your cases early in the academic year. We anticipate a high volume of cases this year. If there are too many cases for a given meeting, some cases must be postponed to the next meeting. Our past experience suggests that cases submitted in fall and early winter are much less likely to be postponed because of case overload than cases that arrive later in the spring.

The committee seeks to work with departments/schools to ensure fair and judicious reviews of candidates. Please contact me (winklewagner@wisc.edu) or Divisional Committees Coordinator Michaela Aust (Michaela.aust@wisc.edu or 263-5741) with any questions, comments, or suggestions.