

**SUMMARY:** The Motion by the *ad hoc* Committee on Tenure and Faculty Development has the purpose of amending the Faculty Rules regarding the process by which the tenure review is to be conducted, particularly with respect to the identification of external evaluators and the solicitation of letters from them.

**MOTION:** That the Faculty, in Part 4, Section 10.I.D of the Faculty Rules & Regulations concerning the Tenure Review and Tenure Procedures, delete the existing language (as struck-through below) and replace it with the proposed new language (underlined and in bold below) effective July 1, 2011.

**RATIONALE:** In its March 2010 report, the *ad hoc* Committee on Tenure and Faculty Development recommended a number of changes to Brown's tenure processes, with the aim of ensuring that those involved in the review are provided with the best possible information when making decisions that are so consequential, both for the individual and for the institution. The Committee believes that there are aspects of the current process that may limit and compromise the quality of this information and recommends the following key changes to Brown's tenure review process: (1) that the department and the candidate develop lists of appropriate outside scholars independently and that the practice of informing the candidate of the names on the department's list be discontinued, (2) that the Dean be able to review the final list and, in consultation with the department, identify additional referees and (3) that the minimum number of evaluators be raised from five to eight. Taking each of these in turn:

- (1) The integrity of the review process depends upon both candor and confidentiality, and the Committee believes that informing the candidate of the identity of potential referees may compromise both. While it is fair and reasonable for a candidate to identify scholars who could appropriately serve as evaluators and to state whether there are individuals who should not be asked to serve, providing the candidate with the department's list of evaluators and permitting him or her to lodge objections could lead to situations in which the pool of potential referees is limited by considerations that have no valid bearing on the ability of the individual to provide a judicious, informed, and candid review. It should moreover be reiterated that Brown's current practice diverges very significantly from that of our peers; the committee could find no comparable institution that followed this practice. Indeed, anonymous peer review is the norm in academia, from journal submissions to grant applications. Given this standard practice, those asked to provide reviews in Brown tenure cases may well erroneously assume that their identity as referees is confidential. Yet, if referees are to be informed of the fact that candidates will know their identity – even if this includes their appearance on a “long list” of potential reviewers – some will be less likely to agree to serve, or be less candid in their assessment.
- (2) A candidate and his or her senior colleagues are naturally best placed to identify those who are distinguished scholars in their particular discipline. Yet there is an institutional responsibility to ensure that the University is in fact seeking the advice of the best possible slate of referees. Some departments, for example, have only two or three tenured members, and it is not inconceivable that these may either be personally very close to the candidate for review or at odds with the candidate. It is thus in the University's interest to have the Dean review the list of proposed reviewers to ensure that questions do not later arise about whether the list of reviewers is as strong and unbiased as it could be. It should be emphasized that all letters, including any from referees identified by the Dean, are sent to the Department and

become part of the Department's, and TPAC's, review; the dossier will include an indication of which referees were suggested by the candidate, by the department, and (if relevant) by the Dean. And it should be noted that the input from the candidate is here strengthened by the fact that the final list must include at least three names he or she suggests, a guarantee not provided under current policy.

In the interest of consistency, accuracy, and fairness it is sensible to have the Dean send out the formal request to external evaluators, if only to ensure that the text does not deviate from the standard format by including problematic language or by failing to include essential components.

- (3) Raising the minimum number of letters from five to eight will enhance the information available to those involved in the assessment process; it will also bring Brown's practice more in line with those of our peers, a number of which require a dozen or more letters. There is no evidence that this will unduly burden departments, since the actual practice in recent years has been to include an average of ten letters in tenure dossiers.

Finally, the Committee's recommendations included changes in the timetable for review. Please note that in the text below some dates differ from those in the original Motion: in response to concerns articulated by both junior colleagues and departments, the dates have been modified to permit more time in the fall semester for the solicitation and receipt of letters, discussion by the department, and preparation of the TPAC dossier. The proposed date for submission of dossiers to TPAC is now January 7 (rather than November 15, as originally recommended). Given the large number of tenure cases that come to TPAC each spring semester, the current deadlines simply do not allow sufficient time for the kind of review that is demanded for decisions of this importance.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee believes that modifying our policies in these ways is essential to the quality and integrity of the tenure review process. The complex process of determining which junior faculty merit tenure is a shared responsibility involving faculty, senior administration, and the Corporation (which alone has the ultimate authority to grant tenure). It reflects a model of shared governance that includes all three groups, and the proposed changes are designed to ensure that each has the information required to make sound decisions on behalf of the University as a whole. Because tenure decisions are based so fundamentally on an assessment of scholarly accomplishment and promise within an academic discipline as well as ability to teach a particular subject matter effectively, the role of faculty – in the candidate's department and on TPAC – is necessarily of critical importance. Yet the Dean, the Provost, the President, and the Corporation are part of the process as well, and since the evidence available to them informs their decisions, it is imperative that this information be of the highest and most unimpeachable quality. These recommendations are intended to ensure that all those responsible for evaluating the tenure case have the best possible expertise available to them.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Committee has also recommended that the probationary period be extended; this is the subject of a separate motion.