

**VCU Faculty Senate
Faculty Affairs Committee**

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Feedback on the following reports:

1) Promotion Tenure Tenure-Eligible

- The report did a great job thinking about what should be standardized vs. what should be left to the school level.
- The guidelines for peer and school committee memberships and voting rights are clear.
- Agree that a university wide review committee should not be part of the regular process, but ad hoc when there is a conflict between peer committee, school committee, and Dean.
- The requirement for peer review committee rationale for the vote is excellent and the addition that the school level committee could ask for more support is adequate.
- The report provides good details on the candidate's right to include a response or appeal a decision and how to move forward when a negative decision is made.
- The requirement from schools and departments to qualify what they mean by national/international recognition is very welcome.

Room for Improvement

- **Voting inconsistencies:** The report did not address voting inconsistencies and mentioned horizontal vs. vertical voting. We are assuming that this is at the peer committee level? Or is this at both the peer committee and the school committee levels?
 - The peer committee report has to provide one vote for each category and overall. This means that the vote is vertical and not horizontal, i.e., the committee deliberates as a group and individual votes on each category are translated into an overall group rating.
 - Based on the overall group rating, the vote for whether someone gets promoted is then an objective vote based on established criteria of one excellent teaching/scholarship, very good for the other category, satisfactory for service (promotion to associate) or very good for the two other categories (promotion to full professor).
 - There should be a process for the school P&T committee to justify a disagreement with a peer committee rating on a category.
 - The first step is asking for more justification from the peer committee is covered in this report
 - What if after justification, the school P&T disagrees with the peer committee? Is there a process of justification provided along with the details of the disagreement and the peer committee vote in writing the report to the Dean?

- **Composition of the appeals committee:**
 - The suggested composition of the appeals committee is 7 voting full professors. We believe that there should be at least one associate professor on the committee. The lack of representation of associate professors for a tenure case can lead to evaluation bias.
 - The selection of committee chair? Can the chair be from the same school of the candidate or would requiring a chair from outside the school minimize risks of conflict of interest and bias based on personal relationship with the candidate?
- **The use of annual reviews in P&T processes:** The core recommendations of not including annual evaluations in the dossier can be dangerous in that it separates the feedback faculty are getting annually about their performance and decisions for promotion.
 - This recommendation conflicts with the other recommendations of requiring faculty narratives and articulating guidelines to chairs for annual performance evaluations.
 - Schools and departments need to find a way to make annual evaluations consistent with P&T requirements as to guide faculty on how to reach their promotion goals.
 - One option is making the inclusion of annual evaluations optional, and the candidate and peer committee should be able to use annual evaluations for support if desired.
- **Clock extension;** information is not included in this document but included for term faculty. This should be included in T/TT document.
- **Student on the peer review committee:** It is not clear what the role of the student is on the peer review committee. If they don't vote, what parts of the meeting do they need to attend/what do they need to contribute?
- **Timeline to P&T for those coming to VCU from a previous institution:** There should be specific university wide language on expedited tenure cases for faculty coming from a different institution. A framework should be implemented to enable a shorter timeline to P&T for individuals joining VCU from a previous institution where they already hold tenure. In such a case, how far back into one's career, prior to VCU, should the dossier go? What would be the expectation for documentation for activities prior to VCU? Flexibility with the organization of the dossier, especially with sub-headings, would be important for the variety of fields and disciplines.

2) Promotion Term Faculty

- Recommending the inclusion of responsibilities in annual contracts is very welcome.
- There are many good things in this document including the inclusion of mentorship as important to teaching activities. However, the document is not as thorough nor as clearly written at the tenure one.
 - We recommend that this document only highlight the differences from the tenure track document while relying on that document for all other information as there

is a lot of consistency in how we want to evaluate teaching, research, and service.

- The main difference should be on criteria for promotion given two out of 3 responsibilities and this important difference is not taken into account in this document. This should be modified before moving forward to improve clarity and avoid confusion.
- Research term faculty can also have 80% research and 20% service rather than teaching - p. 1
- The promotion requirements on p. 6 do not reflect that most term faculty only have 2 out of 3 responsibilities (teaching, research, service). This makes the requirement for associate and full the same. Excellent in one and very good in the other?
- Some recommendations on p. 7 are not worded very clearly:
 - Why is a university level committee recommended here when it is not recommended for tenure track faculty?
 - Document did not make clear in which scenarios term faculty would be able to vote on tenure eligible cases.
 - These recommendations are not very clear and we recommend that:
 - The peer committee evaluating a term case must have at least one term faculty
 - The unit/school P&T should have at least one term faculty member who would be voting on all P&T cases, including tenure track.
- Pedagogical research for teaching term faculty should be highlighted similarly to mentorship, especially as a core requirement for promotion to full professor.

3) Assessing Teaching Effectiveness Report

- Table 2: Rubric to evaluate teaching effectiveness uses a scale that is different from annual evaluation reports and P&T reports. This inconsistency is problematic because it promotes confusion for faculty, chairs, and P&T committees.
- Pedagogical research is not explicitly mentioned and seems diluted under professional development and grants.
- We appreciate the more holistic approach to evaluating teaching effectiveness. However, the rubric doesn't reflect this, as it focuses on evaluations.
- We appreciate the inclusion of an anti-bias/equity statement at the beginning of student course evaluations.
- Table 1 is an effective tool for evaluating courses. The items are phrased in a way that avoids placing blame on the instructor when students do not favor certain activities, assignments, or other aspects. There is always room for improvement in any course, and these items help shift the focus toward making constructive changes in a positive manner.
- The description for student comments is well written.

- Standard measures of each of the dimensions to be able to compare across different departments would be essential. Otherwise, these other dimensions won't carry the weight that student evaluations do, and this exercise to diversify away from evals will all be in vain.
 - This lack of standardized measures for the different dimensions university-wide would also inevitably lead to P&T problems later down the road when comparing dossiers among candidates.
- The description of the Community Engagement dimension should avoid using the word 'mentoring,' as it could be confused with the Collaboration and Mentorship dimension. This will help prevent double-counting efforts and eliminate any ambiguity in categorizing teaching activities.
- We appreciate the University-wide definition of Excellence in Teaching. However, what metrics will be used to measure it? It would be helpful to include clearer guidance on the standards for each category.