



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Davis College

Plant & Soil Science™

Davis College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources

Department of Plant and Soil Science

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Promotion and Tenure: Standards and Procedures

Date: September 16, 2022 (Revised July 27, 2023)

Purpose: This document defines departmental standards and procedures for promotion and tenure.

Review: Departmental standards and procedures for promotion and tenure will be reviewed immediately following every graduate program review, or when changes are deemed necessary. As stated in [OP 32.01](#), final approval of the document comes from the dean of the Davis College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

Limitations: This document codifies the standards and procedures for promotion and tenure in the Department of Plant and Soil Science (PSS), based on current departmental policies that have been approved by faculty vote. Additional procedures required by the Davis College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources or by Texas Tech University are addressed by [OP 32.01](#), and also by the college's guidelines for promotion and tenure.

1. Texas Tech University Promotion and Tenure

The [OP 32.01](#) of Texas Tech University defines the overall standard by which all faculty members are evaluated for promotion and tenure. This is the standard upon which departmental policies are based. Additional information on style and formatting of the dossier are described in [OP 32.01B](#). Additional OP documents are referenced where appropriate.

As stated in OP 32.01, a university is a community of scholars who must be free to search for truth as they find it through their individual research efforts, teaching, and service opportunities, regardless of tenure status. In return, faculty members are responsible to maintain standards of competence and contribute productively throughout their careers. As such, the purpose of evaluation for promotion and tenure by the department, college, and university are in keeping with the mission of the university to strengthen academic quality and reputation, “incentivize” the university’s strategies to promote excellence in teaching, expand and enhance research and creative scholarship, and to further notable outreach and engagement.”

2. Expectations in the Department of Plant and Soil Science

The Department of Plant and Soil Science (PSS) is a diverse and vibrant department with rigorous expectations on productivity in teaching, research, student mentoring, and service. The faculty of PSS is comprised of professionals with a wide range of expertise, from the most fundamental to translational and applied aspects across different disciplines of classical and modern plant and soil sciences. According to expertise, five disciplinary clusters were formed that facilitate a strategic approach to the teaching and research missions of the department, namely: (1) Plant Breeding and Genetics; (2) Fibers and Biopolymers; (3) Agronomy, Crop Physiology, and Crop Protection; (4) Soil Science; and (5) Horticulture. Each cluster has a senior faculty leader appointed by the department chairperson.

All tenure-seeking faculty members from each disciplinary cluster are expected to teach courses that contribute to the undergraduate and/or graduate programs of the department, conduct original and grant-funded research, mentor graduate students, and provide services to the university, profession, and external entities through various forms of synergistic activities and engaged scholarships. Teaching efforts include formal class instruction, and undergraduate and graduate student advising and mentoring. Research efforts include establishing original topics of either applied or basic nature that are addressed through the standard scientific methods and approaches in one's discipline, pursuing and obtaining grants to support the research efforts, and publishing the outcomes of research efforts in accordance with the prevailing standards in one's discipline. Depending on the discipline and topic, research efforts may also include developing intellectual property from the outcome of scientific investigations as well as other measurable forms of scientific and creative outputs. Service efforts include all forms of synergistic activities that help promote the overall missions of the department, college, and university. These include activities that address the needs of external entities and stakeholders within the faculty member's expertise and interest including such as professional societies and academic and scientific journals.

Upon the faculty member's appointment to a tenure-track or tenured position, the relative proportions of efforts that are expected to be devoted to teaching, research, and service are defined in the appointment letter. The proportions of teaching, research and service defined at the time of the faculty member's appointment may also be modified and updated at specific times during the evaluation time-frame in accordance with the necessary changes in teaching and research loads that are agreed between the faculty member and the department chairperson. ***Productivity expectations are based on the proportions of teaching, research and service specific for each faculty member.***

Given the breadth of faculty expertise and research at PSS, which spans the gamut of basic and applied investigations across multiple disciplines, the department recognizes that the standards of productivity and impact in research may vary significantly between faculty members across disciplinary clusters. These variations are often driven by the level of competition for research grants, and also by the level of innovation required for success in peer-reviewed publications, across the different disciplines of plant and soil sciences, and between basic and applied research. Therefore, it is necessary that expectations be established for each individual faculty member, taking into consideration the various factors that contribute to productivity and success

in accordance with prevailing standards. The following resources will be used to establish these expectations:

- a) The initial ***appointment letter*** of the faculty member and any updates/modifications thereafter provides a framework of expectations for the position. Although expectations are revisited and updated as necessary throughout the progression toward promotion and tenure, the appointment letter is an agreed-upon contract that sets the overall expectations and standards for evaluation. For tenure-track faculty members, the department chairperson may solicit the input of a senior faculty member (faculty mentor) to help define fair and realistic expectations at the time of appointment in accordance with the standards in that specific discipline.
- b) The ***annual performance review*** of the faculty member summarizes his/her progress and accomplishments during the evaluation period. It also identifies any changes in expectations based on any modifications in the proportions of time expected to be devoted to teaching, research and service. It explains the department chairperson's determination of what is necessary for the candidate to successfully progress to tenure and promotion or promotion to the next level (full professorship). Changes in appointment require the approval of the department chairperson and the dean.

The third-year review (TYR) is performed by a "TYR Peer Committee" appointed specifically for each tenure-track faculty member. This committee is appointed by the dean upon the recommendation by the department chairperson – composed of a tenured senior faculty member in the department as committee chairperson, one tenured faculty member in the department as internal member, and one tenured faculty member from another department in the same or other college as external member. The TYR provides an independent and integrative evaluation of the tenure-track faculty member's progress in teaching, research, and service based on the expectations defined in the faculty member's appointment letter. The faculty member's teaching is also evaluated by the Peer Committee through on-site observations of classes. The committee's report provides an unbiased account of the faculty members accomplishments to date while also identifying the most critical areas where the faculty member needs to put more emphasis for the remaining duration of the pre-tenure period in order to ensure that he/she will be on track for promotion and tenure. The department chairperson prepares an assessment of the faculty member's accomplishments, progress, and areas for improvement based on the independent evaluation by the TYR Peer Committee. A letter summarizing the department chairperson's assessment is included as part of the promotion and tenure dossier ([OP 32.01 7.b.1](#)).

3. Qualifications for Promotion and Tenure

As stated in OP 32.01, promotion and tenure is based on the following measures of standard and accomplishments:

- a) Demonstrated record of effectiveness as a teacher at Texas Tech University;
- b) Record of peer-reviewed publications and/or peer-reviewed creative activities that contributed to the discipline or field of study, to the faculty member's intellectual and

artistic development as a professional, and to the quality and reputation of the department;

- c) Generation of external funding, or earnest effort to do so in accordance with departmental tenure guidelines, which must be commensurate with the terms of the faculty member's letter of appointment;
- d) Record of engagement in undergraduate and/or graduate student research, scholarship, and creative activities in disciplines where such efforts are specified by departmental tenure guidelines;
- e) Record of professional service that meets departmental tenure guidelines; and
- f) Promise of continuous growth in teaching and research or artistic and creative activities.

4. Third-Year Review Process – Timeline and Mentoring

4.1. Tenure Clock. The probationary period for admission to tenure begins in September of the calendar year when the faculty member was appointed to the position.

After the start of the probationary period, all time accrued in full-time service at Texas Tech University will be counted in the probationary period. Extenuating circumstances that may justify a pause or break of the tenure probationary period must be approved by the provost, without exception. Faculty members who need a pause or break in their probationary period are responsible for initiating this request and must follow the guidelines in Section 2.d.3 of OP 32.01.

4.2. Third-Year Review and Mentoring. The third-year review (*TYR*) will be conducted according to the timeline outlined in

Figure 1. In accordance with the schedule of the TYR, the tenure-track faculty member is expected to complete all the key steps leading to the timely completion of the TYR, which are described below. Ideally, these should be accomplished as early as possible but no later than the end of the second year of a tenure-track position. Process leading

- a) In consultation with the department chairperson, the faculty member will select a mentor(s) from amongst the senior faculty members in the department. It is customary that a mentor is a person whose career path and research discipline are related in one way or the other to the tenure-track faculty member's own career path and research discipline. This is to ensure understanding and implementation of common disciplinary culture and standards, as well as effective sharing of relevant experiences and wisdom by the mentor to the mentee. However, any senior and well-experienced faculty in the department regardless of research discipline may be selected as mentor if that is agreed mutually by the tenure-track faculty member and chairperson of the department, and accepted by the mentor.

The purpose of pre-tenure faculty mentoring is to ensure that the tenure-track faculty member has a reliable **resource person** that he/she can consult with for information and advice on different aspects of the tenure and promotion process “*in good faith*”. Confidentiality is strictly observed on the mentor-mentee relationship. Mentors are expected to be fully committed to help the mentee achieve his/her goals towards promotion and tenure. However, it is the tenure-track faculty member’s responsibility to arrange the schedules and frequencies of meetings with the mentor(s) depending on needs. Meetings can either be formal or casual as agreed by both mentor and mentee. The mentor is expected to provide as much advising as possible to the mentee as long as the mentee seeks the assistance of the mentor. To avoid any conflict of interest, the mentor should not serve in the tenure-track faculty member’s TYR Peer Committee.

- b) The tenure-track faculty member must confirm with the chairperson of the department that the TYR Peer Committee has been formed. The dean of the Davis College officially appoints the TYR Peer Committee composed of a senior and tenured faculty member of the department as chairperson, a tenured faculty member of the department as internal member, and a tenured faculty member from another department in the same or other college as external member. To ensure that common disciplinary standards are well understood and practiced during the process, and that the accomplishments and progress of the tenure-track faculty member are evaluated holistically, fairly, and in good faith in accordance with the expectations detailed in the appointment letter, it is customary that at least either the chairperson or internal member of the TYR Peer Committee is in the same discipline as the tenure-track faculty member. PSS does not have a standing TYR Peer Committee and every committee is specific to a given tenure-track faculty member.
- c) The tenure-track faculty member is responsible for setting up an initial meeting with his/her TYR Peer Committee as a group as soon as possible after it is officially appointed by the dean. The purpose of this initial meeting is to introduce the programmatic plan (teaching, research, and service) of the tenure-track faculty member to make sure that everybody understood the overall goals, and that such plan is consistent with the expected goals as detailed in the appointment letter. During this meeting, the tenure-track faculty member may also solicit any inputs from the TYR Peer Committee to help improve his/her overall plan and strategies for meeting the goals.
- d) The tenure-track faculty member is responsible for coordinating with the chairperson of the TYR Peer Committee regarding the scheduling of on-site class visits, when each member of the TYR Peer Committee will be able to evaluate and submit independent assessments of the tenure-track faculty member’s teaching style, techniques, and efficacy. On-site teaching evaluations will be compiled and summarized by the chairperson of the TYR Peer Committee, which will become part of the TYR dossier that will be submitted by the tenure-track faculty member.

Ideally, three (3) on-site teaching evaluations are expected for each year of teaching by the tenure-track faculty member (one for each TYR Peer Committee member), in order to generate a total of six (6) evaluations during the TYR timeline. These are usually but not always from the second and third year of the tenure-track faculty member. In situations

when the members of the TYR Peer Committee are unavailable (due to schedule conflicts) to participate in the on-site teaching evaluation process, the chairperson of the TYR Peer Committee with the approval from the chairperson of the department, will appoint peer evaluators external to the TYR Peer Committee as substitute(s). The on-site teaching evaluation by the substitutes will be included by the chairperson of the TYR Peer Committee in the final peer teaching evaluation report. As an exception, a smaller number of on-site teaching evaluations (4 to 5) may be accepted for the TYR dossier in case of tenure-track faculty members with less than normal frequency of teaching (*e.g.*, faculty members with much higher research appointment than normal and not teaching regularly). Peer teaching evaluations are shared amongst the members of the TYR Peer Committee during the process.

At the discretion of the chairperson of the department or upon the request of the tenure-track faculty member, additional on-site teaching evaluations may be conducted post-TYR on a case-to-case basis, if necessary to fill gaps in or strengthen the tenure dossier. In these situations, the chairperson of the department will request the members of the TYR Peer Committee or any other faculty member external to the TYR Peer Committee to perform such additional post-TYR on-site teaching evaluation.

- e) The tenure-track faculty member is responsible for setting up either an annual or semesterly meetings with the TYR Peer Committee to review his/her progress, milestones, and directions in research, teaching and service in relation to the goals and expectations set in the appointment letter. These annual or semesterly meetings are done informally hence only 'advisory' in nature, as the formal evaluation of research, teaching, and service accomplishments is not submitted until the time when the TYR is officially due. The tenure-track faculty member will receive a written summary of suggestions from the chairperson of the TYR Peer Committee after each meeting based on the feedback from the entire TYR Peer Committee.
- f) By the end of the TYR period, which is January 30 of the third year, the tenure-track faculty member will submit a complete dossier to the TYR Peer Committee. The dossier must be prepared in accordance with the University Tenure and Promotion Documents format. Dossier must include preliminary research and teaching statements, record of student evaluations, and peer evaluations of teaching compiled and provided to the tenure-track faculty member by the chair of the TYR Peer Committee. The TYR dossier does not include external peer evaluation letters.

When the dossier is completed and submitted, the TYR Peer Committee will meet with the tenure-track faculty member to evaluate his/her progress and accomplishments. The TYR Peer Committee will submit its formal review and recommendations to the department chairperson by February 28. The department chairperson will submit the TYR Peer Committee's recommendation along with his/her own evaluation to the dean of Davis College by March 15.

**Department of Plant and Soil Science
Procedure for Third Year Review (TYR) of Tenure-Track Faculty**

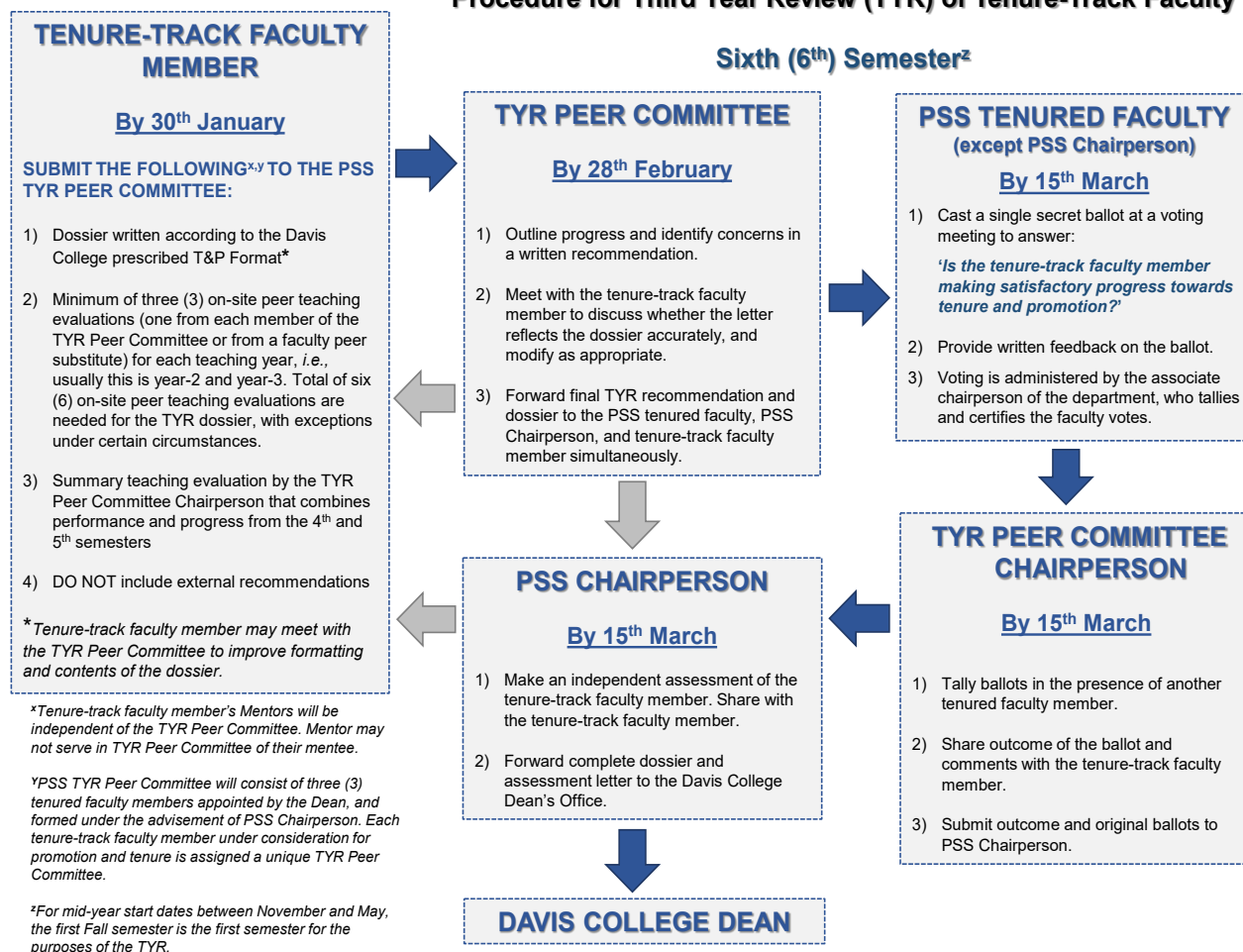


Figure 1. Steps and timeline of third-year review (TYR) for faculty members seeking promotion and tenure. Credit: Jyotsna Sharma

5. Tenure Process and Submission Timeline

The maximum probationary period before acquiring tenure in the university is six (6) years. The timeline for submission of the dossier is shown in **Figure 2**. Before the end of the six-year probationary period, the faculty member must be notified by the university that tenure has been awarded or that the appointment will not be renewed beyond the end of the seventh year.

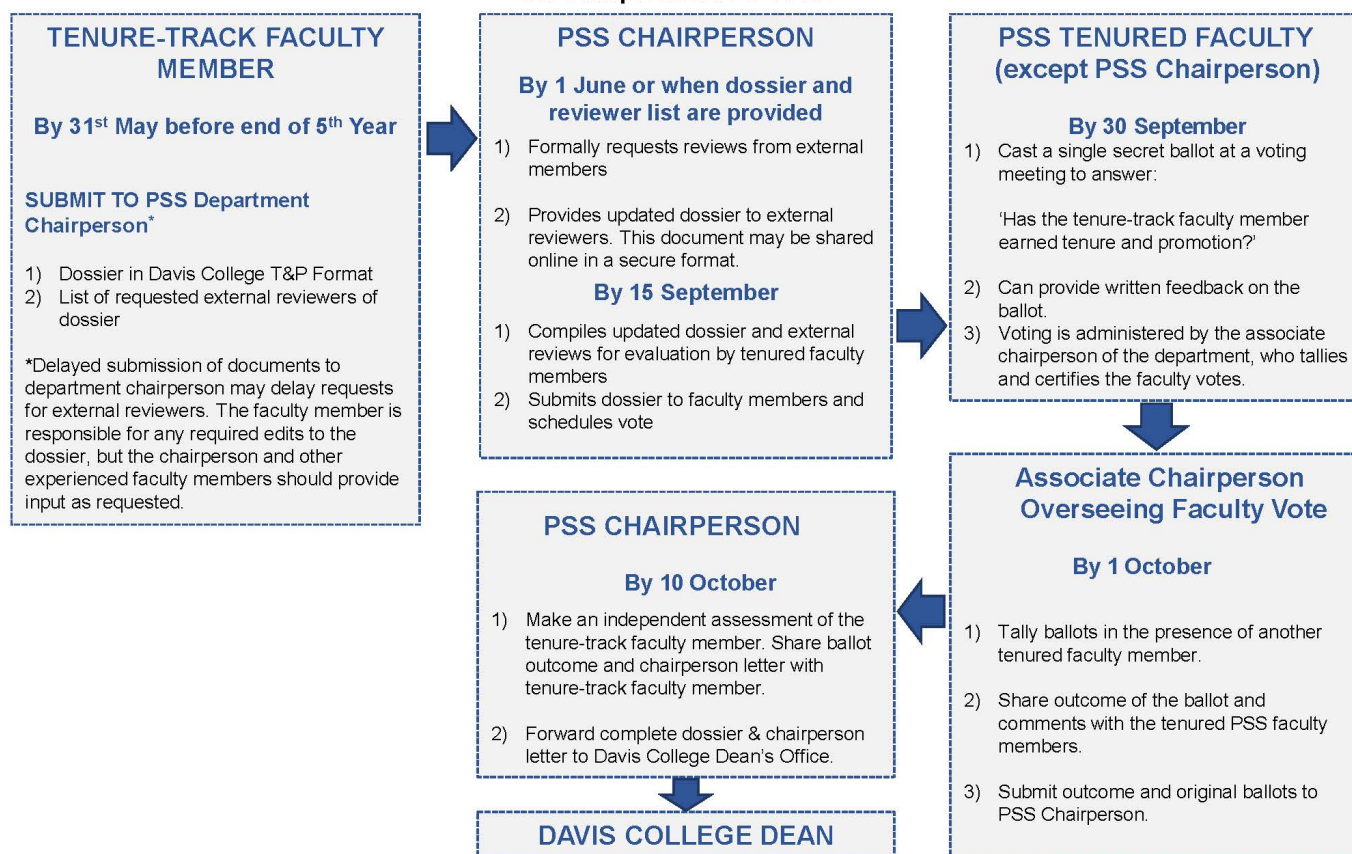
Therefore, **review and voting of the promotion and tenure dossier takes place during the fall semester that concludes the fifth year after initial appointment to the position.** The following is a suggested timeline for submission of the promotion and tenure dossier:

- February:** Tenure-track faculty member meets with the department chairperson for annual review. The chairperson and the faculty member discuss the dossier and determine a timeline for external review. The tenure-track faculty member proposes names of external reviewers, and the department chairperson finalizes the list of possible external reviewers to be invited. The tenure-track faculty member and the department chairperson

may solicit suggestions from the faculty mentor in putting together a list of potential external reviewers.

- **May:** Tenure-track faculty member submits the dossier for external review. The dossier should be complete in all respects, except that additional accomplishments may be added prior to the department vote, if those accomplishments occur after submission of the dossier for external review.
- **May-August:** Department chairperson solicits external review letters from accomplished, tenured faculty members within the discipline of the candidate.
- **Prior to September 15:** Department chairperson presents the final dossier, including external letters, to all tenured faculty members in the department for faculty review.
- **Prior to September 30:** Tenured faculty members convene to discuss the tenure-track faculty member's dossier, and his/her accomplishments for promotion to associate professor and tenure. Each tenured faculty member cast two (2) separate votes – one for tenure and one for promotion to associate professorship.
- **Prior to October 10:** The department chairperson submits the complete dossier to the Davis College Dean, including faculty vote and chairperson recommendation letter.

**Department of Plant and Soil Science: Procedure and Timeline for
Promotion and Tenure of Tenure-Track Faculty
At Completion of 5 Years²**



*For mid-year start dates between November and May, the following fall semester begins year 1 for the purposes of the TYR and tenure. For other start dates, the first fall semester begins year 1 for purposes of TYR and tenure. Completion of the fifth year is August 31 (after dossier submission and before letters are received).

Figure 2. Procedure and timeline for promotion and tenure of tenure-track faculty at completion of the 5th year of service (September 1 begins 6th year).

5.1. Dossier Format. The dossier will include all of the sections and components described in [OP 32.01B](#). The full and up-to-date curriculum vita of the tenure-track faculty member must be in the specific format required by the department, indicating the department chair's assessment and ranking of the impact of each listed publication. This is further defined in [OP 32.01B](#) as follows:

- 5 = Outstanding recognition in field, highly prestigious, refereed
- 4 = Highly respected in field, refereed
- 3 = Good reputation, selective in publication, refereed
- 2 = Average, fairly easy to publish in, typically refereed
- 1 = Below average publication, not discriminating on articles published
- 0 = Not to be counted as publication
- S = Special publication not ranked above

PSS recognizes the inherent subjectivity in evaluating the true impact of the candidate's published scholarly works. This evaluation is typically based on the impact factor of the journal where the scholarly work is published, which may have inherent biases. In order to minimize the

potential effects of these inherent limitations, the candidate must indicate the ***overall ranking within the discipline of the journal*** where the scholarly work was published as a means to provide another view of the relative importance of the journal within a given discipline or field of study. The TYR Peer Committee is often comprised of members who are quite familiar about the standards in the tenure-track faculty member's discipline, thus the assessment of the committee should also provide valuable information to help the department chairperson determining the publication ranking. Additionally, the tenure-track faculty member may choose up to three of the best representatives of his/her published scholarly works that the TYR Peer Committee, department chair, and external promotion and tenure reviewers can use to assess the overall quality and impact of the body of scientific and scholarly works.

5.2. External Letters. External letters will be solicited from accomplished, experienced peers in the discipline of the tenure-track faculty member. Priority will be given to tenured faculty members at aspirational or peer institutions or tenured faculty members with recognized accomplishments within the discipline at universities that otherwise would not be considered peer or aspirational. The tenure-track faculty member and the department chairperson may solicit suggestions from the faculty mentor in putting together a list of potential external reviewers.

The external reviewers will be asked to evaluate the candidate based on the following metrics:

- Accomplishments in teaching;
- Quality of published research and creative activity;
- Success and efforts in obtaining research funding, relative to other researchers in the same discipline at a similar rank;
- Accomplishments with regard to service to the department, college, university, profession, and other internal and external stakeholders;
- Other relevant activities and accomplishments in the dossier within the reviewer's competence to judge.

All external letters submitted by the deadline shall be included in the dossier, and prospective reviewers shall be informed that the letters become a component of the dossier and may be reviewed by the tenure-track faculty member. Reviewers are required to state any perceived conflict of interest, and they shall not be former collaborators or advisors of the tenure-track faculty member being reviewed. Under certain circumstances, reviews of promotion and tenure dossier may be solicited from individuals associated with academic or non-academic institutions outside the United States or from individuals associated with non-academic institutions (*i.e.*, federal research organizations) within the United States, if they are deemed relevant and can provide help towards a more holistic and fair process of evaluation. While the TTU Promotion and Tenure OP allows this practice, a special caution is typically exercised in PSS by making sure that only the reviewers who are highly recognized as leading authorities in the tenure-track faculty member's area of research and scholarship are carefully selected to participate in the review process. This minimizes the impact of potential differences in perspectives and understanding of standards and general expectations between academic and non-academic institutions, and also between academics from different countries. However, ***for promotion to full professorship***, perspectives from recognized experts in the candidate's area of research and scholarship from outside the United States often provide valuable insights into the international

reputation of the candidate and the global impacts of the candidate's contributions to science and scholarship.

5.3. Departmental Vote and Chairperson's Letter. As stated in Section 2.g.1 of OP 32.01, the departmental voting process is described as follows:

- *“Evaluation by the department, which includes a vote by the tenured faculty, and a recommendation by the chairperson, who does not attend or participate in the faculty vote”*

The PSS department chairperson distributes the dossier to all voting members (including the selected college peers) and the department's representative to the Davis College Promotion and Tenure Committee two weeks prior to the scheduled department voting. If the dossier is delayed for any reason, the chairperson shall provide an update to the voting members regarding the delay.

In consultation with the candidate, the department chairperson selects a tenured member of the faculty to serve as spokesperson during faculty deliberation. All tenured faculty members at a higher rank than the candidate are expected to attend and participate in the process. The following protocol will be followed:

- a) Two tenured faculty members of higher rank than the candidate shall be solicited within the Davis College as external members of the voting peers. These peers are asked to participate in the discussion and vote. The purpose of the college peers is to ensure that candidates are evaluated fairly on the basis of their accomplishments and in accordance with the policies and standards of the college.
- b) A recorder shall be chosen prior to the deliberation and voting. The recorder takes notes and summarizes the faculty discussion.
- c) The spokesperson will provide a summary of the candidate's accomplishments and direct the discussion of the candidate's accomplishments in accordance with the expectations for promotion and tenure.
- d) At the end of the discussion, each faculty member, including the spokesperson and recorder, submits a secret (unsigned) ballot in favor of or against promotion and granting of tenure. Abstaining votes are discouraged, and faculty members who vote against promotion or tenure should provide an explanation on the ballot for the vote.
- e) The PSS representative to the Davis College Promotion and Tenure Committee participates in the meeting but does not cast his/her vote during the departmental deliberation and voting. This person's vote is counted during the college promotion and tenure voting.
- f) The promotion ballot is separate from the tenure ballot. Each voting peer makes a vote for both promotion and tenure.

- g) The ballots are collected, counted and verified during the faculty voting meeting by one of the associate chairpersons of the department, who was designated by the chairperson of the department to perform such function. The final vote tally is certified by the designated associate chairperson and chairperson of the department together during a meeting separate from the full faculty meeting.
- h) The recorder shall submit the meeting summary to the department chairperson and may copy the other voting members.

The PSS chairperson shall review the dossier, external letters, faculty discussion summary, and faculty vote. The PSS department chairperson shall indicate the sources of external letters, the form of the consultation, the faculty vote, and the chairperson's own vote. As stated in Section 6.a.3 of OP 32.01, the department chairperson's recommendation is provided to the candidate at the same time it is submitted to the dean. The candidate may request that the dossier be withdrawn from consideration without prejudice in writing at this time.

Prepared and Updated by:

Promotion and Tenure SOP *Ad Hoc* Committee, Summer/Fall 2022

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Revised July 27, 2023: Updated timelines for dossier submission in Section 5 and Figure 2 to meet updated college submission deadlines. GLR