

From: Jo Tyler (jtyler) jtyler@umw.edu 
Subject: Re: Request for the COE P&T Committee
Date: March 25, 2016 at 5:38 PM
To: Anand Rao rhetorao@gmail.com
Cc: Nina Mikhalevsky (nmik) nmik@umw.edu, Janine Davis (jdavis7) jdavis7@umw.edu, John Broome (jbroome) jbroome@umw.edu, Marie Sheckels (msheckel) msheckel@umw.edu



Anand,

I currently serve as Chair of the COE P&T Committee as well as chair of the COE Faculty Affairs Committee. As a result, I have been involved with these issues for quite some time, and therefore I wanted to send you my own responses to your questions in this email. In a separate email I have sent a compilation of responses from other members of the COE P&T and Faculty Affairs committees.

Regarding External Letters in P&T:

The COE currently requires candidates to submit a list of possible writers of P&T letter writers, including writers from outside the COE. I believe this should be revised to require recommendations from outside the University as well as from other colleges in UMW. Our candidates have always included letters from outside the University anyway. These letters serve as significant direct evidence for the P&T committee and provide valuable context for evaluating the rest of the portfolio. In our criteria for promotion to Professor we state: “The rank of Professor carries with it a recognition that the candidate is highly regarded in his or her field ... Evidence supporting such recognition should appear in external letters of recommendation ...” (Appx. K.8.3.2.2). While I think the COE can improve on its requirements for external letters, I do not think the UFC should make any university-wide requirements.

I am concerned about any attempts to dictate to colleges what their P&T procedures and criteria should be, beyond the calenda, general criteria, and policies that are already in Section 7 of the Faculty Handbook. Section 7.9 states specifically that it is up to each college to determine “its own set of requirements for the preparation of the promotion and tenure credentials file.” And the Handbook already requires the University Faculty Affairs Committee to “ensure the promotion and tenure criteria and procedures as established by each college are clearly stated and in parallel with one another” (Sec. 7.11). Beyond that, there is no need for a University-level authority to determine specifics of P&T policies in individual colleges. **The UFC should respect each college’s autonomy in this area.** Any erosion would, I believe, call into question the purpose for even having three colleges at UMW. Among the inherent differences between the colleges are their means of engagement with and commitment to the region, and the state and national professional and accrediting standards for graduates and professional programs. These differences necessitate that the colleges themselves have direction over their separate P&T criteria and policies, as they do over their curricula.

Regarding Evaluation of Teaching and Use of Student Course Evaluation Data:

As a former member of the University Faculty Affairs Committee I participated in drafting the attached report on teaching evaluation in October 2012. It stated among other things that the current student survey instrument has not been tested for validity, that it tends to highlight extremes rather than trends, and that it (and any other measures of the quality of teaching) should focus on student learning outcomes, rather than student opinions. The COE P&T policy reflects this view by stating “**Popular teaching and good teaching are not necessarily the same**

thing” (Appx. K.1.1). Among the UFAC’s recommendations on the attached is that “Teaching evaluation should be closely tied to our Outcomes Assessment efforts.” If it were, it would be much more informative—and relevant—in the faculty evaluation processes.

I doubt very much that it is the online format that is the problem with our current student survey. Rather, I suspect that faculty do not consider it of much value to them as an evaluation tool. When the student questionnaire is linked to merit-based raises, it equates merit with popularity (or more accurately, lack of merit with unpopularity), and that is just wrong. Because the current instrument is the only available source of *quantitative* data on teaching, it can become the *primary* evidence relied upon in the time-consuming annual review process. It is a poor instrument for this level of reliance in making high-stakes decisions affecting a person’s career.

For other colleges looking to find ways of evaluating teaching in the P&T process, an effective prototype may be found in the COE’s P&T document (Sec. K.1.1.1 of the Faculty Handbook). It contains a table listing common indicators and exemplars of appropriate portfolio evidence for evaluating each teaching criterion. COE faculty find this extremely helpful in compiling their portfolios and writing their rationale narratives. Furthermore, our P&T committee members, particularly those from other colleges, have agreed that this table enables them to more comprehensively and equitably evaluate teaching for each candidate.

Thank you for reaching out to the colleges for input on these issues. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

--Jo Tyler

Professor, College of Education

Chair, COE Promotion and Tenure Committee

Chair, COE Faculty Affairs Committee

From: Anand Rao <rhetorrao@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2016 11:14 AM

To: Jo Tyler (jtyler)

Subject: Request for the COE P&T Committee

Hi Jo,

I hope you enjoyed your spring break! I am writing in response to a discussion item that the UFC had on its last meeting agenda. We discussed the possibility of including outside letters for promotion and tenure decisions, and would like to hear from the college P&T committees on this issue. We would like to hear your committee’s thoughts on the following:

1) use of outside letters. How useful would outside letters be to the committee during promotion and tenure consideration? If the university were to include the use of outside letters, what should the letters comment on (limited to scholarly and professional activity, or include review of teaching and service), and how should outside reviewers be identified and selected?

2) evaluation of teaching. We also discussed some concerns raised regarding the evaluation of teaching, particularly those concerns raised over the use of online evaluation instruments and

teaching, particularly given concerns raised over the use of online evaluation instruments and what have been typically low response rates. Does the committee have any recommendations for what can be used to supplement the current instrument?

We will continue this discussion at our next meeting on Wednesday, March 30th, and would appreciate your committee's comments and input to help direct that discussion. Written comments that I can distribute to UFC members in advance would be ideal, but members of the COE P&T committee are also welcome to attend the meeting and participate. Please let me know if you plan to attend and I will set aside time at the beginning of this discussion for you to share the comments coming from your committee.

Best,

Anand

P. Anand Rao, Ph.D.

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