Guidelines for Unit and Evaluation Committee Chairs on Tenure Process and Timeline

I. Relevant sections of the Faculty Handbook (FH)
Even if you have handled a tenure case before, it is important to be familiar with the current Faculty Handbook and to follow its provisions, so please read the following sections carefully.

Section II-C: Academic Faculty Appointments, Reappointments, and Promotions
The discussion of the Tenure Review Process, which includes details about the redacted report that goes to the tenure candidate, is located in this section.

Section II-D: Reconsideration and Appeal of Academic Faculty Reappointment and Promotion Decisions
Definitions of “improper consideration” and “inadequate consideration” are located in this section. Both must be scrupulously avoided in any evaluation decision. See also the April 2024 document from College General Counsel Jamie Art on Principles and Good Practices for Reappointment and Promotion Evaluation.

Section II-F: Academic Department Governance
See especially the Annual CAP Memorandum, Part II: Personnel Information and Evaluation. It specifies who participates in the tenure decision, so it is important to read and follow this section.

Note in particular that “Once approved for tenure by the Board of Trustees, faculty members shall begin immediately to participate in the work of tenured faculty, including participation in tenure decisions. A newly tenured faculty member shall not, however, take part in tenure decisions or appeals concerning colleagues considered for tenure in the same academic year.” Another important point to keep in mind when planning evaluation discussions is the requirement that “[s]enior faculty members on leave must either participate fully in the evaluation process of all candidates for reappointment and promotion in that year, or submit a letter evaluating the work of each candidate.”

Though not currently specified explicitly in the FH but consistent with the spirit of medical leave, tenured faculty who are on medical leave may participate in the tenure process if they are able to do so, at their option, following the guideline of either participating fully in the discussions leading to the final version of the memorandum or submitting a letter.

Section II-G: Academic Program Governance
This section contains important information relevant to evaluation of faculty who contribute to programs.

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Section II-H: Evaluation Committees

This section contains information about the composition of the evaluation committee and expectations of evaluation committee members.

Section II-M: Evaluation of Academic Faculty Teaching, Scholarship, and Service to the College Community

This section outlines a number of key policies that must be followed in evaluation. The process of obtaining outside reviews of scholarship and artistic work is described under Evaluation of Scholarship, so it is important to read and follow the guidelines in this section.

See also Staffing Report, Part II Guidelines and Due Dates in the Chair Resources section of the Dean of the Faculty website.

II. Timeline:

A) Late February: The Office of the Dean of the Faculty sends an email to the tenure candidate (the chair is cc’d) outlining the process, the materials to submit as part of their dossier, and deadlines. You should then meet with the tenure candidate to discuss the process, preparing materials for the dossier, and any questions they might have. Once you have had this meeting, please submit to the Director of Faculty Information Systems the signed form confirming that the meeting has happened. During this meeting, ask the candidate if they would like you to solicit letter(s) from any chairs of committees on which they have served or chairs of units with which they are affiliated. Such letters are appended to the report.

B) By the end of spring break: The candidate should prepare a list of 3-6 possible external reviewers and submit them to you. Relationships to possible reviewers need to be specified. They also may name people they do not wish to have contacted.

C) Shortly before or after spring break: Convene tenured colleagues in the unit or evaluation committee members to generate a list of possible external reviewers. Three of the four external reviewers ultimately ought to come from this list, and you will need at least three alternates. Please strive to have at least one member of the review team be a faculty member at or with significant experience at a liberal arts college.

D) Shortly after spring break: Submit to the Dean of the Faculty: a) the candidate’s reviewer list (including any names of those to exclude); b) the department or evaluation committee’s list; and c) the proposed “dream team” of reviewers, including one from the candidate’s list, along with the proposed alternates should any of those invited decline. Once the Dean has approved the proposed reviewers and alternates, you can proceed with contacting the reviewers you have proposed. When you do so, please use the templates in the Chair Resources on the DoF website:

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External Reviewer Request Template and External Review Confirmation Template. Note that copies of the letters of solicitation must be included in the tenure evaluation packet to be sent to the Dean of the Faculty.

E) **July 1**: The tenure dossier is due (including self-evaluation, *cv*, teaching materials, and scholarly/artistic materials.) To make the submission process more streamlined for candidates and easier for chairs and administrative assistants, we ask candidates to submit their materials via two separate forms:

- **Tenure dossier materials to be sent to external reviewers**
- **Tenure dossier materials to be reviewed by the unit**

Be sure to clarify with the candidate what they would like to be sent to the external reviewers. Scholarly/artistic materials and the *cv* must be sent, but it is up to the candidate whether to send any of the other materials such as the self-evaluation. The candidate may write a separate cover note for the external evaluators if desired.

F) **Aug 15**: Any supplements to the tenure dossier are due. These materials are guaranteed internal consideration by the unit or evaluation committee and by the CAP. The candidate should submit materials for the August 15 due date via this form:

- **Tenure dossier additional materials**

(As the Faculty Handbook notes, “There is no guarantee that material submitted after August 15 will be assessed, but candidates may present their departments and the CAP at any time with evidence of any changes in the status of their work.”)

G) **Oct 15**: The full tenure packet is due to the CAP. Please make every effort to meet this deadline.

The packet includes:
1. the unit or evaluation committee evaluation report, letters from faculty on leave, letters from chairs of committees on which the candidate has served, and letters from chairs of units with which the candidate is affiliated;
2. the unit or evaluation committee report with suggested redactions;
3. the unit or evaluation committee evaluation procedures;
4. the letter, *cv*, and solicitation letter for each of the four reviewers;
5. signatures from the tenured members who participated in the evaluation.
H) As soon as the report is received, the divisional CAP representative and the Dean redact the report independently and then compare the redactions to the unit’s redactions to ensure the guidelines for redactions are followed in the final redacted version. The Faculty Handbook notes:

“However, any confidential information, such as information that identifies individuals within the department or program, or comparisons with other identifiable faculty members at Williams or elsewhere, is removed. In addition, any information identifying outside reviewers or information that could be used to infer the identities of the outside reviewers is also removed.”

“This redacted version does not explicitly state the unit’s recommendation for or against tenure. However, the redaction should not obscure other arguments, evaluative statements, or judgments made in the report.”

To make the redaction process easier, best practice is to name the external reviewers only once, in a group, and then refer to them as “Reviewer 1” or “Reviewer A,” etc. Avoid identifying other individuals or faculty members by name as much as possible in comments on the research (it is ok to name class visitors).

Avoid phrasing comments using “tenure” except in summary statements at the beginning and end of the report; instead, use alternate phrasing (for example, “We view X’s teaching to be excellent” would be preferable to “We agree that X’s teaching meets the standard for tenure”). In general, try not to phrase statements in a way that seems to state the tenure recommendation.

As soon as the redaction is complete, the redacted evaluation report is sent to the tenure candidate and you by email. You share the redacted report with all senior faculty who participated in the tenure decision via the unit deliberations or via a letter submitted because they were on leave and/or unable to attend the deliberations, so that they are aware of exactly what has been shared with the faculty member.

I) Once the tenure candidate receives the redacted report, they have two weeks to choose to reply to the report or not. Any reply goes to the CAP only.

J) Ideally before winter break: The news about the tenure decision is communicated to you, as chair. You arrange for a call or meeting with the tenure candidate to deliver the news.