Fall 2018

To:             Department Chairs, Directors, and Deans

From:Robert Anex, Chair, Physical Sciences Division Executive Committee

Re:Submission of Tenure Review Documents for 2018-2019

Documents relevant to the submission of tenure dossiers to the Physical Sciences Divisional Executive Committee, including the most recent version of the divisional committee’s tenure guidelines and a checklist of required materials are available at: https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/physical-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/

Please pay special attention to the requirements for documenting teaching activities and effectiveness. For promotions, the committee expects to see clear evidence of annual departmental peer review of teaching. A suggested form for peer evaluation of teaching is available on the website linked above.

In addition to student evaluations and peer review of teaching, programs are strongly encouraged to provide evidence of instructor effectiveness beyond the quantitative summary. A growing body of evidence shows that student evaluations commonly reflect gender, race, and even age or class biases. Possible indications of bias should be taken into account in the analysis of a candidate’s teaching effectiveness.

When identifying the three publications that best demonstrate the candidate’s scholarly achievement, please explain how these publications were selected and by whom. It is also most helpful to provide for each of the three most significant publications a short paragraph that explains its significance and scholarly contribution.

The chair’s letter should provide information on the recruitment process that led to the hiring; departmental procedures for voting on tenure (e.g., rules re: quorum and absentee ballots), and the vote breakdown. When a department’s executive committee vote is not unanimous, it should also summarize the major concerns raised during the discussion.

Please review instructions for soliciting letters of evaluation for tenure cases. The dossier must include a minimum of five “arm’s-length” letters from experts who can provide objective evaluations, and specify whether evaluators received the full dossier to review. Letters from individuals such as the candidate’s PhD advisor, postdoctoral supervisors, frequent collaborators, recipients of joint funding, or others who may have a substantial interest in the candidate or his/her work are not “arm’s length” and are given reduced weight by the committee. The committee strongly discourages informal contact (e.g., by phone or email) with letter writers prior to formal solicitation. All formal or informal correspondence with letter writers should be documented.

For most candidates, the expected level of accomplishment for tenure requires the full duration of the tenure clock. The committee discourages early applications for candidates who have demonstrated a strong but not exceptional performance. However, the committee will consider early applications for candidates who have demonstrated an exceptional rate of accomplishment or productivity, as well as those with competing outside offers or for whom early tenure consideration is part of a retention package. The chair’s letter should explain the reasons for early consideration, and level of urgency should be noted in Section K: Urgency of the tenure dossier.
Tenure clock extensions (e.g., for maternity/paternity leave) do not count against a candidate at the divisional level. Unused extensions will not cause the case to be considered as an “early” tenure decision (but the cover letter should identify the original tenure clock and any extensions to make this clear).

Senior hires are generally evaluated for tenure only after they have accepted an offer. If there are extenuating circumstances that require evaluation prior to acceptance, please contact the committee chair with details before submitting a tenure dossier. In addition to the guidelines re: letters provided above, departments should explicitly note whether any writers of letters for the dossier also wrote letters for the candidate’s job application to UW-Madison. An annotated composite tenure dossier and other sample dossiers are available for review in the Divisional Committees office. We strongly urge candidates and department chairs (or others responsible for preparing tenure packages) to examine these documents. An incomplete or poorly prepared tenure dossier may be returned to the department for revision without review.

We serve as an evaluative, rather than investigative committee. Divisional committees are not allowed to search for information regarding candidates for tenure or appointment. We thank you for using the resources noted in this memo to provide us with complete materials for review.

Please share this letter with all assistant professors in your department. Pre-tenure faculty members are encouraged to begin constructing tenure dossiers in their first year at UW.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months. Please contact me (anex@wisc.edu or 608-890-3839) or Divisional Committees Coordinator Michaela Aust (michaela.aust@wisc.edu or 608-263-5741) if we can be of assistance.