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TO: Deans, Chairs, and Directors

FROM: Senior Vice Presidents *DP* David Pershing and Lorris Betz

DATE: March 19, 2010

SUBJECT: External review letters when hiring new faculty with tenure

At the urging of the University Promotion and Tenure Advisory Committee (UPTAC), which reviews all new faculty appointments when the individual is being hired with tenure, we have reviewed our practices with respect to soliciting external letters of reference. Historically, we have permitted departments to use the letters candidates submitted in applying for a position as the letters needed to support the tenure accompanying the appointment. Obviously, these letters are from individuals whom faculty candidates have asked to write on their behalf and thus are less independent than letters from individuals selected and solicited by the university. It is the opinion of UPTAC, which we have found persuasive, that external candidates for tenure should receive the same verification of their professional standing that we expect when we tenure our own faculty members. Therefore, for searches beginning now, we are requiring departments to follow the same rules for soliciting external letters of review for external candidates as for internal candidates for tenure.

We realize that this may require some advance planning, especially when departments anticipate a need for haste in concluding an offer because of competition with another university or some other situation. First, we recommend that candidates for senior positions be notified early in the recruitment process that the institution requires independent review letters to conclude a tenured appointment. Second, since most departments' and/or colleges' guidelines allow the candidate for tenure to nominate at least some of the external reviewers, it is entirely appropriate to ask applicants for a senior position to send names of references rather than sending reference letters directly. Then the department can solicit references from an appropriate number of those individuals, noting that the candidate will be considered for tenure and including a copy of the relevant tenure criteria and standards. University Policy 6-303, Sec. K. 3 states: "It shall be presumed that the candidate waives any right to see such external evaluation letters, unless the candidate submits to the RPT chairperson a written request for access to any letters prior to the time the letters are submitted." It is also certainly permissible to use with outside candidates the same form we use with internal candidates, which gives them the choice between waiving or retaining the right to read the letters.

Please note that it will also be necessary for the department to identify additional experts--the number to be determined by departmental or college guidelines--and solicit letters from them as well,

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though this could be done at a later stage in the process once the pool of candidates for the appointment has been narrowed. Although it is normally desirable for the appointment itself and the tenure decision to proceed simultaneously, this is not required institutionally. This means that the appointment can proceed to conclusion with three letters of reference that could be ones nominated by the candidate, but the tenure decision would have to wait for the letters solicited by the department. No doubt some candidates will be comfortable concluding the appointment negotiations with the tenure decision still pending, while others are not. It might be helpful to assure candidates that the University has no tradition of tenure recommendations for outstanding external hires being rejected by UPTAC or the senior administration when departments and colleges present candidates with strong credentials. Indeed, offer letters now should make clear that appointments are "contingent upon the approval of the President and Board of Trustees." Appropriate additional language when tenure is under consideration would be something like the following: "This is a tenured professor appointment that must be approved for tenure and rank by faculty committees and administrators."

We know that senior hires with tenure are very important additions to our faculty and typically have outstanding national and international reputations. We do not believe that this adjustment to our hiring process will jeopardize such hires, but will strengthen our reputation for making such hires.