

Guide to
PROMOTION AND TENURE AT RENSSELAER

by

The Faculty Senate Committee on Promotion and Tenure
1996

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INTRODUCTION.

This Guide to Promotion and Tenure at Rensselaer gives an overview of the formal promotion and tenure process at Rensselaer. We intend it as a supplement to the Faculty Handbook, not as a substitute for it.

Anyone involved in the process of promotion and tenure at Rensselaer should become thoroughly familiar with the sections of the Faculty Handbook regarding promotion, tenure, and appeal, whether you are a candidate or administrator or faculty colleague in a departmental promotion and tenure committee.

Granting tenure is the single most significant token of faith — and represents the most significant investment of resources — Rensselaer makes to a faculty member. From the point of view of the candidate, it is often a life-altering turning point. Not too long ago, a former provost of Rensselaer called tenure "our million dollar decision." In the time since then, inflation has certainly raised that figure.

The Faculty Senate Committee on Promotion and Tenure (FSCPT), by publishing this *Guide*, wishes to disseminate a basic understanding of how the process works. The procedures by which tenure and promotion decisions are made can be mystifying — or at least daunting — to faculty candidates. We also wish to make a clear statement of established procedures in order to ensure continuity from one departmental chair to another and from one dean to another when these positions change hands as well as to ensure uniform practices among all departments and schools at Rensselaer.

We view this *Guide* as provisional and advisory. In an era when the size, composition, and responsibility of faculty are changing, when "normal" career paths are diversifying, and when new paradigms of publication, research, scholarship, teaching, collaboration, and service are coming into play, any document such as this will naturally require frequent revision. We invite future FSCPTs to revise this document to reflect changes in the profession, and we invite our colleagues to suggest emendations and corrections.

Knowledge of the process should help candidates for promotion and tenure to prepare their own cases. We especially hope this *Guide* will be read carefully by departmental chairs and the deans of the schools so that they, too, can prepare the best possible cases for each candidate and aid the FSCPT to make these important decisions in the most judicious and objective fashion. A sufficient number of poorly-prepared dossiers have reached the FSCPT over the past few years to warrant a clear statement of what the FSCPT views as "best practices." We hope deans and chairs will measure their own practices against the FSCPT's expectations in guiding a candidate through this lengthy process.

To the candidate and the chairs and deans who are responsible for assembling the dossier — indeed to everyone involved in the process, including future members of the FSCPT — we offer simple advice. The watchwords for an excellent dossier are attention to detail, honesty, completeness, objectivity, and freedom from influence. In short, the values for judging the merits of promotion and tenure cases are the same as the values treasured in our scholarly work and teaching and, indeed, are built on these foundations of integrity in academia.

1. COMPOSITION AND DUTIES OF THE FSCPT.

The FSCPT is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate reporting to the Faculty Senate and the Dean of the Faculty. It is composed of eight tenured full professors elected by their constituencies as follows:

- One from each School
- Two at-large
- One by the student body

Each constituency should solicit nominations for tenured full professors and then the entire constituency should vote. The seven members representing the faculty serve terms of three years each, staggered so that there is continuity and corporate memory of FSCPT practices. The faculty member representing the Student Senate serves a term for one year.

In the instance of a committee member who goes on leave during his/her time of service on the FSCPT, the constituency has the obligation to fill the seat. Generally, the runner-up in the original election is asked to do so.

The duties of the FSCPT are chartered by the Constitution of the Faculty Senate: to make recommendations to the Dean of the Faculty on all cases of promotion and tenure of faculty and to hear appeals by faculty members. It is also responsible to review candidates for appointment to faculty positions at the level of associate professor or above, and/or with tenure. These include administrators— Chairs, Deans and Vice-Presidents of academic units, and Presidents — who are *de jure* members of the faculty.

Each year, the FSCPT elects a chair from among its eight members, usually as the last order of business for the academic year so there is clear responsibility for FSCPT duties that may occur during the summer and so the chair can plan his or her service schedule for the subsequent semester. The chair's role is to facilitate discussions, move them along in a timely and orderly fashion, schedule meeting times (usually through the Dean of the Faculty's office), carry out extra charges of the committee (e.g., seek more information from faculty or departmental chairs), report results of these missions to the committee, and record the votes in order to report them to the Dean of the Faculty. Generally, the chair also takes notes from each meeting so that there is a record of the discussion. The chair is also responsible to communicate with Deans regarding the quality of dossiers the FSCPT has received in the interest of suggesting to Deans ways in which case preparation can be improved. The chair also gives a report of the FSCPT's activities to the Faculty Senate at the end of the year.

2. HOW THE FSCPT OPERATES.

Many faculty who have served on the FSCPT over the years have said that it is one of the most effective committees in the Institute. It is the only standing committee where faculty and deans make recommendations with an equal voice. It is certainly a committee that is charged with very serious decisions, and individual members often spend hours reading each dossier, generally taking extensive notes.

The rules of objectivity and clear evidence hold sway in FSCPT discussions. As a result, it is very difficult to let biases of individual faculty members from either within the committee or outside it to unduly influence the final decision. The FSCPT has a strong tradition of protecting both individual faculty members' and the Institute's interests from undue interest or pressures in any direction, pro or con. The primary function of the FSCPT, then, is to safeguard the standards of Rensselaer and to ensure fairness.

The FSCPT meets several times in each semester. During the first meeting the committee sets the calendar. We begin our meetings soon after the deadline for the submission of dossiers to the Dean of the Faculty's office. We have met as many as six or seven times in a semester, and these meetings can last as long as four hours each. The committee will also meet on an emergency basis to vote on candidates who are joining the faculty as associate or full professors and/or with tenure; these often require very quick responses by the Institute.

In preparation for our meetings, each committee member takes extensive notes as s/he reviews each dossier. Traditionally, the Chair of the FSCPT asks every member to be familiar with every dossier. Then, in typically long and detailed discussion, members compare notes and formulate an emerging opinion about each case. No point is too small to warrant a discussion. In certain exceptional cases, when members sense that there might be positive unanimity, the committee may agree to take an early straw poll to avoid protracted and unnecessary discussion. If there is any objection by any member, or an inquiry about any point, then the dossier is given a full discussion. Difficult, ambiguous, or potentially negative cases tend to receive extra attention.

Unfortunately, incomplete or ambiguous dossiers often reach the FSCPT for our consideration. The committee may also find points in a dossier that require clarification, including such significant matters as whether a decision represents early tenure or not, or what contractual agreement a candidate had with the Institute upon hiring, or apparently trivial matters such as a missing recommender's biographical blurb or an incomplete

record of teaching evaluations. In these cases, the FSCPT goes back to a department chair to request additional information, either from the chair directly or from a candidate via the chair. In some extreme cases, such as when there is an obvious mismatch between the apparent value of a candidate's record and a department's vote, the FSCPT has asked that a chair or a member of the department meet with the FSCPT to clarify the matter. These fact-finding meetings are informational and are held only in circumstances when every other route to clarify an issue has been exhausted or there is no more expedient route, since feedback between the FSCPT and the department is sensitive, and the FSCPT wishes to avoid raising alarms or giving undue influence to a chair's voice in the committee.

The committee votes before making its recommendations to the Dean of the Faculty. In recent years, the votes have been registered as double positive, single positive, zero, single negative, or double negative. In the past, Chairs have urged members of the FSCPT to avoid a zero (fence-sitting) vote, but in some cases individual committee members are unable to recommend for or against promotion or tenure.

In a thorough meeting with the Dean of the Faculty the FSCPT again discusses each case, informing the Dean of the Faculty in detail of the arguments pro and con, problems with the dossier, and the *interim* vote of the FSCPT. The FSCPT also will make comments about the quality of the preparation of the dossier, since the Dean of the Faculty is the proper route for information to flow back to deans and chairs and then to the faculty candidate. Sometimes opinions shift between the last FSCPT meeting and the FSCPT meeting with the Dean of the Faculty. The Chair of the FSCPT is obliged to report this vote in a written memo to the Dean of the Faculty so that there is an official record of the FSCPT's recommendation.

Finally, the FSCPT and the Deans meet to discuss each case yet again. The faculty and Deans vote together. This meeting is chaired by the Dean of the Faculty. At first glance it might seem redundant of the separate meetings of the Dean of the Faculty with the FSCPT and the Dean of the Faculty with the Deans, but it is actually a crucible for formulating the clear value of a candidate the institute and the profession. Every time a vote is taken, it is a new vote and supersedes any previous vote.

The Dean of the Faculty formulates his/her position based upon the recommendation of the Deans and the FSCPT and makes a recommendation to the President. The President makes his/her recommendation to the Board of Trustees and the Board of Trustees make the final decision.

Any negative recommendation at the level of the Department, School, or the Dean stops the process and returns to the candidate. In the case of any negative decision at any step in the process, the candidate has the option to appeal, which may involve re-assembling the dossier, adding more evidence, soliciting the help of an advocate, and beginning the case over again (See *Section 7* below). A negative decision requires written explanation to the candidate from the body that made the recommendation.

Any positive recommendation is advisory to the next level in the decision-making hierarchy at every step. The Chair is not bound by the vote of the department committee. The Dean can make a recommendation that is different from the vote of the department or the executive committee of a school. The FSCPT can overturn the recommendation it receives from the Dean. The Dean of the Faculty reserves the right to form his/her own judgments and make recommendations to the President which may differ from the determination of the joint committee of deans and faculty. And the President can do the same based on the Dean of the Faculty's recommendation. Finally, the Board of Trustees can formulate its own decision. The Dean of the Faculty is responsible for reporting to the FSCPT (and, presumably, the Deans) about the outcome of each case.

3. SCHEDULING AND DEADLINES.

From the time the dossiers leave the schools, the decision process usually takes about seven weeks and so begins well before the middle of each semester. As you can infer from the discussion above, the entire schedule for reviewing a professor's candidacy is driven retroactively by the meetings of the Board of Trustees late in the Fall (December) and Spring (May) semesters. The FSCPT and Deans make their separate recommendations to the Dean of the Faculty two or three weeks before the Trustees meet, and then the Deans, FSCPT, and Dean of the Faculty must vote, and the Dean of the Faculty must make his/her recommendation to the President, who in turn must advise the Board. (See Fig. 1 on page 9).

Since there can be a dozen candidates or more in a semester and some dossiers will require hours of discussion, the Dean of the Faculty mandates deadlines very early in October and March for receiving the dossier from the schools. Consequently, the candidate, departments, and schools have to prepare even further in advance. A rushed dossier serves neither the interests of the candidate nor of the process.

Normally, a department should be prepared to make its decision in the first month of a semester. That means that the process of assembling the dossier, especially external reviews, should have been nearly completed at the very latest by the beginning of the semester in which the candidate wishes to be considered. Consequently, if a candidate wishes a decision in Spring of one year, s/he should have prepared the dossier by the beginning of the Fall semester of the previous year.

Candidates and chairs should discuss the promotion and tenure process at least a semester before the process has to begin, and choose whether they will target the Fall or Spring Trustees meeting. This discussion should be the culmination of a probationary period that is no longer than six years, in which the candidate has had annual reviews with the chair of his/her department and a three-year review. These reviews, which require written feedback to the candidate, are important steps in preparing the candidate for tenure and promotion. All evaluations and mentoring should be performed with an eye to advising and preparing the candidate to make the best case possible.

The chair should give the candidates a firm deadline well in advance for submitting his/her parts of the dossier to the departmental committee. These include

- the Rensselaer 23-page biographical sketch form, available from the Dean of the Faculty office.
- selected publications, records of exhibits, performances, installations, etc.
- any additional pertinent information for which there is no room on the bio-sketch

The Chair or some mentor in the senior faculty of the candidate's department should also help the candidate assemble the bio-sketch, and then review it rigorously and critically, looking for all the points noted in Section 3 below and recommend changes, additions, and deletions.

Chairs themselves should leave plenty of time between the candidate's deadline and their own deadline for making a recommendation to their respective Schools, since the departmental committee must have time to mail out and receive back the dossier to internal and external evaluators, read the dossier and vote. In turn, the Deans should set a deadline well in advance of the FSCPT deadline for receiving all promotion/tenure cases from the departments, since the School executive committee must read the dossier and vote on the case. The school executive committee generally consists of chairs of departments and associate and assistant deans.

Chairs must report back to the candidate in a timely fashion on the final votes at each level.

Any negative recommendation at the level of the Department, School, or the Dean stops the process and returns to the candidate. In the case of any negative decision at any step in the process, the candidate has the option to appeal, which may involve re-assembling the dossier, adding more evidence, soliciting the help of an advocate, and beginning the case over again (See *Section 7* below). A negative decision requires written explanation to the candidate from the body that made the recommendation.

Any positive recommendation is advisory to the next level in the decision-making hierarchy at every step. The Chair is not bound by the vote of the department committee. The Dean can make a recommendation that is different from the vote of the department or the executive committee of a school. The FSCPT can overturn the recommendation it receives from the Dean. The Dean of the Faculty reserves the right to form his/her own judgments and make recommendations to the President which may differ from the determination of the joint committee of deans and faculty. And the President can do the same based on the Dean of the Faculty's recommendation. Finally, the Board of Trustees can formulate its own decision. The Dean of the Faculty is responsible for reporting to the FSCPT (and, presumably, the Deans) about the outcome of each case.

Fig. 1: A General Timeline of the Promotion and Tenure Decision Process

Time before Board of Trustees Meeting	Procedure
~ 6 months	Candidate assembles bio-sketch, sample publications, and list of internal and external evaluators to the Chair. Candidate and Chair discuss selection of external and internal evaluators and the procedures and the deadline for submitting the dossier. Chair sends out dossier to evaluators.
~ 12 weeks	Early in the semester, the department Promotion and Tenure committee reviews and votes on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Chair. If the Chair's recommendation is positive, s/he forwards the dossier and a written recommendation to the School. If negative, the Chair informs the candidate formally, including the candidate's right to appeal.
~10 weeks	Executive committee of the School reviews and votes on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Dean.
~ 8 weeks	If the Dean makes a positive recommendation, s/he forwards the dossier with a written recommendation to the Dean of the Faculty before the deadline of the target semester, Fall or Spring (usually October and February, respectively). If the Dean's recommendation is negative, s/he informs the candidate formally, including the candidate's right to appeal.
~ 8 weeks - 3 weeks	The FSCPT reviews and votes on the candidacy.
~ 8 weeks - 3 weeks	The deans of the schools review and vote on the candidacy.
~ 3 weeks	The FSCPT take a final vote on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Dean of the Faculty.
~ 3 weeks	The deans of the schools take a final vote on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Dean of the Faculty.
~ 2 weeks	The FSCPT and Deans meet together to vote on the candidacy as a recommendation to the Dean of the Faculty.
~ 1 week	The Dean of the Faculty makes a recommendation to the President.
	The President makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.
	The Board of Trustees decide.

4. THE DOSSIER.

The dossier is the primary instrument used to make the promotion and tenure decision. As many as sixty or seventy people will review a candidate's dossier during the process: a dozen external evaluators, the departmental P&T committee, the School's executive committee and Dean, the FSCPT, the Deans of the Schools, the Dean of the Faculty, the President, and, in executive summary form, the Board of Trustees. Many of these readers in the audience will have little or no knowledge of the "local conditions" or specific details of a candidate's career and circumstances, nor of the canons of judgment that apply in a department, school, or academic discipline. As a result, it is necessary that the dossier represent in as complete and clear a way any information that pertains to the career of a candidate. More explanation, within reason, is generally better than less. Little should be left to the imagination, and it should not be assumed that all reviewers will be able to judge the value of a candidate's contributions in the classroom or in the lab or in the profession at large.

4.1 Assemble the bio-sketch and supporting materials early.

The candidate should begin to assemble his or her dossier as early as six months before forwarding it to the departmental P&T committee. Normally, each faculty members has all along kept rigorous records, in the form of a curriculum vitae, of his/her own professional career. These should include

- all courses taught
- the numbers of students in each course
- results of teaching evaluations, including a summary of method used
- a selection of written comments
- publications, professional lectures, presentations, talks, and speeches
- copies of publications
- dates and description of performances, installations, buildings designed and constructed, other designs and creative work professionally exhibited, constructed, or reviewed
- grants funded, proposed, and their status.
- foreign travel

- journal boards
- reviews of grants and journal articles
- consulting and private professional practice
- service to the profession and committee assignments
- community service

The standard long biography form or bio-sketch is the central item in the dossier (see recommendations about it in Section 4.2.3, below). We strongly urge each faculty member to look at it even in the first year of his/her appointment to a position at Rensselaer. Chairs should give each new professor a copy upon hiring and discuss with the candidate professor the process and career issues involved. The chair should also remind the candidate at each annual review to update the bio-sketch.

Candidates should also give early and serious thought to the list of outside evaluators whom they will offer to the Chair, who will then solicit some from among the list of the candidate's choices.

4.2 Parts of the dossier with FSCPT recommendations for best practices.

The dossier is a complex document, made up of various parts. Together, these parts should paint a clear picture of the candidate. One sage member of the FSCPT used to say, "At the end of reading the dossier we should feel as if we know the candidate better than his or her colleagues."

The dossier is also a document reviewed by many people with many different interests: colleagues or future colleagues, professionals and peers in the field, chairs, deans, faculty from other schools in the Institute, Dean of the Faculty, President, trustees. In what follows we anatomize each part of the dossier as they have traditionally arrived at the FSCPT and we make special note of common difficulties, offering hints and advice about how to avoid common pitfalls and optimize the process of judgment. Below we list the parts of the dossier in the order they are viewed by the FSCPT and Deans, not in the order of their assembly. In each section, we explain the practices and pitfalls that accompany each part based on our collective experience of the decision-making process.

Please note that the order of documents in the dossier is not mandatory. In fact, some members of our committee feel a more sensible order would be to have the 23-page biographical sketch come first, followed by the Chair's letter, the Dean's letter, external evaluations, internal evaluations, student evaluations, and publications in appendices. In any case, the addition of simple physical tabs to separate sections is extremely helpful. Neatness counts.

4.2.1. The dean's letter.

The Dean's letter makes the Dean's recommendation to everyone downstream in the process. It should be written by — or at least bear the signature of — the Dean and the Dean alone, not an associate or assistant, which diminishes the authority of the letter in the eyes of the FSCPT. The Dean bears final responsibility for the letter of evaluation from the School.

It should also include:

1. An *account of the vote* of the executive or chairs' committee of the school. The Dean may wish to interpret or explain any unusual circumstances surrounding that vote.
2. A *review and evaluation* of all aspects of the candidate's career, focusing on items and accomplishments of special interest.
3. A *statement of the dean's view* of the value of the candidate to the school.

Many deans excerpt highlights — *blurbs* — from the external review letters in addition to giving their own opinions and judgments. By the same token, the Dean's letter should not ignore problems in the candidacy but should address them directly, placing them in context.

A problem that tends to occur in Dean's letters is "over-selling" a candidate. A Dean's natural impulse may be to want to make the best possible case for every candidate, especially in an era of shrinking faculty resources. Yet by failing to address glaring problems, or by resorting to vague hyperbole, the usefulness of the Dean's judgment and perspective gets lost. By failing, for instance, to address a poor teaching record in an otherwise sterling career, the Dean's letter can actually arouse the suspicions of the FSCPT and make us look harder at that dimension. Similarly, by failing to address and explain the fact that a case represents an early promotion or tenure decision, not only does the Dean seem to have overlooked the obvious, s/he often makes the FSCPT take the extra step of having to clarify the timeline in the candidate's appointment. In short, overlooking shortcomings or lacunae in a candidate's dossier invites the FSCPT to focus even more on potential problems areas.

Deans should keep in mind that members of the FSCPT are likely to see many letters from each dean over the course of the three years of their service. Uniformly hyperbolic letters also can devalue deans' letters in the eyes of the FSCPT. The best protection against this is to focus on the evidence and facts in each case.

4.2.2. The chair's letter.

The Chair's letter makes the Chair's recommendation to everyone down the line in the process. It should include

1. The *vote* of the department's P&T committee, including an interpretation or explanation of the vote if there are any ambiguities, and a definition of the composition of the committee, since it changes from department to department.
2. The *chair's evaluation* of all aspects of the candidate's career, focusing on outstanding qualities but also placing in context how the university should understand the value of the candidate's research, teaching, and service to the department.
3. An *explanation of any special circumstances* in the candidacy, including
 - whether it represents an early decision and why that is justified;
 - an assessment of (not an excuse for) poor teaching evaluations especially light or heavy teaching loads;
 - an explanation of the research effort, especially an apparently low research and/or publication effort;
 - a description of efforts, especially service efforts, over and above what the biographical sketch shows or the recommendations explain.

The committee generally relies on the Chair's letter to indicate the relative value of publications, both by the number of publications, the originality of their contribution, the coherence of the candidate's research or scholarly program, and the prestige of the journals, since standards vary widely from discipline to discipline and it is difficult for the general academic audience for the dossier to know which journals are considered first rate and which second rate.

The committee also relies on the Chair's letter to interpret the value of external evaluations, picking out high points and explaining criticisms.

The same advice we have for Deans in composing their letters go for chairs as well. Avoid hyperbole. Avoid "papering over" or ignoring glaring problems, strong critiques from evaluators, or special circumstances in a case. Do take special effort to explain the meaning of a candidate's research within the discipline and the importance of the candidate to the department, —the "fit," — since the Chair is most likely to be in the best position to give this view.

In some cases, departments have included a supplementary letter from an advocacy committee, usually a sub-committee of the department's promotion and tenure committee. This advocacy letter usually explains in fine detail the nature of the candidate's value to the department and the discipline.

4.2.3. Candidate's biographical sketch.

Assembling the Biographical Sketch is the candidate's responsibility. It is the key document on which all the other recommendations and decisions depend. The FSCPT assumes that the candidate has selected and reviewed everything in it for accuracy and detail. In itself the dossier is read as a token of the candidate's ability to take the process seriously and attend to detail, so the FSCPT is especially interested in the completeness and accuracy of every datum.

The candidate should assume that the bio-sketch is neither a necessary nor a sufficient document. i.e., not all categories in it must be filled, and not all the categories that represent a candidate's career may appear on the standard form. Therefore, the FSCPT strongly urges candidates to include material for which there is no obvious category. If you feel that there is significant information about yourself that is not covered by the listed categories, make the necessary additions. This is preferable by far to trying to squeeze an aspect of your career (extraordinary service or fieldwork), a non-traditional publication (e.g. a Website) or other accomplishment into a category to which it doesn't belong. But please take care to label new or additional categories clearly, completely and unambiguously: i.e. "Refereed electronic journal publications"; "Installation of original work"; "Conferences chaired," "Educational software design," etc.

In what follows, we list the categories in the bio-sketch and give our advice about what to include or not include (when it isn't obvious):

I. Identification:

Name
Current rank
Department
School,
Year and rank of first academic appointment at Rensselaer
Dates and rank for subsequent promotions

II. Educational Preparation:

(1) Baccalaureate and graduate degree(s) with Institution and date
(2) Non-degree preparation

III. Professional Experience

Include here not only academic experience but other professionally relevant employment, including military service, corporate research, sabbatical appointments, employment during leave of absences, etc.

IV. Teaching

In general, the past few years at Rensselaer has seen a renewed emphasis on the value of teaching, especially undergraduate teaching. Ineffective teachers have found it increasingly difficult to find their deficiencies in teaching compensated for by large research grants or extensive publishing or service. The committee also tends to value teachers who have introduced innovation to the curriculum or the classroom in the form of new courses or new techniques and methods. A new premium has been placed on interactive learning in all its forms, from collaborative work to robust interpersonal techniques to the implementation of educational technology in standard courses.

Courses

It is most helpful if the candidate provides the following information in a table format with courses divided according to the semester and year:

- Name and course number listed by semester, summer session
- Number of students who completed each course
- Name of colleagues with whom you taught the course and percentage of your responsibility for the course if it was team- taught
- Teaching evaluation score for each course
- Independent studies, special projects, etc. Include titles, dates.

Student Thesis Supervision

Bachelors
Masters
Doctoral

For each category above indicate the student's name and year of completion (already completed or expected), and the title of the student's thesis.

Under a separate listing, include committees in which you've participated but not chaired or supervised.

Curriculum design

Include the names of new courses you've designed or old courses you have re-designed, including collaborative or team-teaching, introduction of instructional technology, software designed, or new pedagogical methods. It is appropriate to include new syllabi in an appendix.

Advising

List numbers of students advised each semester. Many departments have asked faculty to take on student advisees formally or informally. While few faculty members keep lists of all their advisees, please estimate the numbers of students you have advised in each semester.

V. Publications

When listing publications, follow the normal style for bibliographic entries. Give title, co-authors if any, journal, volume, issue, date, paging. It is advisable to list the order of the authors, since the FSCPT traditionally distinguishes between (and counts) the number of first-authored publications and publications where the candidate is second, third, etc. List articles in reverse order of publication from most recent. Include articles not yet published but accepted or under review, but indicate the status clearly and unambiguously. List adaptations, translations or re-publications of your original work in other forms (i.e. conference proceedings republished as book chapters or journal articles) clearly and not as separate entries.

The values of different kinds of publications vary widely among disciplines and genres. Textbooks are distinguished from monographs (sustained works about a coherent subject) and both vary in perceived value from discipline to discipline. In some disciplines, a single journal article may weigh more heavily than a book, and in some disciplines a poster session or web page may be more important than a publication. **It is therefore of great importance that the chair and the dean explain the perceived value of publications and other professional work within the profession of the candidate and that the dossier distinguish clearly among different sorts of publications.**

Books and book chapters, contributions to edited volumes, etc.

A brief description of each book is helpful (one or two sentences). If it is a textbook or an edited volume, indicate so to distinguish it from a monograph. Distinguish between an edited volume of original essays or chapters and an edited proceedings of a conference. If you edited a volume, include any chapters or introductions you wrote.

Journal articles

Be very clear in distinguishing the publication of conference proceedings from refereed journal publications, and refereed from non-refereed journals or conference proceedings. The candidate is free to add clarifying information about the degree of rigor of each of these, especially in published conference proceedings, since having a paper accepted at some conferences is as prestigious and as important a contribution to the field as some journal publications. The FSCPT has been surprised in the past to see candidates with slim publication records fail to distinguish among these categories, and it has been hard not to interpret this as a sign of "padding." Chairs and colleagues who review the dossier should flag such errors in judgment and suggest revisions before it is sent to the next step.

NOTE: The dossier should include, in an appendix, copies for at least the past six years of all journal articles, abstracts, and book reviews if they are not already with the department file. This list may also contain articles accepted but not yet in print and those submitted but not yet reviewed.

Exhibitions, shows, performances, installations.

Candidates from arts or architecture used to face some difficulty in being evaluated by the Institute-wide committee because academic achievement in their fields often do not follow the model of scholarly publication and research in other disciplines. Recently, the biographical sketch has been altered to include an explicit category, parallel to publications, for artistic or architectural work. However, since most if not all members of the committee may be unfamiliar with these genres of accomplishment, it still falls to the candidate — and the chairs and deans — to explain, clarify, define, and distinguish the meaning of each category. Juried shows should be distinguished from non-juried installations, and the relative prestige of each should be explained. Similarly, performances and exhibitions, buildings constructed and/or designed, original concerts, collaborations, etc., each require some annotation of their own. Candidates should also submit slides, photos, and other media where appropriate, with annotations identifying place and context, as well as significance and value.

The current Biographical Sketch distinguishes between two levels of artistic or architectural works:

Recordings, large scale musical or video works, commissions

Exhibitions, performances and recitals, solo; small-scale musical or video works; and group exhibitions or performances, ensemble recitals

Papers, invited talks, lectures, presentations at professional conferences

Give title, conference, site, location, and date for each of these. Distinguish carefully among the different sorts of talks, papers and presentations, especially as to whether they were refereed or not. International presentations, keynote or plenary speeches/papers/presentations, and invitations to present at prestigious venues represent significant contributions and should be noted clearly. The following represent some but not all of the major categories of achievement that should be noted in this section:

International papers, presentations, talks

National papers, presentations, talks at conferences

Invited papers, presentations, talks

Peer-reviewed papers, presentations, talks

Panels and sessions chaired

Keynote speeches, plenary addresses, papers, presentations

Participation in international conferences

List the following separately:

Infra-university, school or departmental colloquia

Talks, lectures at local institutions or community events

Interviews to news media, radio shows, television, etc.

Publication and presentations via electronic media, television, multimedia, etc., creation and publication of electronic resources, new software, electronic design, etc.

Establishment of web sites that act as academic resources to other scholars, publication in electronic journals, multimedia presentations of data, research, or original scholarly work or performances, and the creation of new software and electronic designs have been and will continue to grow in significance, frequency, and impact. While intellectual property rights, copyrights, ideas of originality, and the metrics for evaluating achievement are all challenged in these new venues, there is no doubt that they should be recognized in some form proportionate to other kinds of academic performance.

Abstracts, reviews, professional correspondence

Patents applied for, pending and secured

Give patent number, dates, names of collaborators and co-holders, and explain the device or object patented, including its significance.

VI Awards and honors, fellowships, sabbatical leaves, study abroad

State date, place, title of project, awarding agency, and explain significance and value.

VII. Candidate's Account of Research

This is an important — and often underestimated — opportunity for the candidate to explain his or her career to the more general audience who will review the dossier and to express any larger vision the candidate may have. Consequently, the candidate should take this letter most seriously. It is the only opportunity for the candidate to "speak" to his/her audience and to indicate any personal flavor or distinction in the candidate's career. Good Accounts of Research

- are well-written and grammatically and mechanically correct
- define terms clearly and avoid jargon
- explain aspects of the career that may not be clear from the data elsewhere in the dossier, while avoiding defensiveness
- take into account the generalized audience who will read them
- explain the significance of contributions
- place research in the contexts of the Institute, the profession, and perhaps even the world at large
- describe a large plan or vision of the research project(s), offer a sense of conviction and coherence.

Letters that express the coherence and future plans of a research program and its ties to teaching are most impressive.

VIII. Grants received

List all co-authors and co-principals, other researchers or investigators; the title of the grant; dates; granting agency; monetary amount. A brief narrative description of the nature of the grant and its accomplishments is desirable but not required. Show multiple grants for the same project clearly.

IX. Grants applied for but not (yet) funded with status.

X. Service

For all the following, give dates and titles of service. Indicate if position was elective or appointed.

Memberships in professional societies, including dates and titles of executive positions held and other service functions. List editing of newsletters, directorship of conferences, committees within professional societies, etc.).

Service to the university, include committees, elective positions, chairship of Institute committees, participation in Councils, retreats, special presentations to alumni, Board of Trustees, or administrative bodies.

Service to the school and department separately.

Service to the profession in review of grants, publications, proposals, and candidacies for tenure and promotion at other institutions.

Editorial positions, including advisory boards, on major publications

Curating and jurying of exhibitions

Service to the community, including public posts in charitable organizations.

Describe special initiatives and accomplishments.

XI. Sabbatical Leaves, off campus study programs, foreign and professional travel, dates and topics

XII. Other activities

Other relevant activities most often includes consulting, but this category should be used to mention any miscellany or aspects of a candidate's career that don't fit neatly into any of the pigeonholes above. If you list consulting activities, include name of company and days per year and provide a sentence or two describing the nature of the consulting. You may also list here professional services you've provided including activity as expert witness or congressional testimony, advice to government agencies, etc.

XIII. Miscellany

Include if pertinent, concrete evidence of teaching ability and any unusual contributions to university affairs such as curriculum advising or development, continuing education, distance learning, lab or studio design, that wasn't included under the teaching category of the bio-sketch.

4.2.4. Letters of recommendation or review.

The Faculty Handbook spells out the guidelines for assembling a list of external peer reviews of a candidate's dossier. There must be no fewer than six external reviews, with equal numbers of reviewers suggested by the candidate and the department. Within reason, more external reviews are better, and the more qualified the reviewer, the easier it will be to make clear judgments about a case. The FSCPT looks closely at each external (and internal) reviewer's rank, institution, achievement, experience, and relationship to the candidate. Consequently, each reviewers' letter should be accompanied by a brief biography and statement of the reviewer's relationship to the candidate. Dossiers that do not have sufficient numbers of well-qualified external reviewers are difficult to judge and may reflect poorly on the candidate's case.

These letters play a very significant role in shaping the FSCPT's decision. The entire process seems to be suffering from inflation, since specialists tend to know each other quite well and colleagues in the profession seem to be more wary of legal implications of negative reviews. Negative remarks do stand out and are not easily dismissed.

In particular, a dossier that includes only letters from friends, collaborators, former colleagues, recommenders from non-academic settings, and colleagues of equal or lesser rank give the FSCPT very little sheerly objective, academic information on which to form its judgments. The inability of a candidate or a department to gather such information may be considered *prima facie* a weakness in the candidate's case describing evaluation of teaching, publication, and service.

The Chair and the candidate select the list of external reviewers together and the candidate must be advised of the final list of external reviewers selected. The candidate does not have the right to veto any choice suggested by the Chair, but s/he may append a letter explaining any objection to the choice. In general, the Chair should show the candidate his/her list first to avoid gaining an unfair advantage.

The following must be present in the dossier:

A. List of all external reviewers

The Chair must submit *a list of all external reviewers solicited*, whether they responded or not. This list should indicate whether the external reviewer was suggested by the candidate or the department.

B. Copy of letter soliciting external review

The Chair must also include a copy of his/her *letter soliciting external reviews*. The chair's letter soliciting external reviews must follow these guidelines in order to keep the dossier free from suspicion of influence:

- *The same letter should be sent to all reviewers*. It is up to the Chair to decide whether to say in that letter if the reviewer was selected by the department or the candidate.
- The language should be neutral. The letter should avoid giving the reviewer any impression about the candidate's chances, how the candidate is viewed by the department, or what aspects of the candidate's profile should be emphasized.
- The letter should include a statement of the guidelines for granting tenure or promotion at Rensselaer. A quotation from the appropriate sections of the Handbook serve this purpose well.

C. Reviewer's brief bio statement

The chair should solicit a brief biographical statement from the reviewer, as well as a full disclosure from the reviewer of the relationship between the reviewer and the candidate, including professional collaboration, supervision, or personal relationships.

D. External Review Letters

FSCPT sifts through letters of recommendation very carefully. It looks for nuances of expression that might indicate subtle judgments, since in an increasingly litigious atmosphere, negative recommendations are fewer and praise tends to be inflated. Does the reviewer understand the values and standards of academia sufficiently to make a recommendation?

E. Chair's letter soliciting internal reviews

The same guidelines for external review letters apply to internal review letters, although the tone may be more informal and the Chair may instruct an internal reviewer to focus on particular aspects of a candidate's career. The letter soliciting internal reviews must be neutral, however. The Chair should include in the dossier a list of all internal reviewers solicited, whether they responded or not. This list should also indicate whether the reviewer was suggested by the candidate or the department.

Some chairs publish a general solicitation for evaluation of a candidate's career to all members of a department or school.

F. Chair's list of internal reviewers

The chair should list all internal reviewers, indicating whether the reviewer volunteered, was solicited by the chair or department, or by the candidate.

G. Chair's letter describing process by which student input was solicited

Chair should submit a brief statement describing how students were asked to write letters reviewing a candidate's performance as teacher, advisor, project supervisor, or thesis advisor. If a formal letter was used, the Chair's solicitation letter must be neutral.

The Chair should also include a list of all student reviewers solicited, whether they responded or not. This list should also indicate whether the reviewer was suggested by the candidate or the department.

H. Student letters

Letters from students who have worked with a professor in research or who have taken a professor's class are highly valued by the FSCPT, which recommends that a maximum of ten letters be submitted.

5. EXTERNAL APPOINTMENTS, INCLUDING DEANS, DEAN OF THE FACULTY, AND PRESIDENT.

The FSCPT must vote on external appointments to the faculty that carry tenure and/or rank of associate professor or above. This includes appointments to administrative positions that carry faculty rank, including chairs, deans, vice-presidents and presidents. Quite often, the role of the FSCPT in ratifying these appointments is overlooked as the complex process of search and identification for qualified candidates proceeds on a schedule that is more hasty than that for internal promotion and tenure. Nonetheless, **the FSCPT must see the candidate's credentials and dossier before the contract is issued from the Institute.** In general, the FSCPT has viewed its role as aiding departments and deans to help the Institute secure the best candidates available.

It is the Search Committee's responsibility to assemble an adequate dossier for any candidate whom it recommends for appointment with tenure. A full dossier is often impossible, but at very minimum, the dossier should include all of the written information the search committee has gathered in its deliberations, including letters of review by faculty within the department or school to which the new appointment will be made. At very least, this abbreviated dossier should include:

- A full curriculum vitae
- Sample of publications
- Letters of recommendation, including at least three or four NOT assembled by the candidate
- A cover letter from the chair of the Search Committee and another letter from the ranking administrator responsible for the appointment (Chair in the case of faculty, Dean in the case of Chair, President in the case of Dean) etc. This letter should outline the career of the candidate, a review of his/her profile and the reasons for the recommendation.
- Any relevant application material, including letter of application from the candidate.
- Departmental vote

6. APPOINTMENTS FROM OUTSIDE ACADEMIA.

Rensselaer is in the forefront of academia when it comes to appointing qualified faculty whose primary experience has been in industry. These candidates most often become highly valued and qualified colleagues. However, their candidacies often do pose challenges for the judgment of the FSCPT since their careers and records of publication, research, grants, teaching, and service all may have followed non-traditional paths. In some cases there may be only very slight or no evidence for teaching ability. In some cases, the most significant research performed by the candidate was "locked up" by corporate ownership and was never published.

Since the value of such appointments is often very clear to the departments or chairs who sponsor them, a certain eagerness may cause the sponsoring departments and schools to overlook or disregard traditional categories for academic judgment for tenure and promotion. Yet, the FSCPT takes primary responsibility for enforcing these standards. As a result, the Chair and Dean must take special care to address problems in evaluating such candidates. Special care should be taken to assemble qualified external reviewers who are familiar with academic standards. If there is no evidence of teaching, perhaps it is advisable for the candidate to delay tenure until some record of teaching is accumulated. If research publication is thin because the candidate's responsibility to a corporate employer prevented publication, then some way of evaluating the rigor and value of that research must be found.

7. APPEALS.

If a candidate for promotion or tenure is rejected at any stage in the process, s/he has the right of appeal as described in the Faculty Handbook, which we urge you to consult before proceeding with this section.

However, the Handbook leaves many grey areas about the process which have been defined more clearly by precedent. In what follows, we describe the process we feel strikes the best balance between the interests of the candidate and the Institute based on precedents that have been set in the appeals procedure.

When a candidate for promotion or tenure is rejected at any stage, the candidate has the right to choose an advocate, a tenured full professor from inside or outside the candidate's department or school but within the Institute, who will act as the candidate's representative in the process. If the candidate has received a negative ruling, s/he has the right to appeal with a strengthened dossier, which begins the entire process over again (under the presumption that a positive but mixed vote at an earlier step might have influenced a negative vote at a later step, and an improved dossier may change a mixed but positive vote even more positively).

However, though the process begins again, the clock of the tenure decision is not stopped, so a candidate who is in the final year of a contract, or the grace year¹ after a negative decision may have some urgency in achieving resolution of a case. For that reason, as well as the natural anxiety that attends appeal cases, appeals must take precedence over regular decision, and the FSCPT should set aside regular business to hear appeals with all due speed.

The advocate, while unable to render judgment on the case, accepts this responsibility with the commitment to do everything within her/his power to help the candidate strengthen the case for promotion or tenure. The advocate has the right to review all documents, including confidential ones and ones that are not represented in the dossier — e.g., the minutes of the departmental P&T committee or executive committee of the School — concerning the original case. At the same time, the advocate must preserve the principles of confidentiality. In short, the advocate walks a tightrope. S/he has the delicate task of sifting through confidential material in order to give advice to the candidate without revealing the names or some specifics of the origin of negative opinions and information.

The candidate should then take all steps possible to strengthen his/her case: soliciting other evaluations of the dossier, adding explanatory material; revising statements about research; remembering and adding details, etc. The candidate may also wish to write a statement in his/her own defense that the advocate can then use as the basis of advocacy.

With this revised dossier and additional information, the advocate then brings forward the case to the new starting point. The advocate is welcome to give an oral statement about the candidate, ask questions of anyone involved in the process (chairs, deans, committees, etc.), and expect responses, either in the form of oral or written remarks which can be entered into the record and to which further responses by the advocate and candidate are also permitted. The FSCPT and the Committee of Deans will make time on the P&T agenda to hear any advocacy.

In the past, the FSCPT has on occasion asked that an advocate present the appeal to the committee. The FSCPT has on occasion also solicited further information from the advocate, the candidate, the department P&T committee, the school executive committee, the chair, or the dean involved in the decision. If any

¹ The Faculty Handbook mandates that the Institute must keep a candidate who has been denied tenure for one academic year, with all the rights of a faculty member, beyond the academic year in which the negative decision was reached

negative testimony is presented to the FSCPT, the advocate has the right to respond, but the FSCPT always has had as its goal to avoid becoming a star chamber or inquisition.

After hearing and reviewing all new evidence, each committee or agent (dean, chair, committee) in the process will once again deliberate on a case and deliver a formal recommendation, yea or nay. The advocate does not have the right to be present for these discussions or votes. However, the advocate, on behalf of the candidate must be permitted *timely* access to all new information added at any time to the dossier, including new information that emerges in a Dean's or Chair's letter. Any new oral testimony in the case heard by any committee or administrator must also be presented to the advocate, and the advocate must be given a timely interim in which to respond.

Unlike the original process, in an appeals process a negative opinion delivered at any stage does not halt the appeal. Instead, the dossier is passed through to the next step, through the FSCPT and Committee of Deans, Dean of the Faculty, President and, if positive, to the Trustees.

CONCLUSION.

“ ‘Mongst all these stirs of discontented strife
O, let me lead an academic life.”
— Joseph Hall (1648)

Tenure, and to a lesser extent promotion, are two cornerstones of academic life. They ensure freedom of thought and speech and grant privilege and prestige not so much to individuals as to ideals of academic pursuit: the getting and sharing of knowledge free from restraint, free from influence, free from political pressure or monetary reward, or free even from blind self-interest. Perhaps most importantly, tenure grants faculty members the freedom to take risks and to pursue pure knowledge and truth in ways no other cultural institution can afford.

Tenure and faculty privilege are perennially under assault and increasingly so these days. This is all the more reason that all participants in the process of deciding on the fate of candidates take care and strive for utterly scrupulous rigor in gathering evidence, formulating judgments, and rendering decisions. We hope an ongoing articulation of and obedience to regular and well-understood practices will continue to protect the candidate, the Institute, tenure itself, and therefore the higher goals and interests of academia, including truth and freedom itself.

FOR FURTHER READING.

Taubes, G. (1994) "Peer Review in Cyberspace," *Science* **266**, 11:967.