

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES FOR RETENTION AND TENURE

The following suggestions for the preparation of review files, and description of University Review Committee (URC) operations, are provided at the request of the University Faculty. We hope that this information will clarify and simplify the process of preparing for and undergoing retention and tenure reviews.

A. Suggestions For The Preparation Of Files

The comments in this section should be interpreted with the clear understanding that there can be no single model or template for a "strong" URC file. It is highly desirable that the materials submitted, particularly the candidate's self-evaluation statement, reflect as fully as possible the personal perspectives, commitments, concerns and even idiosyncrasies of the candidate. DRC reports have their own style and "personality"; it is to be expected that this will be even more true of candidate's comments on their own work. For the URC, it is important that the candidate see the preparation of review materials as a significant and useful opportunity for reflection on the process of developing as a teacher and scholar at Bucknell.

Materials to be submitted

Each academic department or program has prepared its own document concerning the process of collegial evaluation. These documents vary somewhat in emphasis and your primary concern, of course, will be to address the particulars of your department's statement. The URC's check list (page 6 of March 1987 document, 1998 revision—"University Review Committee's Reviews for Retention and Tenure") calls for submission, by the candidate, of the following materials:

1. Current curriculum vitae;
2. List of all courses taught during the review period, with syllabi;
3. Self-evaluation statement on teaching, scholarship, and service;
4. All original student course evaluations;
5. All written scholarship and (where relevant) documentation of artistic work.

The URC offers the following suggestions concerning these five types of material, with our most extended comments being on the third, namely the candidate's statement of self-evaluation.

1. Curriculum vitae

We are interested in such basic information as your education, employment history, primary areas of teaching competence, linguistic abilities, and publications or other forms of scholarly work. The number of pages is left up to the candidate, but a length of three or four pages is normally quite sufficient.

A few words about the listing of publications or other scholarly work in your c.v. may be helpful. It is often necessary for the URC to be able to distinguish quite clearly between a) work that has actually been published, b) completed work that has been accepted and is in final form for publication but not yet appeared, c) work that has been accepted for publication but is not yet in final form, d) work submitted for publication and currently under review, and e) work in progress. Please be as clear as possible in your c.v. (supplemented, as necessary, by comments in your self-evaluation statement) as to the status of the publications you list. For example, the terms "forthcoming" or "in press" are quite appropriate for works in category b), but not for those in c) and d). Also, it is helpful to distinguish between peer-reviewed journal publications, conference proceedings papers, proposals, papers presented orally, non-refereed articles, etc. As a final note, please double-check titles and status of works listed on the curriculum vitae to ensure that their listing is consistent with other information in the file.

2. List of all courses taught, with syllabi

A list or table of the courses taught during each semester of the period under review, preferably including the number of students enrolled in each, can be included in the folder of syllabi materials, and/or the section on teaching in the candidate's self-evaluation statement (below). In order to provide a fuller picture of classroom activities, the URC welcomes, with course syllabi, other sample course materials, which might include assignments, handouts, examinations, student papers with instructor's comments, etc.

3. Self-evaluation statement

As you would expect, these vary a great deal in style, length, and content. We have no desire to reduce this variety of styles, for such documents properly reflect the personality and current preoccupations of the writer. However, we can make some useful comments about desirable

length and content, insofar as these do not contradict specifications in your department or program's review document.

Recent personal statements submitted to the URC have varied, literally, from one page to 40 pages in length. Forty pages is unnecessarily long, and will not typically enhance the case the candidate is making. One page is unusually brief, though the particular example cited was an excellent statement which provided all the information the URC wanted. While we have no wish to set fixed page limits, minimum or maximum, we suggest that a personal statement of five to ten pages will be quite adequate in most cases. There is no need whatsoever to "puff up" these statements, or have them contain excessively minute details (which have the effect of obscuring the central points of the assessment). On the contrary, the inherent importance of the other materials in the file, the need for clarity, and consideration for the valuable time of your colleagues on the URC, suggest that these statements should be carefully revised and edited to provide a well-focused self-assessment.

The personal statement should deal with all three of the standard areas of evaluation, namely teaching, scholarship, and service.

a. Teaching Candidates typically list the courses they have taught and then briefly discuss these in turn, as seems appropriate. It is helpful if the candidate is reflective and (self-)evaluative, in a candid and open way, about course goals and how they were addressed, problems encountered, lessons learned, successes achieved, and challenges to be confronted in the future. Of course reference to syllabi and other included course materials (see item 2) can be made as appropriate. Candidates are also encouraged to reflect on their views of undergraduate teaching or "philosophy of education," insofar as they find it comfortable and appropriate to do so. It is especially helpful for the candidate to reflect on strengths and/or weaknesses in teaching as they relate to numerical ratings and comments on student course evaluations. It is part of the URC's charge to discuss these evaluations, and our discussion is better informed when the candidate (and, subsequently, the DRC) provides careful and explicit interpretation of the data we will be examining.

[Candidates sometimes express discomfort that too much emphasis is placed on student course evaluations. It is important to note that the URC considers course evaluations in the context of the entire file, which also includes your and your DRC's assessment of teaching, your syllabi and perhaps other course materials, and your department or program's

alternative method of student assessment of teaching beyond the normal course evaluations (see March 1987 document, 1998 revision).]

In addition to addressing the basic topics already mentioned, candidates writing statements in recent years have also addressed topics such as the following. This list is culled from *many* different statements; no one person should or even could address all these topics. They are included here simply to suggest the wide range of issues which may be addressed, at the discretion of the candidate.)

- Special aspects of one's job description, teaching load, contract;
- Special features of one's teaching career to date;
- Nature of one's teaching experience prior to Bucknell;
- Relation of the teacher's work to the overall departmental program.
- Development of new courses, for the department and/or the common learning curriculum;
- Efforts involved in setting up a new department laboratory or other classroom facility, related to one's courses;
- Development of new procedures or policies for facility use;
- Instructional grants applied for, whether funded or not;
- Courses one hopes to develop in the future;
- Participation in faculty development workshops, on campus or off;
- Important influences on one's teaching style; books on teaching which have been influential;
- Views concerning "liberal learning" today;
- Instructional implications of the "Common Learning Agenda" and/or "The Bucknell Plan for Engineering Education";
- Concerns about teaching and students: e.g., grade inflation, problems of meeting students "where they are," and motivating them, etc.;
- Concerns about establishing rapport, learning students names, etc.;
- Alternative pedagogical approaches: e.g., use of handouts, study questions, balancing lecture and discussion, etc.;
- One's view of examinations, comments on papers, the rapid return on written work to students, etc.;
- One's views of the usefulness of new technologies in the classroom, e.g. computer aided instruction;
- Approach to the organization of courses and preparation of syllabi;

- Evaluation of one's own teaching strengths and weaknesses;
- Use of mid-semester evaluations, to "check in" with students;
- Changes made during the semester, mid-course corrections;
- Preparation of additional questions for course evaluation forms, to fit one's needs;
- Concerns expressed in student comments on course evaluations;
- Consultation with colleagues and mentors at Bucknell, or elsewhere, about responding to teaching challenges and concerns;
- Problems recognized; areas which need improvement;
- Strong points recognized; accomplishments to be celebrated;
- The special challenge of large lecture classes;
- Independent studies and undergraduate research;
- The sort of classroom environment one seeks to create;
- Ways of being approachable and available outside of class;
- Reflections about the personal challenges of teaching;
- The impact of a newborn child on one's professional life (mentioned by both women and men!).

b. Scholarship Here, it is highly desirable that the candidate discuss not only the "what" of his or her work, but the "why," "how," and "where" as well. That is, why have you undertaken the various projects in which you are involved? How do they relate to one another? Where, as you project into the future, are they leading? In short, we are interested not simply in your specific projects, past and present, but also in what one might call your overall "scholarly agenda" or "research program."

In discussing particular scholarly works, it is important, as noted earlier, that the candidate distinguish clearly between works actually published (whether in print, or some other medium), works in final form and in the queue for publication, works explicitly accepted for publication, works under review, and works in progress. In cases where more than one author is listed for a given publication, it is helpful if your self-statement makes clear what specific role you have played in the research, data collection, data analysis, and/or writing of such co-authored papers.

Simply for purposes of illustration, here again are a variety of topics --in addition to the basic ones already mentioned--which have been addressed in "scholarship" discussions of recent candidates' statements .

- Completion of one's dissertation and graduate degree;
- Development of new scholarship beyond the dissertation;
- Grant proposals submitted, whether funded or not;
- Conferences and workshops attended;
- The challenge of balancing teaching responsibilities and research;
- Ways in which your scholarship is integrated with your teaching;
- Scholarly collaboration with colleagues at Bucknell or elsewhere;
- Consulting activities
- Scholarly editing and reviewing of manuscripts;
- Response of professional colleagues to one's published work or work in progress;
- Long range research and publication plans;
- Inclusion of students in one's research and publications;
- Interpretation of creative art as scholarship.

c. Service The personal statement should also address the area of service, whether to the department, the college and/or university, or the wider community. This may consist simply of a list of activities, committees, presentations, programs, and organizations in which you have been and are involved. Beyond such a list, candidates may choose to provide some reflection, however brief, on which areas of service s/he finds most satisfying, and how (if this is appropriate) s/he sees service to be related to teaching and/or scholarship.

Some special topics on service discussed in recent statements are:

- Proposals to host a professional conference at Bucknell;
- Serving as a professional role model, e.g. a woman teacher who serves as advisor to a women's student organization;
- Future plans and expectations for department, university and/or community service;
- Description of professional service in one's discipline.

4. Student course evaluations In addition to the original student evaluation forms which you will submit for transmission to the URC, it is your department's (or program's) responsibility to prepare summaries of quantitative ratings and a typed transcription of all student written comments (see checklist in the March 1987 document, 1998 revision). (DRCs and candidates should note that this responsibility is not due to the "revision", but has always been part of the specifications in the 1987 document.) As a candidate, you are advised to work with your

department or program to provide access to your evaluation materials so that the summaries can be prepared in a timely manner for the review, and so that you may refer to them in your self-statement if you so choose. Also, you may consult with your department or program if you wish to suggest a particular format for tabulated results, or, you may additionally provide your own alternative format (tables, bar graphs, etc.) if you feel that it will aid presentation and/or your discussion.

We further suggest that you include, either with the course evaluations or in your self-statement, a description of the method used to distribute and collect the student evaluations, as well as commentary on any significant discrepancy between the number of students enrolled in a given course and the number of course evaluations collected.

5. *Written scholarship and (where relevant) documentation of artistic work*

Include a copy of all written scholarship listed on your curriculum vitae, and/or appropriate documentation of artistic and other scholarly work. You may wish to provide comments with the scholarship which will help URC readers to put your work (whether in print or some other medium) in proper perspective. For example, with respect to a chapter prepared at the invitation of an editor, you might indicate the instructions or suggestions given to you as an author. You may also point out the relation of various works to each other, particularly if one publication includes material or data from a work published earlier. Also, if you wish, it is appropriate to include formal reviewer feedback on papers submitted to journals or conferences for publication.

Additional Comments on Candidate Files

Most candidates' files serve quite well to provide the information needed by the URC, but it may be helpful to mention here inadequacies which weaken some files and make the URC's work more difficult.

- Some files are unsystematic and poorly organized; basic information is difficult to locate or is missing. Inconsistencies exist between information in one part of the file and another.

- The curriculum vitae of some candidates have been out-of-date, disorganized, or misleading. We have seen lists of publications that have different titles, dates of publication, journal names, etc. from listings in other parts of the file. The current status of professional contributions sometimes is not clear (see item 1 concerning the c.v.).
- The URC at times has to reconstruct basic facts about a candidate's teaching record from separate parts of the file. It should not be difficult to find out what courses were taught in each semester during the review period (see item 2 concerning list of courses).
- Some self-statements are long, rambling, and unfocused (see item 3 concerning the self-statement).
- In some cases, candidates have made significant changes in their "evolving personal plan for professional development" without explanation. The URC attempts to evaluate how the period under review relates to plans stated by the candidate at an earlier review, and it returns to see what recommendations were made by the DRC and URC at those reviews. There can be sound reasons for changes in plans and direction, but it is important that the candidate make clear what those reasons are and how they relate to advice from the DRC or URC in an earlier review.

B. Description of Committee Operations

This description is supplementary to that in the Faculty Handbook, and the March 1987 URC document (1998 revision).

Schedule and Meetings

Early in September the URC convenes in order to fix a schedule of the dates and times of the meetings for the latter half of the term. Depending on the number of faculty to be reviewed, and on the expected complexity of some reviews, we need to schedule some 40 to 50 hours of meetings over a seven-week period beginning October 15. With five faculty and three administrators on the committee, it is nearly impossible to find blocks of two to three hours duration during the day, so meetings typically occur in the evenings. Committee members also have to find an equal or greater amount of time to read candidates' files and to prepare for the meetings.

Candidate's files are read, discussed and voted upon in groups defined by years of progress along the tenure track. Thus, all second-year reviews are scheduled as a first group. When discussion of that entire group is completed, the committee votes on retention for each second-year candidate before moving on to the fourth-year group for discussion and voting. Last to be considered is the group of sixth-year (tenure) candidates. If there are any third-year or fifth-year candidates, their criteria for consideration is interpolated between those defined (see 1987 document (1998 revision)) for the other groups. Dealing with groups in this way helps the committee apply consistent criteria and standards to those under review in each group, and the progression through groups with increasing degrees of experience aids in judging the increasing level of expectations that are expressed in the review criteria.

Discussion

The URC adheres strictly to the principle that only information formally submitted as part of the file can be discussed. In advance of the meeting in which discussion of Candidate X is scheduled, all members of the URC, including the alternate, will have read certain sections of X's file: the candidate's personal self-evaluation; curriculum vitae; summaries of teaching evaluations; and the report of the Department Review Committee. For candidates undergoing a sixth-year review, all members also read letters from outside reviewers of scholarship. Further, for each candidate, three members of the URC will have been assigned as "full file readers"—they will have also read the other information in the dossier, including originals of teaching evaluations, any letters from students, alumni, and colleagues, and as much of the scholarship as is possible. If any member of the committee has any concern about aspects of the file, all members of the URC will read the full file before discussion.

At the time scheduled for discussion of a candidate, one of the three persons originally assigned to read the full file has the responsibility for leading the discussion. The first element considered normally is the candidate's teaching. When this is completed, and discussion of teaching characteristically takes more time than the other elements of the file, discussion turns to scholarship, and, in turn, to service. Discussion can be quite extended as the committee attempts to come to a clear picture of the candidate's degree of success in each of these three categories. The URC tries to take into account differences in the nature, content, and sometimes even styles of teaching and scholarship from department to department, so it relies on the candidate and the DRC to help it place the candidate's record in the appropriate disciplinary context.

Voting

Discussion proceeds through all candidates in a given group before a vote is taken. The committee commonly returns to a rediscussion of individuals earlier in that group in light of aspects that arose later. When discussion is complete the URC proceeds to voting. At this time the committee is reminded of the criteria and guidelines for retention and tenure at the second, fourth, or sixth year as appropriate for this group (the chair reads aloud the guidelines from the 1987 description of the review process). Members of the committee vote "yes" or "no" on retention or tenure for each member of the group. In situations in which a member of the committee has participated on the DRC or is in the same department as a candidate, has a close personal or professional relationship with the candidate, is influenced by knowledge that is not a part of the file, or is incapacitated, the alternate member votes. If further information is needed before voting on a particular candidate, that vote is postponed. The chair of the URC records the results of the vote, but he or she has no more influence than other members of the committee. Even after a vote is taken, any member of the URC can ask that the committee rediscuss and revote on one or more individuals. All this is in an attempt to fulfill the mandate to make "like decisions in like cases". For most decisions, discussion leads to a general consensus among committee members. In those cases where votes are split, neither the faculty nor the administrators on the URC typically vote as "blocks"; that is, the votes among administrators are as likely to vary as those of the faculty.

Following voting on retention for all members of a given group, letters are drafted to each candidate in the group. The URC member who led the discussion on a candidate during the meeting has the responsibility for writing the first draft, copies of which are circulated to the entire committee. Additions, corrections and revisions (often extensive) are made and discussed as a committee. For sixth-year tenure reviews, special text is not drafted for candidates when decisions are positive, and a standard letter is used. Negative decisions at any stage however necessitate the drafting of a notification letter, and a detailed letter explaining the basis of the URC's judgment (this second letter explaining a negative decision is destroyed if not requested by the faculty member). Final responsibility for the content and delivery of all letters rests with the appropriate college dean.

The entire committee meets with the President of the University near December 1 to transmit the committee's recommendations for retention and tenure. In preparation for this meeting, the President reads the same sections of each candidate's file that all members of the committee read originally. The President might ask the URC to return to the file and extend their review

in order to be certain of a particular decision, necessitating further committee meetings and another session with the President.

Appeals to the URC

A candidate who has been informed of the URC's decision to terminate his or her contract may appeal that decision following procedures outlined in the 1987 statement (1998 revision) and the Faculty Handbook. That appeal must be based on substantive grounds, such as "uncorrected erroneous, misleading, or missing information not attributable to omission on the part of the candidate". After such appeals are received by January 15, the URC meets to decide whether to grant the request for appeal. If it does, the URC informs the candidate and conducts a complete new review and revote on the case. The URC has conducted several such new reviews in the past, and has been known to reverse its initial decision. Note that appeals based on procedural grounds are normally made to CAFT—see Faculty Handbook.

C. Conclusion

It is intended that these descriptions and suggestions be thought of only as general information to help candidates organize their files and specific materials included for review and to understand better the URC's review process. The URC wants to emphasize that one's individuality of presentation is a critical part of establishing the teaching, scholarly and community identity of the candidate. Please feel free to address questions about anything above to your dean or the URC chair.

