

To: Associate Professors
cc: Full Professors
From: Full Professors on the CFA, 2022-23
Re: Standards and Criteria for Promotion
Date: December 21, 2022

In May 2018, the full professors on the CFA wrote a letter to associate professors, modeled on the annual letter that the entire committee had been writing to assistant professors for several years. In light of all that has transpired over the past five years (notably the pandemic and the adoption of the College's first strategic plan), this year's full professor CFA has decided that it might be helpful to release a new letter, restating much of what was said in 2018 but also adding some new commentary relating to inclusive excellence and to the impact of COVID.

Articles of Government (Book 1, Article X) provide only the most general and generic definition of what the College expects in order to promote an associate professor to the rank of full professor. As the committee charged with interpreting this legislation in the context of specific cases, each CFA must ask itself what are the appropriate standards for promotion, consistent with the language of Articles of Government. We are writing this letter because we believe that all parties would benefit from greater clarity and specificity. Below we enumerate a few concise principles that guide our interpretation of legislation.

The awarding of tenure gives faculty members freedom to develop new directions in teaching, research and service, as well as new kinds of responsibility. In many cases, we see that the balance of activities and of strengths in a record shifts between the tenure and promotion reviews. The College requires a promotion candidate to demonstrate excellence, but this excellence need not be manifested in the same way as at tenure: we would expect to see new areas of accomplishment and leadership, and it would not be surprising (or fatal to a promotion case) also to see areas where there is less activity than before tenure.

In terms of scholarly profile, we expect associate professors at the time of promotion to have had a continuing engagement with and impact on their field since tenure. A body of scholarly or creative products that can be evaluated by external experts in the candidate's field remains central. In evaluating the record, however, the committee acknowledges that tenured faculty members may publish, produce or perform in a broader range of venues or genres than they did before tenure. We take one of the central functions of a system of tenure to be the promotion of academic risk-taking, and accordingly see it as reasonable to give promotion candidates latitude as to the manner in which they exercise their

professional expertise. For example, tenured Wellesley faculty can have a major impact through distinguished contributions to broader public debate or government service, forms of publishing that advance pedagogical or community initiatives, or scholarly activities that are synthetic or applied in nature. The committee also recognizes that the pace of scholarly activity may be affected by increased mentoring of student research after tenure.

In terms of teaching, we expect to see evidence of growth as a teacher and continued effectiveness and dedication to working with all of our students. Even though much direct evidence comes from SEQs/LERs, we take a broad view of how growth and dedication in the classroom may manifest in a long teaching career. Excellence may be exhibited through curricular development, pedagogical innovation, and success in promoting student learning as demonstrated in evidence of student success beyond the student evaluations. In assessing evaluations of seasoned instructors, we are, of course, looking for patterns of continuing strength, and where there are patterns of negative comment, the committee looks for evidence that such concerns are being thoughtfully and effectively addressed. The committee recognizes that high standards and effective pedagogical approaches may sometimes provoke student complaint. It grows concerned, however, when the comments indicate that a faculty member may not be bringing their full commitment to the course or attempting to address the full range of students in the classroom. Our expectation is that someone deserving of promotion to full professor (the last full review of a faculty member's career) is demonstrating steadfast devotion to the education of our students.

In terms of service, the experience of most associate professors is that opportunities to serve one's department or program and the College expand significantly after tenure. For many associate professors, service to external or professional organizations also increases after tenure. The CFA views leadership within and beyond the College as a critical responsibility of a tenured faculty member. For that reason, our principle is to assign comparable weight to the service criterion as we do to teaching and research criteria. It is important that candidates include all service contributions on their activities sheets, including contributions to diversity and equity that may be less visible than other forms of service. Both candidates and R&P committees should also identify aspects of excellence in the service record in their statements to the CFA, since such excellence may otherwise be difficult for the CFA to recognize and evaluate.

Inclusive excellence

A faculty member's work promoting equity and inclusion might contribute to any or all three of these areas (research, teaching and service), but it does not constitute a separate or fourth review

criterion. Reflecting the College's broader commitment to inclusive excellence, reiterated in the strategic plan, the CFA values evidence that a faculty member is working to promote an equitable experience for all students in the classroom. The CFA also acknowledges the many different ways that faculty might incorporate diversity, inclusion, or antiracism into their work. Such endeavors might include mentoring a diverse group of students in research projects, exploring research questions relating to equity or diversity, or critiquing the practices and dynamics in their larger professional communities.

Impact of COVID

More than two years after the pandemic began, it becomes ever clearer that its impacts on faculty careers will be both deep and long-lasting. COVID has interfered with almost all research-related and professional activities and has added new layers of challenge to our teaching and service responsibilities. As the committee evaluates faculty dossiers and R&P recommendations coming before us, we are intentional about considering evidence of COVID's impact on trajectories of teaching, research, and service. For example, teaching during the pandemic presented a wide range of novel challenges that required extreme flexibility on the part of the faculty, and service responsibilities expanded far beyond their normal bounds. We understand that while those exhausting and time-consuming efforts were necessary exigencies in our community's response to the pandemic, they might not always have been fully appreciated by students. Likewise, we will be alert to the possibility that research included in a post-pandemic promotion dossier as completed but not yet published might reasonably have been submitted in published form in pre-pandemic circumstances. We will make careful use of candidates' COVID statements and will look to R&Ps to provide appropriate context about the pandemic's impact on specific fields, about delays and impediments to certain kinds of research, and interruptions or disruptions to publishing routines and timetables.

In sum, for successful promotion to full professor, the CFA looks for continuing strength in the whole record and a particularly strong record in at least two of the three categories under review. Promotion to full professor is never automatic, though candidates may follow different paths to a successful outcome.

Full Professors on the 2022-23 Committee on Faculty Appointments:

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