

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 2, 2023
To: Assistant Professors, Untenured Associate Professors
Members of Reappointments and Promotions Committees
From: Committee on Faculty Appointments (CFA), 2023-24
Re: Reappointment and Tenure Review Process

Each year the current CFA writes to junior faculty reaffirming the procedures and standards that inform the work of the committee. The purpose of this annual letter is to strengthen communication within the College community regarding the review process. It is not the committee's intent to provide a comprehensive account of the appointments process or to modify the process described in legislation, but to offer a general overview and to address the most common questions raised by the junior faculty in the context of our current times. More detailed information is available in *Articles of Government*, Book I and in the guidelines and checklists available on the [CFA webpage](#).

General Operations of the CFA

In reappointment and tenure reviews, the role of the CFA is to respond to the recommendations of Reappointments and Promotions (R&P) committees. The CFA's decisions take the form of either accepting or rejecting a recommendation made by an R&P or by the majority or minority within an R&P.

The CFA often needs further guidance to interpret material provided by the R&P. If the CFA feels that it does not have sufficient information to respond to a recommendation, the committee may ask written questions of an R&P or request copies of annual conversations and/or class visit reports. Requests for information or clarification are not uncommon and should not be interpreted by candidates as foreshadowing a negative decision. In some cases, the CFA may also request to meet with the R&P in person to discuss a case.

Faculty members on the CFA holding an appointment in the same department as a candidate or who are members of a candidate's R&P are recused from consideration of that case and do not participate in any of the committee's discussions. Instead, they participate as members of the R&P. The Provost/Dean of the College and the non-voting Dean of Faculty Affairs are the only exceptions to this rule, because they serve on the committee in their administrative capacity.

The College's appointments process has long been characterized by its relative transparency. The candidate receives a copy of the R&P's recommendation as well as of any correspondence between the CFA and the R&P (with appropriate redactions). It is not the practice of the CFA to meet in person with the candidate, but at any stage of the process, the candidate is free to communicate in writing to the CFA. The CFA does not share such communications with R&Ps, so if candidates wish their R&P to see a copy, they should provide one directly. To further protect candidates' privacy, members of R&Ps and the CFA are instructed to adhere scrupulously to the principle of confidentiality.

The CFA gives thorough and careful consideration to each case before reaching a decision. It has been the practice of the committee never to make a decision about a reappointment or tenure case at the first meeting at which it is discussed. Every case is considered on at least two occasions, and frequently more than that. As a result, an extended period of time may elapse between the time at which a case is first considered (and written questions submitted to an R&P) and the time at which a decision is made.

Each case that comes before the CFA is considered on its own merits. The CFA does not base its decisions to tenure or reappoint on a comparison of the candidates. The College does not have reappointment or tenure quotas or caps, and is structurally prepared to tenure all faculty who are offered a tenure-track appointment. The College does, however, have rigorous standards for faculty performance in each of the three main areas of activity (scholarship, teaching, and service) considered at reappointment and tenure, all of which assist the CFA in projecting a faculty member's future contributions.

The Provost's office publishes a list of faculty under review each year. This list provides an opportunity for members of the College community, past and present, to write to the CFA about a candidate coming up for review. Letters from colleagues and students are welcome, but the CFA does not judge a case based on the number of letters received. The committee is particularly interested in letters sharing information that may not be reflected elsewhere in the record, such as details about service or teaching contributions to a program other than the candidate's home department or program.

COVID

Across all departments and disciplines, the pandemic interfered with almost all research-related and professional activities and added new layers of challenge to teaching and service responsibilities. As the committee evaluates faculty dossiers and R&P recommendations coming before us this year, we will carefully consider evidence of COVID's impact on trajectories of teaching, research, and service. 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. While it is never possible for one CFA to constrain its successors, we are confident that future committees will be similarly attentive to the pandemic's effects on the professional careers of pre-tenure faculty.

Standards

As described in Articles of Government, recommendation for tenure is based on a careful evaluation of a candidate's work in the three areas of teaching, research, and service. A faculty member's work promoting equity and inclusion might contribute to any or all three of these areas, but 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.

Teaching

At the time of a reappointment or tenure review, the CFA expects to see evidence of highly effective instruction and a demonstrated commitment to students' learning. By the time of a tenure review, we expect to see clear evidence of that effectiveness at multiple levels of a department's or program's curriculum and with students who have varying levels of experience in the instructor's field. The CFA takes into account the candidate's growth as an instructor over time, including evidence that challenges are being thoughtfully addressed. Teaching records may vary with respect to the number and form of course preparations, depending on the discipline.

Although opportunities and expectations again vary across fields, the CFA recognizes the importance of collaborative work with students and honors thesis and independent study supervision as an activity that can unite excellent teaching, meaningful service, and in some disciplines, publishable research. While the CFA acknowledges the unique pedagogical value of extending research opportunities to students, we encourage junior faculty to value their own research needs, balanced with student mentoring as appropriate to the specific discipline or project.

When evaluating a teaching record, the CFA reviews the candidate's personal statement, the R&P's recommendation (which addresses class visits), enrollments, selected syllabi and pedagogical materials, unsolicited letters, and Student Evaluation Questionnaires (SEQs, prior to fall 2022) and Learning Experience Reflections (LERs, starting in fall 2022). When reviewing SEQs and LERs, CFA members identify themes (positive and negative) in the student comments and discernible trends in the quantitative and qualitative data. We do not make the assumption that excellent teaching is necessarily synonymous with high scores and laudatory student comments. The committee recognizes that some attributes of excellent teaching (high standards, demanding or challenging coursework) or some legitimate pedagogical methods (for example, cold-calling) might be characterized negatively in some student comments, and that other negative student comments may result from factors beyond the instructor's control. The CFA interprets the SEQ and LER record in the context of all other teaching-related materials available during a review.

Research

As noted above, the College maintains high standards of scholarly research. In all cases, the committee primarily considers the quality and significance of the contributions that faculty members make to the scholarly or artistic field in which they work. In order to evaluate scholarly work, the CFA considers the professional expectations of each field, taking account of the impact of the pandemic, as appropriate. The committee evaluates all relevant evidence, including the judgment of external evaluators (in tenure cases), the candidate's research statement, assessment by R&P colleagues, the quality of publication venues, the standards and definitions of excellence appropriate to a particular field, as well as any relevant indicators of professional standing and distinction, such as external funding. While mentoring student researchers is commonly evaluated as contributing to a research portfolio in many STEM disciplines, it is not a College-wide expectation for scholarship. The committee finds that significant contributions to a

scholarly field generally involve a record of substantial publication, but the committee is primarily concerned with the quality of that publication record.

Service

We look for a record of dedicated service to the College community in every case for reappointment or tenure. The CFA understands that individual interests and opportunities for service vary across the College, so every service record will be unique. Participation on committees of Academic Council and departmental committees and other forms of College service are expected, with particular note taken if a faculty member has assumed significant responsibilities in the work of a committee or on behalf of a specific college initiative. The committee also appreciates that many faculty members make significant contributions to academic programs other than the department or program in which they are appointed, and encourages candidates to highlight those contributions.

The CFA values both the formal and informal service contributions of junior faculty, and asks that candidates and R&Ps identify and describe 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. The activities sheets enable faculty to provide a fuller description of their service contributions, including mentoring and advising students, contributing to racial and ethnic diversity and equity, and other forms of service that the College values.

The CFA also values public service and service to the profession. Such service might include participating in external review processes for academic journals or other publication outlets or institutions, media appearances or commentary in the public press, organizing panels and symposia at meetings of professional organizations, or serving on the governing bodies of such organizations.

Members of the 2023-24 Committee on Faculty Appointments:

Paula A. Johnson, President
Andrew Shennan, Provost and Dean of the College (Chair)
Megan Núñez, Dean of Faculty Affairs (on sabbatical fall 2023)
Hélène Bilis, French, Francophone and Italian Studies
Oscar Fernandez, Mathematics
Thomas Hodge, Russian
Jennie Pyers, Psychology
Ryan Quintana, History
Andrea Sequeira, Biological Sciences