Thank you for taking the time to review the nominations for this prestigious campus award. Your work in selecting colleagues for recommendation to the VCRE for recognition is important. You are charged with evaluating the work of colleagues, which is familiar work for faculty. You may be less familiar with the fact that research on peer reviewing has shown that there are some common pitfalls in the process that lead to unintentional bias in the outcomes. Briefly, those pitfalls have to do with taking shortcuts in peer review, which leads us to rely on shortcuts (i.e., biases) in our thinking. This document summarizes what the research tells us about how you, as a reviewer, can avoid those pitfalls that can lead to biased outcomes in peer review.

Here are some tips to keep in mind about effective peer review processes:

1. **Set up an initial conversation among the review panel about what each review criteria means**, before doing your individual reviews. The current Conti call for nominations notes the importance of three criteria: 1) record of outstanding accomplishments in research and creative activity as a UMass faculty member, 2) potential for continued excellence, and 3) merit of the project that would be undertaken during the Fellowship period as proposed in nomination materials. What do each of those mean to your review panel? Make sure you are aligned in the weighting of these items and discuss any additional criteria that the panel may have in mind (such as timeliness).

2. **Before reviewing applications, also discuss common biases that may appear in materials** that you are asked to review as part of the nomination package. Letter writers of all genders are more likely to use superlative adjectives (e.g., outstanding) for men nominees and “grind” adjectives for women nominees (e.g., hard-working), even when describing the same kinds of productivity. Even citation scores have biases built into them (on average 75% of citations are made to other authors personally known and men are more likely to benefit from this cumulative advantage; men are also more likely to self-cite). See UMass ADVANCE materials and references on our website.

3. **Evaluate each nominee on the same set of criteria**. In your written reviews, it may be helpful to work from the criteria checklist that you have all agreed upon in step 1 and type those headings in each of your reviews. Consider how each candidate does on each criterion.

4. **Give yourself enough time to review**. Evaluating applicants fairly takes time. Research consistently shows that biases are most likely to occur when we are rushed. When you receive the materials, block out time in your schedule to read the nominations and write up your reviews, and then to go back over all the reviews and reflect on the group as a whole. The review panel discussion meeting should also last long enough and be moderated to make sure all reviewers’ voices are heard.

5. **Repeated and intentional efforts lead to change**. Equity is not a one-time achievement but requires vigilance to sustain; and it is collective work that we do together. Give everyone a voice. Speak for equity in your written reviews and remind each other of effective practices for mitigating bias in the review panel discussion.