August 1, 2013

To: Deans, Directors, Department Heads and Chairpersons, Department and School/College Personnel Committee Chairpersons

From: Joel W. Martin, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel

Subject: Promotion and Tenure Recommendations for Tenure-Stream Faculty

Annually, the Office of the Provost circulates information intended to reinforce the criteria and procedures mandated by the UMass-MSP Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and by the Board of Trustees’ Academic Personnel Policy (the “Redbook”) for all recommendations of tenure and promotion. I continue that tradition with this memorandum. Because it expands on previous years’ memoranda, I urge you to read it in its entirety.

Role of the Faculty

Quite appropriately, the Redbook and the CBA empower the faculty with “primary responsibility” in conducting peer reviews of candidates for promotion and tenure. That role acknowledges the special position that faculty enjoy in helping to govern, guide, and build the future of the university. That role also conveys certain obligations. With regard to promotion and tenure, the Redbook directs that the faculty:

- present a clear, complete and convincing case for the recommendation so as to assure the faculty member of a complete presentation of his or her qualifications and achievements, and so as to provide the basis both for full reviews of the recommendation, and for the decision. [Section 3.1]

In other words, the case must not only be evident to faculty reviewers, those reviewers must present their recommendations clearly and convincingly to subsequent reviewers.

Occasionally, the Provost’s Office receives recommendations that do not “present a clear, complete and convincing case”—either for or against promotion and/or tenure. For example, committee votes in which abstentions outnumber either positive or negative votes undercut the imperative for the recommendation to be “convincing.” Similarly, evaluations that rate only one of the three areas (teaching, research, service) as “Excellent” but that still recommend for tenure fail to be either “clear” or “convincing.”
Let me emphasize that I am not advocating longer or more elaborately documented recommendations. Rather, I am advocating conscientious attention to the standards and imperatives of the CBA and the Redbook and careful composition and editing of recommendations to ensure that they fulfill the obligation described above.

General Standards and Considerations for Three Areas of Evaluation

The tenure decision and each level of promotion has its own standard for advancement, but common to all of those decisions is the university’s demand for high professional standards, as contained in Section 4.1 of the Redbook:

High professional standards must be the basis for all personnel decisions. Personnel recommendations and decisions shall be made only after a review of all the qualifications and all the contributions of the individual in the areas of teaching; of research, creative or professional activity; and of service. All three areas must be considered, but the relative weight to be given to each may be determined in light of the duties of the faculty member.

Research/Creative/Professional Activity. The assessment of a candidate’s accomplishments in research/creative/professional activity should consider whether the candidate demonstrates growing independence from the dissertation work or post-doctoral training. Recommendations should address the substance of the scholarly work; the program of inquiry, theme, or intellectual agenda that charts the course of research; and any basis for projecting that the candidate’s professional achievements will continue. Letters from established scholars in the field are most helpful when they comment on the quality of the work and its importance to an area of inquiry. Letters that provide mere summaries of the record are less useful. (The Academic Personnel website offers two templates for soliciting external reviews at www.umass.edu/provost/sites/umass.edu.provost/files/uploads/Solicitation%20of%20External%20Reviews--template%20no%20enclosures.dotx.)

Teaching. The consideration of teaching should attempt to capture the total contribution of the candidate to the instructional mission; achieving such a comprehensive assessment typically involves multiple modes of evaluation, not just student evaluations. The review could examine and document teaching effectiveness in the formal classroom setting and in less formal student interactions. The classroom-based review might cover the range of courses taught and their importance to the curriculum; the currency of course content as revealed in course syllabi; evaluations from students; evaluations from peers; evaluations of the effectiveness of pedagogic innovations or improvements; and review of teaching-related issues reflected in the candidate’s Annual Faculty Reviews. Beyond the classroom, reviewers may consider the roles played in academic advising; the mentoring of undergraduate and graduate
students; the supervision of students engaged in independent study, honors, or graduate work; and the development of curricular materials, including those intended for alternative formats, such as distance learning. Although not required, a teaching portfolio can work effectively to connect teaching activity with the candidate’s personal statement.

Service. Certain types of service receive special mention in the CBA and the Redbook. For example, the CBA requires that service to the faculty union be considered, and the Redbook requires that service outside the department be considered at the department level. In general, the consideration of service should be inclusive, acknowledging the contributions that candidates make both inside and outside their departments and inside and outside the university. The extent to which service outside the university contributes to a case for promotion or tenure may depend on the pertinence of that service to the individual’s professional profile or to advancement of the university’s mission. Service may include that provided in governance or management (to the department, college/school, university or profession); that representing outreach to extend knowledge beyond the university/professional community; and that intended to promote community engagement as a benefit both to the university community and to the off-campus community.

A Note on “Cultural Standards.” Recognizing the breadth of promotion and tenure standards articulated by the CBA and the Redbook, some departments have engaged in useful conversations about what those standards mean in the cultural contexts of their individual departments, and some of those conversations have led to documents that express those “cultural standards.” As efforts to come to a common understanding of the CBA and Redbook standards, cultural-standards documents are appropriate, but they may not be used to formally evaluate a candidate’s research, teaching, and service because they have not been bargained with the faculty union. Internal and external reviewers have the right and should individually interpret the standards expressed by the CBA and the Redbook, and any document that purports to interpret those standards for reviewers could easily be challenged as illegitimate in grievances or litigation. Internal and external reviewers always retain the right to exercise their individual interpretations of the CBA and Redbook standards, interpretations that may differ from those of “cultural standards” documents. Therefore, departmental reviewers should not rely on or refer to such documents in making their recommendations, and department chairs/heads must not send these documents to external reviewers.

Tenure Standards & Criteria

In specifying the standards and criteria for tenure, the Redbook elaborates even more on the importance of excellence:
The award of tenure can be made only by the President with the concurrence of the Board of Trustees. Consideration of a candidate for tenure shall be based on the following:

a) Convincing evidence of excellence in at least two, and strength in the third, of the areas of teaching; of research, creative or professional activity; and of service, such as to demonstrate the possession of qualities appropriate to a member of the faculty occupying a permanent position.

b) Reasonable assurance of continuing development and achievement leading to further contributions to the University. [Section 4.9]

Clearly, "high professional standards," "convincing evidence of excellence," and "reasonable assurance" of continued progress describe this institution’s expectations at the campus and system levels for all personnel recommendations and actions. These expectations require sufficient supporting evidence at all levels of review through that of the dean. Each recommendation should clearly state whether and how the faculty member has shown convincing evidence of excellence in each of the three areas (teaching, service, and research/creative/professional activity). Some indication of how the individual compares to similar faculty in peer institutions will help support a case for tenure and/or promotion.

The Redbook requires that positive tenure recommendations relate the proposed award of tenure to:

a) program plans at the department, college, campus, and University level;

b) flexibility as affected by rank and tenure distributions and anticipated retirement dates;

c) departmental affirmative action goals, considering the nature of the positive contribution that affirmative action is able to make to the diversity of perspective that is essential to the well-being of the department and the University community. [Section 4.2]

Most tenure cases also involve a recommendation for promotion to Associate Professor. In these cases, Section 4.6(b) (cited below) also applies and should be addressed at each level of review.

**Promotion Standards & Criteria**

In addition to the broad standards for all personnel decisions described above (Redbook Section 4.1), the standards for promotions are further defined in Section 4.6. In their recommendation letters, reviewers at all levels should explicitly cite these standards.
and criteria, clearly articulating whether and how the candidate’s record conforms to them:

Recommendations for promotion shall be based on qualifications and contributions in the areas of teaching; of research, creative, or professional activity; and of service; and on the following considerations:

a) For promotion to Assistant Professor, the faculty member must possess the appropriate terminal degree, or equivalent professional experience, and have a record of achievement in the field of academic specialization. In addition, the candidate must show promise of continuing professional development and achievement.

b) For promotion to Associate Professor, the faculty member must have a record of achievement sufficient to have gained recognition on and off campus among scholars or professionals in his or her field; and must show promise of continuing professional development and achievement.

c) For promotion to Professor, the faculty member must have a record of achievement sufficient to have gained substantial recognition on and off campus from scholars or professionals in his or her field; and must show significant potential for continuing professional achievement. [Section 4.6]

**Tenure & Promotion Process for Tenure-Stream Faculty**

The process of advancing a candidate’s file through levels of review is similar for all tenure and promotion cases with these variations: For promotion to the rank of Associate Professor accompanying a recommendation for the award of tenure, positive cases proceed through review at the level of Provost, Chancellor, President and Trustees. For all other promotions, including promotion to full professor, the process concludes with the Provost’s decision. (Nominations for promotion to “Distinguished Professor,” a process separate from that described in this letter, also advance to the Trustees.)

The Redbook (Section 6.4) and the CBA (Articles 11 and 12) detail the timelines and steps for recommendation of tenure and promotion.

A. **Beginning the process.** The process begins when the department head or chair informs the faculty member of the tenure review. The notice must be given by the end of the third calendar week of the semester prior to the semester in which the tenure decision by the Board of Trustees is scheduled. For faculty members for whom 2013-2014 constitutes the tenure decision year, September
20, 2013, is the deadline, but we encourage earlier notification. The Board of Trustees must act by August 15, 2014.

Notice of a promotion review should be sent as early as possible in the semester in which a department plans to conduct such a review. A faculty member not scheduled for promotion consideration may request such a review. Neither a department head/chair nor a department personnel committee may refuse to an eligible faculty member’s applying for promotion, nor may they refuse to review an application; however, under no circumstances should promotion reviews of an individual be conducted more often than once a year.

B. Compiling the file. The "basic file" for each promotion and/or tenure recommendation, compiled by the department head/chair, should contain:

1. All materials submitted by the candidate that he or she believes will be essential to an adequate consideration of the case.
2. Letters from outside reviewers as described in D. below; a description of the professional standing of each writer and of his or her relationship with the candidate; and an indication of who suggested each name.
3. Tables of contents, as described in F. below.
4. The candidate’s curriculum vitae, including a bibliography or comparable list of professional accomplishments.
5. Copies or reviews of the candidate’s published works or evidence of other professional accomplishments.
6. Evaluations of the candidate’s teaching effectiveness, including but not limited to those of students.
7. Evaluations of the candidate’s service and outreach activities.
8. Recommendations of committees and administrators, as described in E. below.

Each successive level of recommendation or decision must review and, if necessary, supplement the basic file. Subsequent to the recommendation of the department personnel committee and throughout the review process, the candidate retains the right of access to all parts of the basic file except for those letters to which he or she has voluntarily waived access, as described in C. below.

C. Soliciting Letters from External Evaluators. For tenure recommendations and for promotions to Associate Professor or Professor, the department head/chair (not the DPC) should solicit evaluations of the candidate’s accomplishments from external scholars and/or professionals. Ideally, the dossier will include evaluations from research universities (RU/VH) with very high research activity or comparably renowned institutions. (For the Carnegie List of RU/VH institutions, see
The evaluators solicited must include scholars suggested by the faculty member and should include some not suggested by the faculty member. At least three should be from persons not personally or professionally close to the faculty member.

Before soliciting such letters, the department head/chair must consult with the candidate on the list of proposed evaluators and on the draft solicitation message to be sent to those evaluators. The candidate has the right to comment on the appropriateness of the proposed evaluators and on the solicitation message, but the candidate may not demand the exclusion of any evaluator or the revision of the solicitation.

Before soliciting any on- or off-campus evaluations, the candidate must sign the waiver form (attached), either waiving or not waiving access to the letters that will come from those reviewers. Once signed and submitted by the candidate, the waiver is irrevocable for the personnel action under consideration. Note that the waiver applies only to letters received in response to individual solicitations. Comments or letters received in response to broadly distributed invitations are not protected by the faculty member’s waiver of access.

The solicitation should clearly indicate whether the faculty member has or has not waived access to evaluators’ letters. In either case, the solicitation should notify prospective evaluators that the candidate will receive a list of external reviewers from whom letters were solicited and received. The Provost’s website offers a solicitation template that you may find useful (see www.umass.edu/provost/sites/umass.edu.provost/files/uploads/Solicitation%20of%20External%20Reviews--template%20no%20enclosures.dotx).

D. Recommendations – Typically, the process moves through the following stages.

DPC: The department personnel committee reviews the basic file, may supplement the file with relevant information, and writes a recommendation, which includes the committee’s numerical vote on the overall recommendation; the recommendation should not report votes on the ratings of “Excellent,” “Strong,” or “Not Strong” for each of the three areas of evaluation. The committee adds its recommendation* to the file, sends a copy of its recommendation to the candidate, updates the file’s table of contents, and forwards the expanded basic file to the

* If the candidate has waived access to the letters submitted by external evaluators, the composers of internal recommendation letters should scrupulously ensure that no external evaluator is identified, directly or indirectly.
department head or chair. The candidate may choose to respond to the committee’s recommendation and to any materials added by the committee; such a response becomes part of the basic file and is forwarded with the file to subsequent levels of review.

Department head/chair: The department head/chair evaluates the expanded file, including the DPC’s recommendation and the candidate’s written response to the DPC recommendation (if any); may supplement the file with relevant information; adds his/her written recommendation* to the file; sends a copy of his/her recommendation to the candidate; updates the table of contents; and forwards the expanded file to the school/college personnel committee. Again, the candidate may respond to the head/chair’s recommendation and to any materials added by the head/chair; such a response becomes part of the file and proceeds with the file to subsequent levels of review.

CPC: The school/college personnel committee evaluates the expanded file, including previous reviewers’ recommendations and any responses by the candidate; may supplement the file with relevant information; adds its written recommendation*, including overall numerical vote (but not votes in the three evaluation areas); sends a copy of its recommendation to the candidate and to the department; updates the table of contents; and forwards the expanded file to the dean.

Dean: The dean evaluates the expanded file, including previous reviewers’ recommendations and any responses by the candidate; may supplement the file with relevant information; adds his/her written recommendation*; sends a copy of his/her recommendation to the candidate, the CPC, the department head/chair, and the DPC; updates the table of contents; and forwards the expanded file to the provost.

Candidate’s right to add materials: The candidate may supplement the file with new, relevant material at any stage in this process. The candidate may submit a written response to any material added to the file at any stage in the process.

Rights of response: When materials are added to the file by the candidate or by other reviewers after the file has reached the college level, the DPC and the head/chair have the right to respond in writing to the new materials, but they should submit their responses in a timely

* If the candidate has waived access to the letters submitted by external evaluators, the composers of internal recommendation letters should scrupulously ensure that no external evaluator is identified, directly or indirectly.
fashion so that the review process is not delayed. Such responses become part of the expanded file and must be considered by subsequent reviewers.

E. **Contrary Recommendations.** A head/chair must consult with the DPC before recommending differently from the DPC. Reviewers at the college level (CPC and dean) must invite clarification and additional information from departmental reviewers before making a recommendation contrary to that of either the DPC or the department head/chair. The provost must invite clarification and additional information from the dean before making a recommendation contrary to that of either the CPC or the dean. All such requests and all information received in response must be added to the expanded file.

A department head/chair or a dean must provide compelling reasons for a recommendation that is counter to that of a department personnel committee. The action must be explained against the backdrop of professional and University standards and criteria.

Recommendations from departmental and college-level committees should report not only the results of the vote but also all important considerations related to the vote. Those considerations become essential in cases where votes show divisions in the assessments by members of a personnel committee.

F. **Table of Contents.** At the time of his or her recommendation, the department head or chair should compile a table of contents of the basic file, add it to the file, and send a copy to the faculty member. Similarly, when the school/college personnel committee acts, it should update the table of contents, add it to the file, and send copies to the faculty member and the department. If the school/college committee does not do so, the completion of the table becomes the responsibility of the dean. In any event, the dean must assure that the table of contents has been updated and distributed prior to submitting the file to the Provost.

G. **Personnel Action Forms.** Completed Personnel Action Forms and Tenure & Promotion Checklists should accompany all tenure and promotion files submitted to the Provost’s Office. Tenure files should also be accompanied by a completed "Summary of Tenure Recommendation" form (attached).

H. **Timelines.** As indicated in the master calendar, faculty members to be reviewed during the current academic year are those whose tenure decision year occurs in the second semester of AY2013-2014 or the first semester of AY2014-2015. We must submit tenure cases to the President’s Office six weeks prior to meetings of the Trustees’ Committee on Academic and Student Affairs. A recommendation from this committee is then forwarded to the Board of Trustees. The Trustees
meet four times each year: February, June, September, and December; failure to meet campus deadlines can jeopardize timely action.

Recommendations in tenure and promotion cases are due as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Action</th>
<th>Tenure-Decision Year</th>
<th>File Due to Dean</th>
<th>File Due to Provost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure &amp; Promotion to Associate Professor</td>
<td>2013-14 spring semester</td>
<td>November 15, 2013</td>
<td>January 15, 2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2014-15 fall semester</td>
<td>March 5, 2014</td>
<td>April 4, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotion only</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>January 22, 2014</td>
<td>March 3, 2014</td>
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Careful adherence to *all* of the relevant provisions of the CBA and Redbook policy is essential. Observance of the requirements helps promote the high professional standards that the University has a responsibility to uphold. Hence, faculty members and administrators should carefully examine the guidance in this memorandum and ensure their use. If you have any questions about these or related matters, please let me know.

The University of Massachusetts—from the campus to the Trustees—has expressed its commitment to high-quality scholarship, teaching and service. I seek your counsel on efforts that my office can make to help us realize our collective dedication to excellence.

Enclosures: Checklist for tenure only & for tenure with promotion
Checklist for promotion only
Tenure summary for President’s Office
Waiver of right of access to letters of recommendation