

# Observations and suggestions

*College of Agricultural Sciences  
Oregon State University  
September 2005*

These observations and suggestions from the College of Agricultural Sciences promotion and tenure review committee are drawn from the experience of the 2005 promotion and tenure cycle at OSU. They are intended as a resource to help unit leaders and candidates in preparing future dossiers.

—*Roy G. Arnold, Executive Associate Dean*

## **Cover page**

- The cover page should clearly indicate all recommended personnel actions (promotion to a new academic rank, promotion and indefinite tenure, or indefinite tenure only), not the current rank and tenure status of the candidate.

## **Form A**

- Information provided should be carefully reviewed for accuracy regarding dates and years of service, appointment specifics (9- or 12-month, FTE distribution, tenure status, etc.); please refer to the letter of offer to assure accuracy and consistency. For item B.9, “Service at OSU”, specify the date for which the count is made (e.g., “6 years on June 30, 2006”).
- Prior service credit granted in the letter of offer, or any documented agreements to extend the tenure clock for extenuating circumstances should be noted; the timing of requests for extension of the tenure clock should coincide with the specific extenuating circumstance(s) triggering the request rather than at the end of the annual tenure cycle, and can only be considered upon request by the faculty member.
- Required signatures must be included on Form A.

## **Waiver of access to external letters**

- If the candidate has chosen to waive access to the external letters, the waiver of access form signed by the candidate must be included in the dossier.
- If the candidate has chosen *not* to waive access to the external letters, a sheet of paper indicating this decision should be placed in that section of the dossier (per memo from the vice provost for Academic and International Programs).

## **Position description**

- OSU promotion and tenure dossier preparation guidelines call for inclusion of all position descriptions since the candidate’s hire date or last promotion. As position descriptions are regularly reviewed and revised, we now have dossiers with multiple position descriptions covering the faculty member’s service since their initial appointment or since their last promotion. In some cases, the different position descriptions reflect significant changes in assignments. In other cases, the changes are minor and may simply incorporate specific required language. Because these changes may not be obvious to someone external to the unit, it is recommended that the dossier contain a short narrative describing the changes in the candidate’s position description and the rationale for those changes. (Note: It has been suggested to the vice provost for Academic and International Programs that perhaps the dossier guidelines should be revised to call for the inclusion of only one position description, along with a statement explaining any changes in the candidate’s position description during their appointment history at OSU. The vice provost has referred this suggestion to the Faculty Senate’s Promotion and Tenure Committee for their consideration. Initial responses from the

vice provost and the chair of the Faculty Senate's committee indicate that there is some sympathy for this idea, provided that both the candidate and the department head have an opportunity to indicate their agreement with the contents of the summary by signing off on the document.)

- Position descriptions represent an agreement between the immediate supervisor and the faculty member regarding expectations for the position, and thus **should not** be written in "first person" format.
- Expectations for scholarship must be described in the position description.
- Position descriptions **should not** include outcomes information, such as grant dollars, publications, etc., from periodic performance reviews.
- All position descriptions included must be dated and signed by both the candidate and the unit leader.

### Candidate's Statement

- First-person language is appropriate in the Candidate's Statement because it is expected that the candidate will present the purpose, context, importance, outcomes, and impacts from her or his efforts.
- Scholarship contributions should be included in the Candidate's Statement. Some College of Agricultural Sciences units do an outstanding job of coaching promotion and tenure candidates to organize their candidate statements around examples of program activities in each area of assigned responsibilities (teaching, advising, research, Extension and outreach), including for each example a description of the specific initiative, any associated needs assessment, methods or process used, assessment of outcomes and impacts, and associated scholarship (documenting its communication and validation by peers).
- Data cited in the candidate statement should agree with data appearing elsewhere in the dossier (e.g., number of student advisees, courses, publications, FTE distribution, etc.).

### Internal letters

- Internal letters should be presented in the order outlined in the dossier preparation guidelines.
- Departmental committee letters should include a description of the composition of the committee and should indicate the vote on promotion and tenure recommendations. This letter should be signed by at least the chair of the committee.
- Administrative letters are letters of *evaluation*, not *advocacy*.
- The names of individual reviewers or their institutions and locations should not appear in the letters from the departmental committee or department head; a coding system should be used to enable College- and University-level reviewers to identify the external reviewers being cited.
- Any significant changes in the focus of the candidate's research or education programs should be explained, along with the rationale for these changes and an assessment of the candidate's success in transitioning to the new program focus.
- Administrative letters should include an analysis of significant themes or patterns of strengths or deficiencies that may be raised by external reviewers, and should analyze and address specific issues or concerns raised in letters from departmental committees or external reviewers. External reviewers sometimes rationalize a positive recommendation despite significant concerns about deficiencies in the candidate's record. Such letters are not persuasive or convincing. When multiple external review letters show this pattern, writers of

administrative letters should go beyond simply citing the external reviewers' positive recommendations by providing a careful analysis of the deficiencies cited by the external reviewer(s).

### Letters from external peers

- External reviewers should be a strong group of experienced professionals, qualified to evaluate promotion and tenure dossiers by virtue of their experience in leadership roles within higher education institutions, government agencies, or scientific and professional organizations, or from their experience serving on program review teams or research program panels, etc. Candidates should be made aware of this expectation so that they will identify such individuals on their list of possible reviewers.
- In the list of external reviewers, those suggested by the candidate must be identified; a minimum of three reviewers should come from the candidate's list.
- Letters to evaluators should not request "letters of support"; wording of the request letter should indicate that letters of *evaluation* are sought, and should invite evaluators to assess critically the significance and impacts of the candidate's work and the candidate's professional stature. This letter should follow the format provided in the University's guidelines.
- A log of contacts with the external reviewers should be included and should provide dates for each contact.

### Vitae sections of the dossier

- Publications should be grouped as outlined in the dossier preparation guidelines.
- To the degree possible, dates should be given for all entries in the vitae.
- The candidate's specific contribution to co-authored publications should be described.
- If the status of any publications identified as "submitted" or "in review" changes during the course of consideration the dossier, the appropriate pages in the dossier may be revised by sending a message to an associate dean reporting the change.
- Dates and dollar amounts should be indicated for external grants and contracts; if a multi-investigator grant, the candidate's role in the project should be specified.
- For competitive grants, the relative success rate among those who apply for this type of grant should be indicated, where available.
- For Web sites developed by the candidate, usage data, any documented assessments of value to users, and documented impact or consequence should be described.
- For computer programs and distance education courses developed by candidates, documented usage and impact data should be described.
- Where applicable, documented economic impacts should be cited, with a clear explanation of the basis for the calculated impact.
- Candidates should be advised to describe accurately their contributions to team efforts, and to resist the temptation to overstate their role or their share of the credit for outcomes and impacts resulting from the team's work.

### **Faculty with teaching assignments**

- A letter is required from a student committee that has reviewed and evaluated all parts of the dossier related to teaching and advising. Units should avoid asking students who are under the supervision of the candidate to lead the process or to sign the letter of evaluation.
- Student committees should include both undergraduate and graduate evaluators (if appropriate) and a description of the number and type of students involved should be in the letter.
- A letter describing the process and results of peer evaluations of teaching is required and must be signed by at least the chair of this committee.

### **Faculty with significant Extension and outreach assignments**

- Candidates are advised to start early in the validation of scholarship, especially when it is not in the form of peer-reviewed publications; innovation in documenting the validation of scholarship is encouraged.
- Outcomes and impacts of Extension education programs for the community or client base served should be documented. Documentation of these consequences should be linked to educational events and Extension publications listed in the dossier.
- Wherever possible, summaries of events and publications, grouped by areas of program emphasis, are preferable to lengthy lists.
- For both Extension specialists and field faculty, documentation of client evaluation input should be included. Use of a survey instrument, administered by the academic home department, is encouraged.
- Client survey results may be combined with publicly available data in documenting impacts and outcomes. Other program-specific surveys may also be appropriate.

### **Recommendations for promotion to senior faculty research assistant**

- A letter from the candidate's immediate supervisor must be included; place a checkmark beside item C.7.c., "Letters from Other Administrators with Supervisory Responsibility," on Form A to indicate the inclusion of this letter in the dossier.

### **Early recommendations**

- Recommendations for tenure prior to the sixth year of annual tenure appointments are regarded as early tenure recommendations. Early recommendations frequently stimulate questions from members of the University Promotion and Tenure committee; the earlier the recommendation, the greater the expectation that a compelling case must be made that the candidate has demonstrated extraordinary and exceptional performance. Faculty members should be counseled that unless an exceptionally compelling case can be made, it may be better to wait another year to allow sufficient time to develop a much stronger dossier based on a longer record of performance and productivity at OSU. If early tenure recommendations are submitted, it is important to describe clearly and openly the full length of OSU service by the effective date of the recommended tenure action, note prior service and years beyond the terminal degree, and any other special considerations (conditions of offer, specific overtures from other universities, significant outcomes and impacts specifically from OSU work, total career achievements and contributions, and national and international stature based on their total professional record). Where there is prior service elsewhere, OSU and prior productivity and contributions should be clearly differentiated.

## Negative recommendations

- Where significant shortcomings are cited in support of a negative recommendation, the department head's letter should indicate any documented prior communication of concerns and recommendations to the candidate from annual performance reviews and the three-year review, and should describe the candidate's response (or lack thereof) to those recommendations. If this information is not provided, it is almost certain that the College or University promotion and tenure committees will request documentation of prior reviews of the candidate's performance.

## General

- Where applicable, evidence of effective integration of teaching, research, and Extension and outreach activities is helpful.
- If "Other letters" are included, the rationale for their solicitation and inclusion in the dossier must be clearly explained; a sample of the letter requesting input and a log of individual contacts should be included.

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Office of the Dean  
College of Agricultural Sciences  
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## Addendum

*Additional observations from Bill Braunworth, June, 2006*

### Scholarship

When listing publications and peer presentations, please be clear about the review and/or invitation process. This information should indicate if the contribution is a refereed journal article or if it is peer reviewed. In cases of peer reviewed work it is often not clear who the peers were and therefore the process should be described (indicate peer expertise and position and describe the review process). In some cases an invitation to speak to a peer audience indicates a strong national or regional reputation. In describing the contribution explain how this may be a form of peer validation (i.e. who invited you and why). In other cases a presentation to a group of peers is based on voluntary submission of an abstract which is peer reviewed and may have an acceptance rate of less than 100%. The acceptance rate and the types of peer reviewers involved should be briefly described as well as the professional level of the audience and the number attending.

### External review letters

The request to an outside reviewer should include the question, "Would this person be evaluated favorably for promotion and/or tenure in your institution?"

When the candidate and the department head independently select the same external reviewer the list of reviewers in the dossier should indicate that that reviewer was selected by the department head.

For field faculty and for specialists we typically conduct a survey of the candidate's performance. A similar survey should be done for faculty members who have an administrative role such as staff chair. In such cases those under the supervision of the staff chair and key county officials should be surveyed.

### **Position descriptions**

Do not put scholarship and research together in the same section of the position description. Research is an assigned duty like teaching and Extension. Research does not equal scholarship. Research becomes a scholarly accomplishment when it is communicated and validated by peers. There can be scholarly accomplishments in any of the assigned duties.