To: Department Chairs, Department Administrators, Deans and Directors  
From: Jeffrey Beneker, Chair, Arts & Humanities Divisional Committee  
Re: Tenure guidelines for 2015-2016

This memo accompanies the most recent version of the Arts & Humanities Tenure Guidelines, which can be found at http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/faculty-divisions.htm (please select the “Tenure Documents” tab in the Arts & Humanities Divisional Committee accordion folder). It is intended to emphasize some of the most important aspects of the preparation the dossier for promotion to associate professor with tenure. Even if you are not preparing a case for promotion and tenure, please look over the guidelines, since they provide, in outline, expectations that all assistant professors should anticipate as they move toward tenure, and also provide a sense of the work expected of department chairs and faculty colleagues as they prepare the assistant professor for the tenure and promotion process.

Tenure dossiers must be submitted electronically to the divisional committee. Working bookmarks are appreciated.

One of the most important facets of this preparation – one that is reflected in the tenure dossier, and the process of which is expected, by all divisional committees, to be made explicit in that dossier – is the support and mentoring of the junior faculty member over the course of the probationary period. Some of the most important things you can do in this regard include:

- ensuring that all assistant professors understand the process of mentorship in your department, and that each – along with colleagues assigned to mentorship roles, particularly members of the review committee – follows that process actively and responsibly;
- making clear, in the chair’s letter, the process followed and the extent to which the department followed it;
- ensuring that assistant professors’ classes have been visited, ideally twice a year (once every semester), by a variety of faculty members and for a range of classes.

The strongest tenure and promotion cases tend to be those where the junior faculty member has had thorough mentorship, has understood the process, has engaged in the process actively and collaboratively, and in which the chair’s letter is explicit about how her or his work has been supported.

It is also important to realize that a poorly-prepared dossier can hinder even the strongest of tenure cases. Be careful and thorough when putting the dossier together, and make sure that all directions are followed – including directions on when to submit cases during the academic year – and that the chair’s department’s, and candidate’s contributions to the case are clear and that all supporting material is put in the proper context.
On the matter of timing and logistics, please bear in mind the following:

- We encourage submission of tenure cases early in the year (and the semester); having all our cases bunched up toward the end of the year is more work for us, and more work for departments, and doesn’t benefit the candidates.
- We cannot consider early tenure cases (those that have time remaining on the tenure clock beyond spring semester) after the March meeting. Please note that early cases should meet all the criteria that a case brought in the sixth probationary year must meet.
- The last meeting for which cases for promotion to tenure will be accepted is the April meeting.
- Cases in which a faculty member is hired with an offer of appointment with tenure will be accepted for the May meeting. Because the Divisional Committee meets only during the academic year – not over the summer – departments may wish to encourage recipients of offers of appointment to take a leave of absence from their previous institution for the following academic year (the first year of appointment) so that departments will have ample time to prepare the tenure dossier for consideration by the Divisional Committee in the early fall of the first year of appointment.
- Please be sure that you have included all the necessary material in the dossier before it is sent to the Divisional Committee. If we find that a file is incomplete, or that it has been prepared hastily, we will send it back to the department, delaying the case until the deficiencies have been remedied. If you have questions about what does and doesn’t go in a tenure file, please contact Michaela Aust (at michaela.aust@wisc.edu or 263-5741).

The tenure and promotion dossier is one of the most important documents a department chair, and an assistant professor, will produce in her or his career. While all parts of the dossier are crucial, among the most closely scrutinized by the Divisional Committee are the chair’s letter, the outside letters of evaluation, the candidate’s statement on future work, and the material supporting the assistant professor’s teaching. The Divisional Committee is also seeing more cases that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries, and it is vitally important that members of the Committee understand the nature and contribution of the assistant professor’s work between and inside these boundaries.

- The chair’s letter serves many purposes. The most important is to frame the case for the committee. Tell us about the voting process, and the total number of votes cast; if there was disagreement on the Executive Committee, tell us about it and how it was resolved; if there are weaknesses in the case, explain how they were considered in the discussion, and what measures the department has taken to address them and how it has worked on the problems together with the assistant professor. You should explain to committee members what the criteria are for tenurable work in your discipline, and you should explain the nature of the candidate’s work in terms understandable to non-experts. Please remember that the committee includes members from across the arts and humanities disciplines in the college, and will probably not include people squarely in the candidate’s discipline.
- The five to eight outside letters tell Divisional Committee members what experts in the candidate’s discipline think about her or his work, but they are not sufficient in and of themselves. Please remember to tell us who these people are, why they are qualified to review the case, how they were selected -- according to the Divisional Committee’s guidelines -- and which of those solicited refused to review the candidate’s work and why.
- The candidate’s statement on present and future work should explain to the Divisional Committee what she or he intends to work on, how far along each of the projects are, what each project’s relation to the dissertation and first major work is, and what funding, if any, has been
secured to pursue it. Please remember that one of the criteria for promotion and tenure is evidence of future work, so the candidate must be able to do more than speculate as to what future projects might be. To whatever extent possible, the statement of future work should be supported by information in the curriculum vitae and the dossier.

- The tenure dossier should fully explain the assistant professor’s role in the department’s teaching mission, including what courses were taught, how the candidate’s evaluations compare to those of departmental colleagues, and how the candidate’s pedagogy might be understood as innovative. The department should carefully prepare cumulative and comparative data that is clearly understandable to members of the Divisional Committee.

- With the increased emphasis on cross-disciplinary research and teaching, department chairs should address not just the nature of the assistant professor’s interdisciplinary work, but the extent to which that work meets the standards of rigor, expertise, and methodology in each of the fields in which s/he works. It is equally important to explain the innovative aspects of the work, and how it is important to the department, the division, the school/college, and the university.

A few last words. If the assistant professor’s work is in a language other than English, please be sure that the sample of that work is in English or has been translated into English, and that the chair has explained the topics, methods, impact, and relation to the field of the material in the file in that other language, since most members of the Committee will not be fluent in that language. For candidates where performance is a major component of the tenure record, please provide the divisional committee with information about upcoming performances, exhibitions, and ticket availability. For candidates who have joint appointments, please take care that the chair of the home department consults with and request the support of the other departments or units involved (including, but not limited to, student and peer teaching evaluations, evaluation of the candidate’s research, record of the unit’s vote and explanation of voting).

A long dossier doesn’t equal a strong dossier. Be as detailed as necessary, but economical. Examples of strong dossiers are available in the office of the Secretary of the Faculty. Please contact Michaela Aust (at michaela.aust@wisc.edu or 263-5741) to schedule a visit to the office.