Fall 2015

To: Department Chairs, Directors, and Deans

From: Carl Sovinec, Chair, Physical Sciences Division Executive Committee

Re: Submission of Tenure Review Documents for 2015-2016

Documents relevant to the submission of tenure dossiers to the Physical Sciences Divisional Executive Committee, including the most recent version of the divisional committee’s tenure guidelines and template letters (effective September 2014), are available at: www.secfac.wisc.edu/faculty-divisions.htm. The following reminders discuss specific points that have arisen during dossier reviews over recent years.

Candidates are not penalized for tenure clock extensions and should feel comfortable with using them when circumstances warrant extension. The Physical Sciences Divisional Committee looks for the same level of accomplishment by the end of a candidate's tenure clock, regardless of extensions. The chair's cover letter for a dossier should identify the original tenure clock and any extensions.

All submissions are judged by the documented level of accomplishment and not by the rate of accomplishment. The committee does not provide special allowance for dossiers submitted before the final year of a tenure clock, regardless of extensions. Thus, the committee does not encourage applications for early promotion in the absence of extenuating circumstances, such as outside offers. However, in cases where an extension is granted, candidates may choose to be reviewed within their original tenure-clock allowance without being considered early.

Please review the instructions for soliciting letters of evaluation for tenure cases. The dossier must include a minimum of six letters from knowledgeable experts who can provide objective evaluations for both appointments and promotions. At least five of the letters must be from individuals who are professionally at "arm's length" from the candidate. Letters from individuals such as the candidate’s major professor, postdoctoral supervisors, frequent collaborators, recipients of joint funding, or others who may have a substantial interest in the candidate or his/her work are not "arm’s length." They are generally given reduced weight by the committee. The committee strongly discourages informal contact, e.g. by phone or email, with letter writers prior to formal solicitation. All correspondence, formal or informal, with letter writers should be documented.

Thoroughly document the candidate’s contributions to each publication from the tenure track. Every publication listed as having been published during the candidate’s tenure track at the UW must: a) have the candidate and his/her advisees, other senior researchers, and miscellaneous other collaborators clearly identified in the author list; b) be followed by a clear and succinct explanation of the contribution that the candidate had made together with his/her group members. The explanations can be qualitative (“The candidate and his/her student performed the theoretical work, while the collaborator’s group did the experiments”) or expressed as a percentage of the effort in different categories (e.g., Design: 60%, Data collection: 80%, Analysis: 70%, Writing: 70%).

When a department’s executive committee vote is not unanimous, the chair’s letter should summarize the major concerns raised during the discussion.

Please pay special attention to the requirements for documenting teaching activities and effectiveness. For promotions, the committee expects to see clear evidence of annual departmental peer review of teaching. A
suggested form for peer evaluation of teaching is available on the website. Also, encourage mentoring committees to meet with candidates regularly, starting from the beginning of an appointment.

An annotated composite tenure dossier and other sample dossiers are available for review in the Divisional Committees office. We encourage candidates and department chairs, or others responsible for preparing tenure dossiers, to examine these documents. Poorly prepared and incomplete tenure dossiers may be returned to the department for revision without review.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months. Please contact me (esovinec@wisc.edu or 608-263-5525) or Divisional Committees Coordinator Michaela Aust (michaela.aust@wisc.edu or 608-263-5741) if we can be of assistance.