

Tenure Review Guidelines for Department Chairs

This document explains the responsibilities of Department Chairs, as representatives of the candidate's department, in the tenure review process at Augustana and offers suggestions that may result in more effective case preparation for candidates and Chairs. Note that, while the FRC carefully considers the department's assessment of the candidate, FRC makes its own independent recommendation of support or non-support of the candidate.

The tenure process is described in Chapter 3 and the role of the department in that process in section 3.3.2. of the [Faculty Handbook](#).

The Probationary Period

As soon as a tenure-track faculty member is hired, the chair should begin guiding them in building the portfolio and collecting evidence to illustrate their development. Because a candidate may have several chairs in this period, chairs should keep records of probationary faculty members' development (yearly reports, 2- and 4-year review letters, teaching observations) and share them with successors. Regardless of whether the tenure decision is positive or negative, tenure candidates find the process to be more equitable when they are effectively mentored, receive useful and constructive feedback, and feel supported in their teaching and research (Lawrence, Celis, and Ott, "Is the Tenure Process Fair? What Faculty Think," *Journal of Higher Education* 2014).

Chairs thus play a crucial role in helping junior faculty members prepare for tenure review. The chair should:

- Provide the candidate with a copy of the department's statement of expectations for [teaching, scholarship, service, and DEI](#) efforts as they begin their first year at the College, and answer any questions about these expectations;
- Encourage them to participate in Center for Faculty Enrichment (CFE) and FRC activities that are designed to help them learn about, adjust to and navigate the rules and norms of the review process;
- In the case of departments with fewer than three tenured faculty members, locate appropriate additional faculty from outside the department to form a tenure committee of at least three tenured faculty members;
- Observe their teaching and coordinate teaching observations of the candidate by the tenure committee and representatives of any interdisciplinary programs in which they teach;
- Advise the candidate on using and administering the required IDEA course evaluations, including selecting appropriate learning objectives and devising methods for ensuring student participation. The chair may also help the candidate identify a proctor to administer the forms if the candidate requests one;
- Guide them in interpreting and critically evaluating the results of student evaluations, including parsing student comments, identifying potentially biased responses in order to focus on patterns that are reasonable and actionable, evaluating statistical significance, and understanding trends over time and across courses;

- Help them improve their teaching in response to justifiable student critiques, persistent problems in students' abilities to meet learning outcomes, and concerns identified by observers and the candidate;
- Provide them with opportunities to participate in the life of the department and College and advising them on how to select opportunities that best fit their interests and skills;
- Assist them in developing their scholarly agenda, including locating campus and external resources to support their scholarship, providing counsel about how well their scholarship fits the department's expectations, and guiding them to develop a strong pre-tenure paid leave proposal, if eligible;
- Ensure that the candidate has an understanding of the college's mission with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion and directs them to resources to incorporate these principles in their teaching and other areas of their professional life, if warranted;
- For the 2-year and 4-year reviews, provide them with guidance in preparing their materials, consult with and solicit feedback from the tenured members of the department (or review committee) and chairs of any interdisciplinary programs to which they contribute (including FYI) in crafting the department's letter, share the letter with the candidate in advance of the review, attend the review and debrief and answer any questions they may have about the FRC's letter;
- In May or June of the years when the candidate is not reviewed by the FRC, guide them to fill out the [annual review action plan](#) OR discuss yearly accomplishments and concerns (NOTE: this process may stand in for the more burdensome process outlined in the Handbook section 3.2.1);
- Provide an annual review of their progress for the years when they are not reviewed by the FRC and share the report with the candidate, the candidate's tenure committee, and academicaffairs@augustana.edu..
- Throughout the probationary period, the Department Chair is responsible for notifying the candidate in writing of unfavorable information at the earliest opportunity in order to allow them to find resources and strategies for change.

The Year Before the Tenure Review

Since tenure reviews take place in the fall, it is imperative that the chair begin working with the candidate on their tenure case no later than the fall of the year preceding the tenure review.

With the candidate, the chair should:

- Explain the nature of the tenure review process;
- Review the candidate's teaching evaluations and observations of the candidate's teaching;
- Conduct a thorough end-of-year annual review and compile all previously completed annual reviews;
- Discuss with the candidate the results of their 2- and 4-year reviews and candidate's subsequent growth;

- Consult with the candidate as they prepare their materials, offering advice about the kind and amounts of evidence necessary to make a strong case for tenure.

Survey: During the spring semester before the fall tenure hearing, the Department Chair should survey, either in person or in writing, a sample of current students and alumni who had the candidate as a teacher or advisor. These are often majors in the candidate's program. Generally, about half of the students are suggested by the candidate and the other half selected by the department. The results of the survey should be included in the departmental letter. The chair should also solicit input from the chairs of programs (including FYI and Honors) in which the candidate has taught, if applicable.

Two Weeks Before the Tenure Review

Review of Materials: No later than two weeks before the tenure portfolio is due to the FRC, the chair should make sure that the materials have been shared with all tenured members of the department (or the tenure committee).

All previous Chair's annual letters should be shared with the department's tenure committee, but the FWC/FRC summary letters written back to the candidate should only be shared IF the candidate agrees explicitly in writing explicitly (in writing) agrees to have those letters shared with the tenure committee.

The tenured members of the department (or the tenure committee) should review the candidate's portfolio and then meet with the Chair to discuss the materials compiled by the candidate and the information gathered by the Chair. The Chair should take notes at the discussion to help in the writing of the departmental letter. The chair should convey any concerns to the candidate and allow the candidate to address them before the departmental vote. Ideally, most of the tenured members will have participated in the prior pre-tenure review process, so there should be no surprises or new demands made upon the candidate at this stage.

Following the meeting, each tenured member of the department should vote in a secret ballot whether or not to support a tenured appointment for the candidate.

Departmental Letter: The Chair should write a letter describing the level of departmental support for the tenure candidate, including the number of tenured faculty members who support the granting of tenure, the number who are opposed and the number of abstentions.

Rather than summarizing the substance of the candidate's materials, this letter should explain and give evidence as to whether the candidate does not meet, meets, or exceeds expectations of the performance criteria in each of the areas of teaching and advising, scholarly/professional expression/achievement, service, and DEI as established in the departmental statement of tenure expectations and in the Faculty Handbook.

The letter should assess the indications of promise for continued growth in effective teaching and advising, scholarly and professional achievements, and service, as well as the ways the interests, training, and capabilities of this individual meet the long-range needs of the department and College.

The report will reflect the collective assessment of the tenure committee and must be vetted by all members of the tenure committee. All committee members should sign the letter, which indicates their agreement with its contents. Note that if the letter fairly states the positives and negatives for a candidate and gives qualified support, then everyone should be able to sign, regardless of whether they vote yes or no. Voting anonymity is still preserved. If the department is unable to give unqualified support to a candidate's tenure case, or if the Chair learns of information that may affect the

candidate's case, the Chair must document those concerns and provide the results of the departmental vote in the Department Chair's letter to FRC.

If a committee member disagrees with the content of the letter, and the Dept. Chair is unwilling to make alterations to acknowledge those disagreements which are written, that person should not sign the letter. The dissenting committee member has two options: 1. voice their reasons for disagreement of the contents of the letter to the Dept. Chair, who will convey those opinions to the candidate and the rest of the tenure committee (comments may be either anonymous or attributed, depending on the dissenting committee member's wish); 2. write their opinion as a signed dissenting letter that is given to the candidate and the rest of the tenure committee well in advance of the FRC review. This secondary letter accompanies the Chair's letter. It may be singly or co-authored.

The full departmental report (Chair's Dept. letter and any dissenting letters) should be treated as confidential and should be shared only with the tenured members of the department, the candidate for tenure, and the Faculty Review Committee.

Sharing the Report: Fairness demands that a candidate have as much time as possible to assess and respond to any information that may damage the candidate's prospects for tenure, or to withdraw from the tenure process if a favorable outcome is considered unlikely. The Department Chair must share the department's written report (and any dissenting letter) with the candidate well in advance of the tenure review, and should address any questions and concerns the candidate has about the report before the tenure review.

If the department is unable to give unqualified support to a candidate's tenure case, or if the Chair learns of information that may affect the candidate's case, the Chair must provide the candidate with a written summary of areas of concern.

During the tenure hearing, the Chair will not be permitted to introduce new information – information that has not been discussed with the candidate or written into the letter – only elaborate on the departmental letter or the discussion topics covered during the hearing. This restriction is intended to protect the candidate from unsubstantiated hearsay, innuendo and rumor, which is why an honest, frank, thorough, and detailed written department report is so critical.

Letter Submission: The deadline for submission to FRC is Monday of week five of the fall semester. The Department Chair should electronically submit the written report (the Department Chair's letter, as a pdf file) and, if they have not been submitted previously, all prior annual review letters, as email attachments to *BOTH*: facultyreview@augustana.edu *AND* facultyreviewcommitteegroup@augustana.edu. The subject line of the email should be, "Chair's support letter for first name last name date" with the date in mm.dd.yyyy format (this would be an appropriate name for the actual pdf file as well).

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