Summer 2024

To: Deans, Department Chairs, and Directors
From: Shaun Marcott, Chair, Physical Sciences Divisional Committee
Re: Submission of Tenure Review Documents for 2024-2025

Please share this letter with all assistant professors in your department, as well as the chairs of mentoring committees for junior faculty.

Documents relevant to the submission of tenure dossiers to the Physical Sciences Divisional Executive Committee (PSDC), including tenure guidelines and a checklist of required materials are available at: https://secfac.wisc.edu/tenure/physical-sciences-divisional-committee/tenure-documents/. Based on recent tenure cases, we bring your attention to the following issues:

• **Tenure Clock Extensions.** Tenure clock extensions granted (e.g., due to COVID, maternity/paternity leave, or other reasons) are not considered negatively, whether they are used or not.

• **“Early” Tenure Submissions.** The PSDC judges each candidate according to their accomplishments in the probationary period, independent of the actual time spent. While most candidates use the full tenure clock in order to meet the expected level of accomplishment for tenure, a department may submit a candidate before then if it is clear that the accomplishments of the candidate merit it. It is important to note, however, that candidates are only evaluated by the committee once, by agreement of all four faculty divisions. Also note that the “accomplishments of the candidate” include research AND teaching, and it is important that the candidates have demonstrated excellence in both areas in order to meet the expectations for tenure. For candidates with competing outside offers for whom tenure consideration is part of a retention package, the situation should be explained in the Chair’s letter and the level of urgency should be noted in Section L: Urgency of the tenure dossier.

• **COVID.** The PSDC recognizes that COVID-related challenges are experienced differently by different candidates. The PSDC is committed to thoughtful consideration of these challenges in making its recommendations. As described in the tenure guidelines, the dossier may include an optional statement describing the impact of COVID on the candidate’s accomplishments. This section is independent of any COVID extensions of the tenure clock.

• **Documentation of Teaching Effectiveness.** For promotions, the committee expects to see the results of annual departmental peer reviews of teaching. These reviews are meant to be evaluative and are important complements to student evaluations. A listing of suggested content for peer evaluation of teaching is available on the website linked above. Other evidence of instructor effectiveness is welcome.
• **Extension/Outreach.** Content provided in the extension/outreach section may be read with interest by members of the PSDC, but it will not be considered in the deliberations unless this is a formal part of the candidate’s appointment. In most cases, the corresponding section of the dossier can simply indicate that the candidate does not have an extension/outreach appointment. In such cases, the outreach activities may be best documented as part of their service in that section of the dossier.

• **Soliciting Letters of Evaluation.** The dossier must include a *minimum of five* “arm’s-length” letters from experts who can provide objective evaluations. Letters from individuals such as the candidate’s PhD advisor, postdoctoral supervisors, frequent collaborators, recipients of joint funding, or others who may have a conflict of interest in the candidate or their work are not “arm’s length” and are given reduced weight by the committee. In general, the candidate should not be consulted in the selection of letter writers. The committee strongly discourages informal contact (e.g., by phone or email) with letter writers prior to formal solicitation. All formal or informal correspondence with letter writers should be documented. Please specify whether evaluators received the full dossier to review, and keep in mind that all materials provided to the letter writers must be included in the dossier.

• **Appointments.** Senior hires have generally been evaluated for tenure only after they have accepted an offer. During the 2022-2023 year, we implemented an expedited process for hires at the *full professor level* is intended to allow offers to be made with a positive evaluation for tenure. This streamlined process is described in the Divisional Committee rules in Section III. In this procedure, the department chair can submit an abbreviated tenure dossier to the PSDC and give a short presentation of the case to a standing PSDC subcommittee on senior hires. This subcommittee will then either approve the application or ask that a fuller application be made through the standard PSDC process as soon as is practical. If there are other extenuating circumstances that require evaluation prior to acceptance, please contact us with details before submitting a tenure dossier. In addition to the guidelines regarding letters provided above, departments should explicitly note whether any writers of letters for the dossier also wrote letters for the candidate’s job application to UW-Madison.

• **Example Dossiers:** Sample dossiers are available for review in the Divisional Committees office, 133 Bascom Hall. *We strongly urge candidates and department chairs (or others responsible for preparing tenure packages) to examine these documents.* An incomplete or poorly prepared tenure dossier may be returned to the department for revision without review. Pre-tenure faculty members are encouraged to begin constructing tenure dossiers throughout their probationary years at UW.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months. Please contact Shaun Marcott (smarcott@wisc.edu or 608-262-2368) or Divisional Committees Coordinator Michaela Aust (michaela.aust@wisc.edu or 608-263-5741) if we can be of assistance.