

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

FACULTY COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES

APRIL 27, 2012

PRESENT: Catherine Beneteau, Michelle Bombaugh, James Cavendish, Richard Manning, Christine Probes, Philip Reeder, Kristina Schmidt, Mary Sweely



ABSENT: John Cochran, Joseph DeSalvo, Eric Eisenberg, Julie Harmon, Cheryl Kirstein, Adriana Novoa, Kelly Page Werder, Robert Potter, Bernd Reiter, Sandy Schneider, Hari Srikanth

- I. Meeting called to order.
- II. April 13th meeting minutes approved.
- III. Deans' remarks-none Dr. Eisenberg and Associate Deans were called to the Provost office for a meeting regarding Polytechnic.
- IV. Selecting committee alternates: The following were selected and voted on to fill the alternate positions on the following committees:
 - Faculty Development- SHUM-Peyton McElroy (Philosophy)
 - SNSM-Jason Rohr (IB)
 - Diversity Committee- SHUM-Steven Prince (History)
- V. Report on Survey-Dr. Cavendish handed out the results of the Survey regarding T&P Confidentiality Letters. The results are attached. It was suggested that this survey be done again due to the timeframe in which it was sent out. This will give all faculty members time to review and take the survey again.
- VI. Report on Library renovations-Dr. Manning informed the council that two members of the Library Staff will speak at the Spring Assembly to give an update on this situation. Dr. Manning suggested that this be an item that the Library Committee can work on during the Fall Semester.
- VII. Old business-none.
- VIII. New Business-Committee report for assembly-Dr. Manning read his report to members for input before addressing the Spring Assembly
- IX. Meeting adjourned early to go to the Spring Assembly.



Practices Surrounding External Review Letters for Tenure and Promotion





1. Under the current Collective Bargaining Agreement, applicants for Tenure and Promotion have the right to see the letters of their external reviewers, including identifying information, the external letter writers do not have the right to confidentiality, and the applicants may not waive their right to ensure such confidentiality. Do you think this practice should be retained or changed?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Retain the current practice.		38.4%	53
Change the current practice.		61.6%	85
		answered question	138
		skipped question	2



2. Given that you believe the current practice should be changed, do you think the new practice should...

		Response Percent	Response Count
allow the T&P applicant him/herself to decide whether to waive the right to review the contents of the external letters.		45.3%	39
not involve options on the part of the individual T&P applicant, but be a college-wide practice in which NO T&P applicant has the right to review the contents of the letters except in the case of a grievance.		54.7%	47
		answered question	86
		skipped question	54


3. Given that you think the individual T&P applicant should have the option to retain or waive his/her right to review the contents of the external letters, do you believe that the applicant's decision to retain or waive that right should...

		Response Percent	Response Count
be known to everyone involved in the review process.		76.3%	29
be known only to the applicant and the persons requesting (e.g., the chair or dean) and writing the external review letters.		23.7%	9
		answered question	38
		skipped question	102



4. Given that you think the individual T&P applicant should have the option to retain or waive his/her right to review the contents of the external letters, do you believe that the applicant should...

		Response Percent	Response Count
have the ability to decide on the level of confidentiality he/she prefers (i.e., whether he/she waives access only to the letter writers' identifying information or to the entire contents of the letters).		56.4%	22
not have the ability to decide on the level of confidentiality he/she prefers.		43.6%	17
		answered question	39
		skipped question	101




5. Given that you think the individual applicant should not have the ability to choose the level of confidentiality of the external letters, do you think the external letters should be...

		Response Percent	Response Count
fully confidential		100.0%	17
confidential only as to the identities of the letter writers		0.0%	0
		answered question	17
		skipped question	123






6. Given that you think the new practice should be a college-wide practice in which NO T&P applicant has the right to review the contents of the letters except in the case of a grievance, do you think the external letters should be...

		Response Percent	Response Count
fully confidential		57.4%	27
confidential only as to the identities of the letter writers		42.6%	20
		answered question	47
		skipped question	93

7. With which school in CAS are you currently affiliated?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Humanities		36.5%	50
Social Sciences		37.2%	51
Natural Sciences and Mathematics		26.3%	36
		answered question	137
		skipped question	3

8. What is your faculty status at USF?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Non-tenure track faculty/Lecturer/Instructor		6.5%	9
Assistant Professor		21.7%	30
Associate Professor		33.3%	46
Full Professor		37.7%	52
Other (please specify)		0.7%	1
answered question			138
skipped question			2

9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

	Response Count
	70
answered question	70
skipped question	70

1 Why?

Apr 19, 2012 11:12 AM

Page 7, Q9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

1	My writers assumed that the letters were confidential and were surprised to find out that we could see them. This was some years back.	Apr 25, 2012 4:15 PM
2	Non-confidential letters - potential reviewers may decline to write the letters. Letters that are written may not be as critical as they should be. This results in a decreased usefulness of the letters.	Apr 25, 2012 1:55 PM
3	I feel that lack of confidentiality prevents a frank assessment of the candidate's qualifications. The process should be double-blind to separate future personal relations from the application process.	Apr 25, 2012 11:16 AM
4	I went through the process at a different university, where full confidentiality was so extreme that I still do not know who wrote letters for me. I find that I therefore feel awkward at conferences, not knowing to whom I owe a sort of debt, and not knowing if they understood just how rigid the rules at my last university were. My first promotion was at a third university, one with rules similar to USF's, and I found that process really rewarding: getting to see the letters was a sort of affirmation of the whole process and a real guide to me in the years that followed in terms of what others had found most valuable--and in need of attention--about my work. I have also been a reviewer, and believe that I would not write differently if I knew the candidate would see my comments.	Apr 25, 2012 11:05 AM
5	See who was providing feedback and the nature of that feedback.	Apr 25, 2012 10:55 AM
6	I came with tenure, so cannot comment.	Apr 25, 2012 10:22 AM
7	Transparency and accountability of the process. It is important that care be taken in selecting reviewers and in the evaluation and interpretation of their reviews. However, the value of demystifying and legitimizing the external review process for the candidates offsets the perceived shortcomings.	Apr 25, 2012 10:05 AM
8	I was tenured at LSU and moved to USF with tenure. My tenure letters were confidential only as to the letter writer's identity, not fully confidential.	Apr 25, 2012 9:43 AM
9	Having served as chairman, non-confidentiality resulted in many external and internal reviewers refusing to write a review for a candidate.	Apr 25, 2012 9:40 AM
10	Drawbacks are that those more critical are unlikely to want the candidate to know their personal thoughts about the case.	Apr 25, 2012 9:27 AM
11	Tenure and/or promotion reflects a major academic achievement in an applicant's career. Consequently, the applicant should be entitled to the maximum open-access-policy provided by the university's framework of laws.	Apr 25, 2012 9:26 AM
12	This doesn't really answer your questions, but I feel it is important to say: I believe that the letters should be treated in a manner similar to student letters of recommendation. This provides the clearest parallel.	Apr 25, 2012 9:15 AM
13	A worthwhile learning experience.	Apr 24, 2012 3:41 PM
14	That was long, long ago. I believe that the proposed process will be more rigorous, which is to the advantage of the University, College, School, and	Apr 24, 2012 3:28 PM

Page 7, Q9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

Department--and, I'd like to think, to the applicant as well. It certainly would mean that the letters could carry more weight.

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| 15 | <p>I appreciated being able to see the letters; I gained confidence about my tenure application as a result. Possible drawbacks occurred to me later. I found out after I'd read all my letters that one of my referees has a policy of never writing letters that might be seen by candidates, and a close friend and mentor advised me to make certain none of my referees ever knows I read their letters. She said that no one reads the full instructions on how to write such letters, so she is certain that at least some of those who wrote for me never realized their letters were NOT confidential. I'm in a small subfield where I have met almost everyone senior to me who is still active in the field at one conference or another. If they later learn that USF routinely shares those letters, I could find myself in an awkward situation with these letter writers. If letter writers DO read the instructions and realize that their letters won't be confidential, they may well refuse to write. (I do not know if any of my potential referees did this.) Others may write watered-down letters, reluctant to commit too much in any direction because I may read the letters (and could conceivably share the contents). Our peer and aspirational-peer institutions generally have fully confidential letters for tenure and promotion candidates. I think we need to adopt the same practice to remain competitive.</p> | Apr 24, 2012 7:31 AM |
| 16 | <p>While the applicant should be allowed to waive their right to see external review letters, it is important that they be told of the general tenor of the letters. Not all criticisms and concerns are just, and the applicant should be allowed to rebut them. They need not know which letter writer said what. This will require that someone experienced be asked to summarize the letters for the applicant. If this is too onerous, then it may be best to retain the current process.</p> | Apr 23, 2012 11:43 AM |
| 17 | <p>I went through the tenure and promotion process on the USF Polytechnic campus for the initial stages of review, largely because I had just hired three new junior faculty members, and I did not think it fair to put them through a tenure process on this campus if I had gone through the process on the Tampa campus (I was in the last cohort of USFP faculty members who had a choice). Since I had not one single "peer" evaluate my work (no other tenured faculty members in English on the USFP campus), without being able to read the external reviewers' letters, I would have relied on the uninformed judgment of faculty members with no connection to my discipline. Therefore, without being able to access the external reviewers' letters, I would have in no way experienced "peer review" at all in the process.</p> | Apr 23, 2012 10:13 AM |
| 18 | <p>I am actually not opposed to the confidentiality aspect. My problem is with the selection process. In most cases the list of 10-15 potential reviewers that a tenure/promotion candidate selects is not equal. In other words, some of those potential reviewers will be more familiar with the candidate's work than other potential reviewers. Therefore, the random selection process is the problem, and it could end up with 5 reviewers who are not as familiar with the candidate's work as people who were not selected, but probably should have been. The candidate and the chair better understand how to rank the potential reviewers in terms of familiarity of with the candidate's work. The narrowing process should remain with the candidate and chair. At least, the candidate should be allowed</p> | Apr 23, 2012 7:19 AM |

Page 7, Q9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

to rank the potential reviewers, and the Dean should try to adhere to that ranking.

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| 19 | <p>The possible benefits and/or drawbacks will affect me personally mainly in connection with any work I may do on T&P committees. It is thought by some that non-confidentiality prevents some potential outside reviewers from participating out of fear they may be sued for a negative evaluation. Given the increasingly litigious nature of our society, this is certainly plausible. However, I have not seen any solid proof of this, and the argument is based entirely, as far as I can see, on anecdotal evidence. Over the years, I have read dozens of letters by outside reviewers and I have to say that I impressed by how candid the great majority of them are. I have not seen a reluctance on the part of these reviewers to criticize the research or scholarship of candidates for T&P when they thought it appropriate. I will say further that some reviewers tend to get carried away with carping and petty arguments that reflect more negatively on them than on the candidates' work. There are of course also instances where reviewers get carried with excessive praise. Some potential reviewers claim they are too busy to evaluate candidates for T&P, and frankly, I believe some are too lazy. I am not convinced that all of them are simply afraid or unwilling to write on account of the current non-confidentiality policy. On balance, I think that candidates should have the right to choose whether they want reviewers' evaluations to be confidential or not.</p> | Apr 22, 2012 9:32 AM |
| 20 | <p>External review letters from the applicant's field are among the most objective and important information that is available for USF to decide the tenure decision. I think there is no major benefits with USF's practice of non-confidentiality.</p> | Apr 21, 2012 9:47 AM |
| 21 | <p>non confidential letters are not held in the same regard as confidential letters. I think if letters were confidential, they would carry more weight in making decisions.</p> | Apr 20, 2012 9:00 AM |
| 22 | <p>Although some potential external letter writers declined to write letters for me, NONE of them cited non-confidentiality as a reason. Typically, they were simply over-committed and did not have the time. If the main impetus behind a change in policy is the belief that non-confidentiality interferes with getting external reviewers, I would like to see good evidence for this belief. Anecdotal evidence will not suffice. I found it extremely valuable to have access to the letters. For one thing, as a woman in a male-dominated field in which implicit bias and prejudices, sometimes subtle and sometimes overt, are still commonplace, I believe that having letters that are not confidential may steer letter-writers toward more objective and fair evaluations, or force those who would be tempted to voice their prejudice under cover of confidentiality to decline to write. Importantly, transparency of process and accountability are always important. Their importance is magnified in the T&P review, a very serious professional evaluation that has, perhaps, the single biggest impact on a person's professional prospects and employment. The fact that some other institutions require confidentiality only leads me to believe that THEY ought to revise their retrograde policies. There is no reason for secrecy. Either the evaluation letters will honestly reflect the candidates' work or they will not. Confidentiality does not guarantee honest assessment, but it does provide letter writers with an unwarranted unaccountability for their role in determining the career prospects of</p> | Apr 20, 2012 8:51 AM |

Page 7, Q9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

	those for whom they write. For another thing, reading external writers' review of the work is actually of intellectual and professional value to the candidate, who stands to gain a different perspective on his or her developing career. The purpose of the T&P process is obviously not to provide this sort of perspective or feedback, but it is a side benefit of having access to the letters.	
23	Because the letters were not confidential, letter writers were less likely to agree to write the letters, and the value of the letter was minimized.	Apr 20, 2012 5:51 AM
24	It was difficult for my Chair to find enough qualified reviewers who were willing to write letters without the promise of confidentiality.	Apr 19, 2012 6:32 PM
25	A wider pool of writers.	Apr 19, 2012 4:53 PM
26	I found no drawbacks to it. My letters were very strong and it gave me a boost of confidence to know that my work was so highly regarded by such famous people.	Apr 19, 2012 1:53 PM
27	It did not seem to effect the outcome.	Apr 19, 2012 1:23 PM
28	During the tenure and promotion process to Associate Professor, I did not experience any problems obtaining external letters of support - despite the fact that the reviewers knew I would have access to their comments. It has been argued that it can be difficult to find faculty willing to write nonconfidential letters of support. That has not been my experience. Not one of the individuals contacted in my case expressed an unwillingness to provide a letter because of a lack of confidentiality. I have also found letter writers to be quite candid despite the non-confidentiality practice. I also don't buy the argument that non-confidential letters cannot be considered as strongly as confidential reviews by the T&P Committee. Faculty are remarkably candid in any number of contexts. Non confidential letters are just as revealing and truthful as confidential reviews. I do not see any need to change the practice. I would feel much LESS comfortable with a system that prevented me from seeing the contents of my external reviews.	Apr 19, 2012 12:56 PM
29	Confidentiality of the contents of the letters is a common practice, so denying the letter-writers confidentiality will make it more difficulty to get people to write letters. However, I see no justification in keeping the identities of the letter writers confidential - in fact, I think that keeping their identities secret is weird, and invites abuses.	Apr 19, 2012 12:14 PM
30	None that I am aware of.	Apr 19, 2012 12:13 PM
31	The principal effect of the current policy of non-confidentiality is to reduce the weight of the letters in the tenure process, and to make external letters less useful for gauging the future success of the candidate, and the significance and quality of his or her scholarship.. If a letter writer knows that the faculty member will see the letter, the writer may not be as open or objective as he or she might be if the letter were confidential. The other perspective is that a strongly negative letter may adversely affect the tenure decision, and the candidate would not be able to counter what could be an overly critical or even vindictive letter if the	Apr 19, 2012 11:48 AM

Page 7, Q9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

	letters are confidential. Of greatest importance, however, is that whatever policy is ultimately chosen is that the policy be clear to all involved in the tenure process, and at every stage, including the initial request to provide an external evaluation.	
32	I haven't gone through T and P at USF. Was tenured at another university and granted tenure when I moved here. At my former university, all letters were confidential. I would say, based on just anecdotal recollection, that the letters at my earlier university were more informative. Here at USF, for each tenure packet I've reviewed, I'd say that at least half the letters have been so anodyne that I haven't found them useful at all.	Apr 19, 2012 11:46 AM
33	It didn't affect my T&P process personally. I am in favor of confidentiality in order to raise the level of T&P considerations to a national standard. Letter writers should be assured that they can speak freely and openly. At the same time, in the case of grievances, the applicant should be able to respond to and/or refute unfair critiques. A transcript of the letters with all personal references removed should serve that purpose	Apr 19, 2012 11:46 AM
34	Many refused to write letters as they were not confidential. Research universities should have confidential letters, and it was a major issue with letter-writers that USF did not have confidentiality.	Apr 19, 2012 11:43 AM
35	The process was overall positive. Benefits: 1. It was good to see who respected your work and who did not. 2. Gave you an idea of who to and who not to suggest as a reviewer of your future research articles. 3. Helped determine if these individuals may be possible collaborators for future projects. Drawbacks: None that come to mind.	Apr 19, 2012 11:43 AM
36	The drawbacks are obvious. Most letter writers will not be fully objective, if at all, knowing that their comments will not be confidential. Therefore, the letters are basically worthless.	Apr 19, 2012 11:40 AM
37	None for me personally, but I was already a Full Professor when reviewed for tenure. External letters under the current system are rarely useful.	Apr 19, 2012 11:35 AM
38	Very uplifting to read positive letters of recommendation	Apr 19, 2012 11:23 AM
39	----	Apr 19, 2012 11:13 AM
40	The practice of non-confidentiality often prevents outstanding reviewers from agreeing to do the reviews. Also, those that do are considerably guarded in their comments, particularly those that are even remotely negative. This detracts significantly from the quality of review.	Apr 19, 2012 11:02 AM
41	I did not go through T&P at USF. At my previous university, however, the absolute secrecy of outside review letters was a reason I left that university. I was encouraged to apply for promotion to full professor and did so. I was turned down by the college, a decision subsequently reversed by the Provost. When I tried to protest the college decision, I learned that I did not have legal standing to do so and could not see any of the materials in my case. Subsequently,	Apr 19, 2012 10:55 AM

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	however, several of the outside reviewers sent me copies of their letters, voluntarily, and they were uniformly and stunningly good. Secrecy breeds abuse and distrust. There is a balance between the credibility of anonymous letters and the helplessness of faculty in the face of total secrecy.	
42	I don't think it mattered in my case, as I was already a senior professor at another institution when I joined USF.	Apr 19, 2012 10:41 AM
43	In traditional academic fields such as mine, external letters add nothing to the evaluation of publications in good journals or books from good presses. Our open practice ought to be spread to those universities that operate in secrecy with regard to the identities of external reviewers. I doubt very much that a "waiver" of contractual rights would stand up to legal challenge.	Apr 19, 2012 10:22 AM
44	major benefit	Apr 19, 2012 10:20 AM
45	I did not have any issues regarding the T & P process and do not think the issue relates to those who clearly have the credentials. I believe that the new policy will assist in getting better information regarding those cases that are borderline and will allow an external expert to have full disclosure regarding the scholarship and credentials of the faculty. This will be or great assistance and the confidentiality needs to be made clear to the external referees for this to work.	Apr 19, 2012 10:19 AM
46	Drawbacks: -- Refusal by external reviewers to review my file. -- Inability to guarantee that external reviewer comments were an objective reflection on my research. Benefits: -- Granting of tenure mainly becomes a department, college and university-level decision, so not being held to externally imposed standards.	Apr 19, 2012 10:14 AM
47	It keeps those on Department Committees honest. In my experience, both as a faculty member, as Associate Chair, and as Chair; as well as co-chair of the CAS T&P Committee, the instances in which department committees' summaries of outside letters has too often been outrageously tendentious and misleading to the detriment of candidates. It is unfortunate, but too often people end up on these committees who are unable to exercise professional judgment and seem to let their personal biases interfere with the process.	Apr 19, 2012 9:49 AM
48	whatever the outcome, it is important that the TP committees be able to read the entire letter and know the authors of those letters.	Apr 19, 2012 9:38 AM
49	The benefit is transparency. External reviewers should be making truthful claims in their letters and the candidate can verify the content of the letters. Also the candidate can be aware of the variety of the letters in terms of tone, what gets addressed (accomplishments, character, behavior, shortcoming), especially in case one or more letters have negative content. The further benefit, not in my case, but surely in cases where tenure is uncertain or denied and some letters are negative and incorrect in some way, is that the candidate can mount a defense. The candidate's career and reputation are on the line. External reviewers should be able to be candid about their claims, but they also should be held accountable if necessary.	Apr 19, 2012 9:20 AM
50	The purpose of external reviews is to gather information. Optimizing the	Apr 19, 2012 9:16 AM

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collection of information presupposes that referees can express their appraisals freely, easily, and clearly. An option to waive confidentiality crimps this freedom, because referees are then more likely to hedge their bets; write in guarded, diplomatic ways; or simply refuse to write a report at all. Plus, USF's current practice falls short of the national (confidential) standard. Richard Manning should chill out!

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| 51 | Although I came to USF as a full professor, I have been very pleased with USF's policies on bargaining committee outcomes. I am very happy with all current arrangements. Thank you. | Apr 19, 2012 9:09 AM |
| 52 | It results in difficulty receiving fully accurate letters from reviewers who have doubts about a candidate's status - many reviewers won't write a critical letter w/o anonymity. Letters for strong candidates are not going to be impacted in any way. | Apr 19, 2012 9:06 AM |
| 53 | A couple of the external reviewers were not happy to have to write under the condition of non-confidentiality, but they agreed to write the letters anyway. In the body of the letters, they stated that it was unusual for them to write a letter which they knew would be visible to me, and I think this may have influenced how they wrote the letter. I benefited personally from the opportunity to read the letters because they gave me guidance in terms of focusing my research agenda. At the same time, I would have preferred that the letter writers were told that the letters would be confidential in terms of the identities of the letter writers, but that the candidate would be able to read the letters' contents with personal identifying information redacted. | Apr 19, 2012 8:51 AM |
| 54 | The process should be as transparent as possible so those who are denied can feel that they were treated fairly. Having secret information creates a climate where people might feel that politics or favoritism were factors in their denial. I am against the practice of asking people to waive their rights, because those waivers are obtained under duress. Someone seeking tenure/promotion will not feel free to refuse. On a practical side, I have written dozens of external reviews. My behavior is not in any way affected by whether I am told the letter is confidential (to the applicant) or not. I write the same letter. For one thing, I know that if tenure is denied and the candidate sues, the letter will come out. Yes, there is a problem that external referees are rarely candid about a candidate's shortcomings, and many exaggerate the quality/impact of the record. This is not because people are afraid the candidate will see the letter, but because most people are reluctant to do something that will adversely affect someone else. This happens on T&P committees and it happens with external reviewers. It is tough to contribute to someone losing their job. | Apr 19, 2012 8:43 AM |
| 55 | Drawback: Potential reviewers are reluctant to write if confidentiality is not guaranteed | Apr 19, 2012 8:38 AM |
| 56 | I came as a full professor, so I cannot speak from personal experience. However, I do many T and P reviews for other universities. I have declined to write when I know the letter is not confidential -- if I cannot write a strong letter. That is, if I believe the applicant's file is very strong, I am happy to write. If it is not, I am more reluctant. As a chair at USF, I believe the same may happen here | Apr 19, 2012 8:27 AM |

Page 7, Q9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

-- it is harder to get people to write letters when they know their letter is open, and they want to write a less-than-stellar evaluation.

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| 57 | Question: Why is the CAS Faculty Council so plainly dragging its feet on this issue? There can be no question that allowing confidentiality (by whatever mechanism we employ) will benefit individual applicants for tenure and promotion, as well as their units and the College at large. If this is disallowed by the CBA, then it is up to Academic Affairs to negotiate this matter with UFF at its next bargaining session! The CAS Faculty Council has no business mediating, here. As a UFF member, I demand that the Faculty Council step aside and allow my duly empowered Union representatives to do their job without unwarranted and ill-conceived interference. | Apr 19, 2012 8:25 AM |
| 58 | From actually adjudicating Tenure and Promotion applications in my department, I believe that too often referees are not sufficiently arms-length acquaintances of the applicant, but actually friends. That sort of use of networks by applicants is not a good practice, and should be discouraged. | Apr 19, 2012 8:24 AM |
| 59 | Candidates have worked extremely hard to obtain tenure and deserve to have access to outside evaluations. Candidates denied tenure should not have to resort to legal means to see the information that influenced the committee's decision. In my opinion, the University is opening itself up to lawsuits if it changes this policy. Why invite more trouble in what already can be a very contentious process? | Apr 19, 2012 8:20 AM |
| 60 | 1) I don't think it affected my reviewers for tenure. As I recall, two of the people initially contacted did not accept: one declined on grounds that he was too far out of field (a very reasonable judgment); the other did not answer within the time frame, and it later turned out that he was away on research leave. Those who accepted (I believe I had five) were from leading universities and were informed of the policy. 2) It was instructive for me to be able to read the letters, both for their appraisal of my work and for what I learned about writing such letters. 3) Speaking from my own experience (I've been an external reviewer for two tenure cases at flagship public universities) and from discussions with colleagues in the field, I suspect that -- with or without confidentiality -- many, even most, potential reviewers would be reluctant to accept an invitation for which they would anticipate having to write an assessment pointing towards denial of tenure. I'm not at all hesitant to write negative or critical reviews of grant applications, journal articles or book manuscripts -- I fully accept that as a vital responsibility of my profession and I recognize that those decisions contribute to professional success or failure. Tenure, however, is different. Not only is there more at stake, but I believe -- and I doubt that I am alone -- that, in today's job market, institutions ought to be able to select the right people and provide an environment for their tenure. I am reluctant to be the outside executioner when there may be internal factors, of which I am unaware, that have placed the candidate in the predicament of facing a denial. 4) Tenure or denial of tenure is a decision of such gravity that I believe that the need for transparency and accountability should be paramount. | Apr 19, 2012 8:16 AM |
| 61 | I think that non-confidentiality diminishes the impact of a very positive letter. My letters were very positive, but had they been submitted under conditions of full | Apr 19, 2012 8:13 AM |

Page 7, Q9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

confidentiality, they would have been taken more seriously. I believe in changing the policy because the top research institutions in the country operate under full confidentiality, and we should too. In addition, I believe that weaker tenure/promotion cases have a greater likelihood of being exposed if letters are fully confidential. That is better for USF, and for all faculty. When weak cases are approved for tenure/promotion, it is bad for the institution.

62	To some extent, some external reviewers in my field soften the tone of their letters a bit because of the public nature of the reviews, but it's still completely clear as to whether they think the applicant has achieved the minimum qualifications. I think the drawback of somewhat more polite letters is far worse than perhaps 40 people on campus knowing the content of secret letters and secret letter writers while the applicant wonders why people are looking at him like a "dead man walking." (I use the term 40 because that would be the approximate number of people in the unit personnel committee, the CAS T and P committee, the CAS dean's office, and the provost's office who would have access to the secret letters.)	Apr 19, 2012 8:10 AM
63	Reviewers fear of legal actions.	Apr 19, 2012 8:09 AM
64	I was tenured and promoted at another institution, but I have experience as a member of the school and college level T&P committees. The current system of non-confidential letters makes it more difficult to find reviewers for tenure and promotion cases. There have been two instances in the last three years where departments had difficulty in finding external reviewers, and the non-confidentiality of the letters was the principal complicating factor. We should change the system as soon as feasible.	Apr 19, 2012 8:08 AM
65	Although my experience with external reviewers was extremely positive, I recently have seen particularly vicious and mean-spirited external letters written that had little to do with the facts. But only folks in the discipline would have been able to detect the politics at work. College Committees, deans, and provosts would have been persuaded without recognizing the politics. If faculty members are going to be attacked, they have a right to know whom they are being attacked by. This right to know only increases as the stakes increase, such as in the case of tenure and promotion. I believe the process of finding external reviewers with stellar reputations who are at rank, in comparable fields and institutions, who DO NOT have relationships with (or stakes in) the tenure/promotion candidate ensures the same kind of neutral objectivity--as much as that is ever possible--as blind reviews. Blind reviewing is fine for publication when people's entire careers are not on the line. But otherwise faculty members have a right to know--after the fact--who said what about their qualifications for tenure/promotion. On the positive side, I personally found it most helpful to later read what my reviewers said about me and my work. The constructive criticism was useful, and the praise was comforting at a very stressful time after a long period of working very hard.	Apr 19, 2012 8:04 AM
66	Currently, letters are understandably vague rather than critical in cases where T and P are not straightforward or should be denied. In the most important cases the letters are almost useless.	Apr 19, 2012 8:00 AM

Page 7, Q9. Reflecting on your own experience of going through the tenure and/or promotion process at USF, what did you perceive to be the major benefits and/or drawbacks for you personally to USF's practice of non-confidentiality with respect to the external review letters?

67	One of my letters contained inaccurate information not related to judgement of my work but whether or not I had contributed to a co-authored work. The other letters were strong. Fortunately the committees and others in the tenure process did not seem to be swayed by the letter with inaccurate information. It was nice to be able to point this out to department members who voted on my tenure. I received unanimous support from department and 'outstanding' at every level. I believe the letter writer either didn't read my file or perhaps had issues with my co-author. This experience makes me very wary of keeping letters away from candidates.	Apr 19, 2012 8:00 AM
68	I think you'll only ever get truthful letters if they're confidential	Apr 19, 2012 7:54 AM
69	n/a; went through tenure/promotion elsewhere where confidentiality procedures were in place	Apr 19, 2012 7:54 AM
70	It gave me the chance to avoid having people chosen who I had conflicts with and also to ensure that the external letter writers were people who had an grasp of my research.	Apr 19, 2012 7:53 AM