

April 8, 2020

To: Dr. Clarendia Phillips, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

From: Promotion and Tenure Task Force

Subject: Task Force Report

In September 2019, Provost Clarendia Phillips assembled the Promotion and Tenure Task Force, i.e., the committee, (chairs - Don Deis and Blair Sterba-Boatwright; members - Xinping Hu, Yolanda Keys, Phyllis Robertson, Sarah Scott, Frank Spaniol, Michael Starek, Mary Thornton, and Robert Wooster) to provide recommendations on ways “to elevate our research profile while maintaining our teaching and service standards” as Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi continues to grow and evolve. The charge also explicitly highlighted the significance of “our standing as a Tier 2 Research University” [the classification system created by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education] and emphasized the importance of clearly communicating expectations for promotion and tenure in light of the policies of comparison institutions.

To meet this charge, the committee met every other week from mid-September 2019-early March 2020, during which time it gradually achieved a consensus. Committee members reviewed the promotion and tenure policies of comparison and aspirational schools (UT-Dallas; UT-El Paso; UT-Arlington; UT-San Antonio; Texas Southern; UT-Rio Grande Valley; Texas State University; Texas A&M-Kingsville, East Carolina, Florida Atlantic, East Tennessee State, Louisiana Tech, Old Dominion, South Alabama, and University of Louisiana-Lafayette), the means by which the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education develops its research classifications, and current and former practices within the University. In late January 2020, the committee also split into sub-groups (Scholarship/Creative Activity, Teaching, and Service) to address specific elements.

General Findings

1. The committee agrees that Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi can and should do more to promote scholarship and creative activity, foster excellence in teaching, and recognize the importance of service. The committee concludes that these goals can be realized through a subtle blend of education, additional resources, and minor revisions in University rules and procedures, as detailed below.
2. A close review of the Carnegie classifications reveals that they are exclusively weighted toward research funding [especially appropriate to the Sciences and Engineering], number of research staff, and number of doctoral degrees awarded, but are of much less relevance to research productivity in business, the arts, humanities, education, nursing, and the social sciences. Although of undoubted symbolic importance and useful in efforts to secure external funding in appropriate areas, they are unsuitable to assessing the research productivity of the entire University.¹

¹ The Carnegie Commission bases its classifications on the following measures: Science & Engineering R&D Expenditures; Non Science & Engineering R&D Expenditures; Science and Engineering Research Staff; Number of Doctorates, Humanities; Number of Doctorates, Social Sciences; Number of Doctorates, STEM; Number

3. The committee finds that the University must devote resources to graduate programs and faculty research—especially in the highly-competitive and grants-dependent fields of science and engineering—in accord with its desire for increased scholarship and creative activity. Detailed recommendations appear below.

4. Recently, the University has undertaken steps to provide department chairs with better training in conducting performance reviews, all of which must be linked to promotion and tenure standards and include specific directions concerning necessary improvements. This is particularly important considering the changed emphasis in the mid-term review policy (Section 4.4 of University Policy 12.01.01.C1). The committee wholeheartedly endorses such efforts and recommends that the success and/or failure of this training be reviewed by senior administrators and faculty leaders following completion of the 2019-20 faculty evaluation cycle and incorporated into department chair feedback.

5. The committee finds and recommends that the University community must do a much better job of following and implementing our existing rules and procedures surrounding annual evaluation, promotion, and tenure. Errors and problems have clearly arisen in many promotion and tenure cases; although some disputes are probably inevitable, closer adherence to written policies at all levels is essential to improving fairness and equity across the University.

6. Colleges and departments must review all faculty policies associated with annual evaluation, tenure, and promotion every five years.

The committee also offers the following responses to the specific questions outlined in the Provost’s September 10, 2019 committee charge:

1. *Are our standards at the level of our benchmark and aspirational peers?*

The Committee finds that our written promotion and tenure guidelines are similar to those of comparison institutions; University-wide standards and language among these are fairly general, leaving specific details to discipline-appropriate guidelines.

2. *Should standards for each area be explicit? For example, the College of Business represents one extreme with a sophisticated system that clearly articulates the value of different types of scholarly contributions. Or should they be more open as in the College of Liberal Arts? If they are more open rather than specific, how would we ensure standards are clearly communicated?*

of Doctorates, Other Fields; Per-capita Science & Engineering R&D Expenditures; Per-capita Non-Science & Engineering R&D Expenditures; and Per-capita Science & Engineering Research Staff. It also explains that “while this approach is suitable for classification purposes, *we do not believe the institution-level results should be used for institution-by-institution comparison and ranking*” [their emphasis]. “Basic Classification: Analysis of Research Activity,” January 19, 2019, The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/downloads/CCIHE2018-Research_Activity_Index.xlsx (see the “ReadMe” segment of the Excel workbook).

The committee concludes that the highly specific TAMUCC College of Business model would not necessarily foster greater research productivity across the University; while perhaps appropriate to the College of Business, anecdotal evidence suggests that this model can be problematic at times. Specifically, faculty on the road to tenure may believe the minimum requirements are sufficient to achieve tenure. Further, requirements too strictly defined can act as a constraint to creativity and research that isn't clearly prescribed. Research and creative work is not to be undertaken to achieve tenure alone. This work is meant to actually be creative and valuable to the various disciplines.

Nonetheless, the University must, at all levels, do a much better job of developing and communicating expectations for annual evaluation, promotion and tenure, particularly at the department level. At present, some departments seem to have no such policies, and others seem to make little or no effort to follow them. To achieve greater clarity, the committee recommends:

- a. TAMUCC rule 33.99.04.C0.02 (Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Members; sections 3.6 and 3.7) be changed to require that each department (or, when appropriate, area faculty) develop written criteria for promotion and tenure in the areas of teaching, scholarship and creative activity, and service. These criteria should establish a minimum standard which must be met to apply for promotion and tenure, but do not guarantee a successful application. These department-level guidelines must be in accord with University and college rules and procedures and must be consistent with the missions of the department, college, and University. These published guidelines must also be readily accessible and be adhered to throughout the promotion and tenure process. Differences in judgment and interpretation are inevitable. However, when faculty P&T committees ignore policies, mandatory training should result. Further, administrators who violate policies, or permit violations of policy through inattention, should be held accountable and see mention of this in their annual evaluations.
- b. Existing rules (Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty, sections 6.3 and 7.4) require that each college dean meet with department and college promotion and tenure committees every year, during which time the dean “shall review college policies and University rules and procedures related to promotion with the committee.” The committee recommends that, in the absence of some unusual exigency, the dean (rather than their designee) appear at each of these meetings, and that the dean be additionally charged with providing each member a copy of University, college, and department policies regarding promotion and tenure.
- c. This University rule also requires (section 5.2) that the dean’s office be responsible for overseeing the portfolios of each applicant. The committee recommends that each college develop a system (such as a routing or sign-in/sign-out sheet) designed to document that all appropriate faculty review the portfolio of every candidate and that department chairs place high priority on such service throughout the annual evaluation process.
- d. Many universities include provisions for external reviews of promotion and tenure candidates. The committee recommends that external letters be required for faculty affiliated

with doctoral programs; in other programs, each department (or area) should assess the appropriateness of such a requirement and, if desired, incorporate it into their guidelines in a timely fashion.

e. TAMUCC rule 33.99.C0.02 (Performance Reviews of Full-Time Faculty Members) must be clarified to include a provision directing annual evaluations to include a statement regarding the faculty member's progression toward promotion, tenure, and/or post-tenure reviews.

f. Much confusion arises over the percentages of faculty workloads (teaching/scholarship and creative activity/service) across the University. The diverse goals and expectations of each discipline, department, and college mean that the weight accorded teaching, scholarship and creative activity, and service will often vary. Indeed, such percentages may even change over time for an individual faculty member. In every case, however, the workload for each faculty member for the next year must be clearly stated as a part of their annual evaluation (section 4.3 of University Policy 12.03.99.C1.01), and a summary of their workloads included in their portfolio and considered at every stage of the promotion and tenure process.

g. The committee recommends that the college review process in University Policy 33.99.04.C0.02, be modified in parallel to the department review process, so that the college committee contains only members at or above the rank of the candidates under consideration.

h. The committee recommends that abstentions in the department and college committee votes be counted as negative votes.

i. The committee recommends that any associate professor or professional associate professor who are candidates for promotion not be permitted to serve on review committees for that year.

3. *As we contemplate our University goal to increase research expenditures, should expectations of funding be explicit in academic units where funding is a reasonable expectation?*

Such considerations, if they have not been, should be explicitly stated in guidelines developed by departments and colleges where external funding is required for research success. In other areas and disciplines, such funding should be recognized, encouraged and rewarded, but not required.

4. *As an institution we value interdisciplinary work. Do the standards create the flexibility for faculty to engage and be recognized for successful interdisciplinary collaborations?*

The committee recommends a close review of University, college, and department policies to ensure that they explicitly encourage and reward appropriate interdisciplinary scholarship and creative activity, particularly that involving external research and

development grants. However, interdisciplinary scholarship and creative activity should not supersede expectations of an independent research program for faculty.

5. *Our students' success is at the core of what we do as an institution. We all understand that teaching evaluations are just one form of evaluation of teaching quality. How will we meaningfully measure quality of teaching?*

To encourage and promote better teaching, the committee recommends:

- a. Tenured faculty conduct mandatory peer evaluation (through at least one face-to-face class observation or online course evaluation as well as one meeting to discuss syllabi/class goals) of tenure-track faculty on an annual basis. The department chair should conduct this evaluation at least once in the pre-tenure period, and at least once after tenure is granted between promotions and post-tenure reviews. Evidence of such evaluations must be included in the candidate's portfolio.
- b. University, college, and departmental guidelines should be expanded to include better measures of teaching effectiveness in on-line courses.
- c. As noted above [2(a)], department-level guidelines should be expanded to include expectations regarding teaching.
- d. As per existing policy in every college, the committee reminds faculty and administration that student evaluations can be meaningful, but must be considered in conjunction with other factors in all assessments of teaching.

6. *For departments with doctoral programs, how do we document expectations around faculty advising doctoral students? Are there minimum expectations for engaging with graduate students, particularly for promotion to the rank of full professor?*

The committee recommends that faculty involved in doctoral programs have appropriate workloads. For example, in COSE, faculty deemed "doctoral faculty" receive a 2-1 teaching load, but are held accountable for recruiting doctoral students and for the progress of those students towards well-defined benchmarks, as well as obtaining extramural funding to support their research and students. The substantial time invested in supervising doctoral students should be reflected in faculty workloads. While stipends may be appropriate in some instances, it is imperative that doctoral faculty have teaching loads commensurate with their increased expectations in scholarly productivity and supervision of doctoral students.

Along with this, the committee recommends that doctoral programs review their faculty's activity on a regular basis (3-5 year cycle) to ensure active participation (teaching program courses, taking part in program meetings and service initiatives, such as admissions voting, and advising students). If neither of the above activities are ongoing during the past 3-5 years, appropriate steps need to be taken by their respective departments to adjust workload accordingly.

7. *We all recognize the importance of service to ensuring our University runs well. It is important that as faculty progress from assistant to the associate rank that they begin to take on meaningful service activities. Are we clear about valuing leadership in service and setting an expectation that a major service role has been completed prior to promotion to the rank of full professor, if appropriate?*

The committee finds that existing University policies are clear, but as noted above, service expectations should be more explicitly addressed at the department level. The committee recommends:

- a. Each department (or area faculty) explicitly lists the minimum service expectations for each rank. The weight of service on workload documents should reflect any increase in service expectations at the higher ranks.
- b. Each department (or area faculty) provides example lists of acceptable service activities within each of the categories recognized by the University.
- c. Each department (or area faculty) articulates the importance of demonstrating leadership in service and fulfilling a major service role prior to promotion to the rank of full professor. University policies do not imply that each candidate be required to fulfill a major service role in each of the service categories recognized by the University.
- d. To better highlight the importance of service on department and college promotion, tenure, post-tenure, and third-year review committees, the committee recommends that such efforts be more explicitly recognized during the annual evaluation process.
- e. Service commitments for faculty on nine-month contracts should not be required outside of the contract period. Stipends or other compensation should be required in instances that require an exception.

8) *What will be needed to support our faculty in meeting a higher standard?*

Lacking guidance from the University, the committee recommends that departments define and eventually redefine what constitutes a “higher standard” in research and creative activity. The committee encourages departments to have the sort of difficult conversations required to define and measure this higher standard. The standard should be consistent with the level of support available to faculty in the department.

To support faculty scholarship and creative activity, the committee recommends:

- a. Resources must be made available to sufficiently advertise and interview for tenure-track positions.
- b. New tenure-track faculty must be hired in accord with the University’s increased emphasis on scholarship and creative activity. In addition, professional/clinical faculty should not be shifted to tenure-track lines without agreement by department faculty similar to what would be expected for a new tenure-track position. Ideally, a new search should take place.
- c. When new tenure-track faculty are hired,
 - i. Policies on annual performance evaluation, promotion, and tenure expectations should be made explicit with appropriate workloads assigned for teaching, scholarship and creative activity and service to support their success.

- ii. Steps must be taken to ensure that the University can provide the essential infrastructure for their research. This includes research facilities and prompt access to startup funds. As research expectations in different disciplines increase, startup should increase accordingly to be competitive with other universities.
- iii. Tenure-track faculty in all colleges must have access to well-trained and competent administrative support staff in order to relieve the administrative burden of conducting funded research. A lack of post-award administrative support serves as a substantial distraction from actually doing the work for which the grant was awarded.
- d. Competitive graduate student compensation packages, including tuition and fees, should be available to enhance recruiting and retention of well qualified masters and doctoral students.
- e. Increased opportunities for professional development devoted to building research capacity. This includes training opportunities for both research faculty and research administrators. This is particularly important for associate and full professors needing to fulfill revised expectations.
- f. Increased funding for faculty travel to professional conferences.
- g. Increased funding for University, college, and department research enhancement awards beyond the level provided by state appropriations.
- h. Additional incentives for excellence based on what is already available. (cf. Presidential Impact Fellowship offered by TAMU)
<https://today.tamu.edu/2019/11/05/texas-am-announces-2019-presidential-impact-fellows-edges-fellows/>

The Promotion and Tenure Task Force appreciates the opportunity to provide input into this important process and welcomes any questions or feedback regarding clarification of the recommendations provided.