
A REVIEW OF THE TENURE PROCESS AT WPI

CTAF Meeting with Probationary Faculty

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Overview



- Purpose
- Process
- Tenure Criteria
- People
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Open Question and Answer

Purpose



- **Formally** (Faculty Handbook sec. 2)
 - “Academic freedom is essential to both teaching and research.”
 - “As a consequence of the primary obligation of members of the academic community to pursue truth, the tenure concept has evolved for the protection of individuals from internal and external community pressures.”
- **Informally**
 - Granting of tenure represents a significant long term commitment to candidate as a member of WPI community
 - Intent of process: Based on qualities demonstrated by candidate during probationary period, **maximize probability that decision for or against tenure is in best interests of WPI and candidate**

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Vocabulary



- Department Tenure Committee (DTC)
- Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF)
- Joint Tenure Committee (JTC)

$$\text{JTC} = \text{CTAF} + \text{DTC}$$

$$8 = 5 + 3$$

Process (Preview)



(Faculty Handbook sec. 2)

- **Complete Background Study**
 - Information from candidate, colleagues, students, alumni, and professional peers.
- **Confidentiality**
 - Protect welfare of candidate, colleagues, reviewers
- **Unitary Recommendation**
 - No class system of tenure
- **Shared authority**
 - Faculty (JTC), Administration (Provost), Board of Trustees.

Process (Preview)



- **Initial appointment**
 - Letter from Provost indicates timetable for final tenure review by joint tenure committee (JTC)
 - Usually in 6th year, documents submitted end of year 5
 - May be adjusted subject to negotiations with Provost
- **Annual reviews**
 - Conducted at department level (DTC)
 - May result in terminal appointment before JTC review
- **In spring (by June 1st) prior to final tenure review year**
 - Candidate submits material for dossier
- **Material received prior to A term**
 - Letters received from external reviewers, professional associates
 - Alumni and student evaluations collected

Process (Preview)



- **JTC meeting: A term**
 - Extensive discussion of dossier
 - Identify strengths and weaknesses relative to tenure criteria
- **A-B break**
 - Candidate asked to submit dossier updates
 - Department faculty interviews conducted by 2 DTC members
- **JTC meeting: B term**
 - Review new materials (interviews, projects, letters)
 - Continue discussion of dossier
 - Vote if ready
 - Unitary recommendation communicated to Provost
- **Provost may consult with President, Dean**
 - May consult with JTC, must consult with JTC if disagreement
- **Provost communicates recommendations to Trustees**
 - Current practice is that Provost communicates final decision to candidate after the Trustees meeting

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The WPI Tenure Criteria



Approved by the Faculty on October 13, 1988.

Amended by the Faculty on March 24, 2011

From the Faculty Handbook, Section-2, Page-4:

- 1. High quality teaching**, undergraduate and/or graduate is an essential (but not sufficient) requirement for obtaining tenure at WPI.....
- 2. High quality scholarship** is an essential (but not sufficient) requirement for obtaining tenure at WPI.....
- 3. Service** is valued and considered in the tenure deliberations at WPI....

At WPI, a candidate cannot compensate for being bad in one area by being great in one area.

Teaching



- The candidate's activities should demonstrate the capacity for continued high quality performance.
- High quality **teaching** can be evidenced in many ways, including (but not limited to):
 - course evaluations
 - faculty peer evaluations
 - evaluations by alumni
 - the quality of the Major Qualifying Projects, Interactive Qualifying Projects, and the Humanities Inquiry Seminar or Practicum
 - freshman advising, academic advising and graduate theses advised by the candidate
 - teaching innovations
 - new course introductions
 - redesign of existing courses.

Scholarship



- The candidate's activities should demonstrate the capacity for continued high quality performance.
- High quality **scholarship** can be evidenced in many ways, including (but not limited to):
 - peer-reviewed publications such as journal articles, conference papers, and/or book chapters
 - books
 - exhibitions and performances
 - professional awards
 - citations in the professional literature
 - presentations at professional meetings
 - grant proposals and grants awarded
 - offices held in professional societies
 - journal editorships
 - reviews of papers and proposals
 - patents

Service



- **Service** can be evidenced in many ways, including (but not limited to):
 - service to WPI (faculty governance and ad-hoc committees, assistance to administrative offices)
 - service to the candidate's department (curriculum committees, MQP area coordinators, faculty recruitment, seminar series participation and coordination)
 - service to the local community (board and committee membership in social service and cultural institutions, local government participation)
 - service to the profession (participation in national and international committees and panels, in local chapters of professional societies, in conference organizations)

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2019-20 CTAF Members



- Aaron Deskins (CHE, 2021) (Chair)
- Jennifer Rudolph (HUA, 2021)
- Jim Doyle (SSPS, 2022)
- Lauren Mathews (BBT, 2022)
- Sarah Olson (MA, 2023)
- Mark Claypool (CS, 2023)

CTAF, Continued



- Normal CTAF term is 4 years
- No member may serve successive terms
- No department is represented twice
- Not eligible: Department Heads, Provost, Deans
- One member is recused from each case
- CTAF members review all cases except when recused

Dept Tenure Committees (DTCs)



- Department Chair + 2 elected from tenured dept. faculty
- 2 year terms (1 new member elected each year)
- Can not be CTAF members

Conduct Annual Candidate Reviews:

Guidance for teaching, scholarship, service

Review of items required by the JTC

Develop The List of External Reviewers

Professionals in the candidate's field

Interview Tenure/tenure track Department Members

Responses reported anonymously

Act as full members of the JTC during the tenure review process

Candidate Information



In the year you come up for tenure, you will provide

- **List of Professional Associates**
- **CV** (CTAF provides a recommended format to facilitate our review)
- **Personal Statement** (Not to exceed 5 pages)
- **3 Selected Publications**
- **Citation Index** (for all your publications)
- **Additional Materials** (as you wish)

Stopping Your Tenure Clock



- See Faculty Handbook, Section-2, Page-3.
- Clock can be stopped for up to 2 years.
- For situations including, but not limited to:
 - child bearing
 - child rearing
 - personal or family member's health
- Must notify/ negotiate with the Provost.

Tenure Appeals Process



WPI's Faculty Review Committee:

- If denied tenure, a candidate can notify the WPI Faculty Review Committee (FRC).
- FRC members are provided with the same materials as the JTC, plus the JTC recommendation letter.
- Examples for re-consideration:
 - Improper procedure
 - Violation of academic freedom
 - Discrimination
- The FRC does not discuss any merits of the case.
- If candidate receives a positive FRC vote, the dossier and other materials are sealed (no new additions), and the same materials will be reviewed by a new JTC the following year.

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