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)

\[ JTC = CTAF + DTC \]

\[ 8 = 5 + 3 \]
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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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
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.
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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