An Overview of the Tenure Process at WPI

Meeting with Probationary Tenure-Track Faculty

Lauren Mathews, Chair
Mark Claypool, Chair-Elect
Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF)
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“CTAF is in charge of the process by which tenure recommendations are reached for each probationary member of the tenure track Faculty.”

-- WPI Faculty Handbook*

- A faculty governance committee comprising 6 members from among the tenured faculty
- Members are elected by the faculty to 4 year terms
- No department is represented twice
- Administrators and department heads are ineligible

*https://www.wpi.edu/sites/default/files/faculty-governance/Faculty_Handbook.pdf
Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF): current membership

Lauren Mathews (BBT) Chair
Mark Claypool (CS) Secretary
Constance Clark (HUA)
Kris Wobbe (CBC)
Nima Rahbar (CE)
Jim Doyle (SSPS)
Goals for Today’s Session

• Remove at least some of the uncertainty about the tenure process at WPI
• Update on CTAF’s process for providing guidance to teaching track faculty
• Help you to understand what aspects of the process are within your control
• Point you towards helpful resources
• Try to answer any questions or concerns
The Primary Purpose of Tenure is to Protect Academic Freedom

• “Faculty Members are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of other academic duties.”

• “Faculty Members are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subjects and evaluating their students . . .”

• “During their probationary period, untenured Members of the Faculty have the same academic freedom enjoyed by tenured faculty members.”

--WPI Faculty Handbook
The Tenure Clock (pre-Covid)

Your tenure review year:
• Is your 6th year, unless you received credit for previous TT experience.
• May be adjusted with Provost approval, but minimum of 2 years at WPI for probationary appointments

Stopping the tenure clock
• New child provision: birth or adoption of a new child allows probationary faculty member to stop the clock for 1 year by submitting written notification to the provost, with limits on when the notice must be submitted
• Unpaid leaves/reduction to part time for at least 6 months/12 months, with terms & conditions of leave negotiated with provost
• Does not affect the standard of evaluation at final tenure review.

Early Tenure
• Is possible, but the standards are higher, requiring some “special or significant contribution”.
• The tenure decision may be tabled.
The Tenure Clock (current, for faculty starting AY21/22 or earlier)

Your tenure review year:
• Is your stated tenure year +1 (for most faculty, this will be their 7th year).
• The one-year clock extension because of Covid impacts applies to all tenure-track faculty by default, unless and until you opt out.

To opt out . . .
• Notify Deb Graves in the Provost’s Office and cc your DH, Dean, and the Provost.
• You should discuss your options with your Department Tenure Committee, but it’s your choice, you don’t need anyone’s approval.
# The Tenure Clock (current)

## Opt-out deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year at WPI</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting Year</td>
<td>16/17</td>
<td>17/18</td>
<td>18/19</td>
<td>19/20</td>
<td>20/21</td>
<td>21/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Tenure Year</td>
<td>21/22</td>
<td>22/23</td>
<td>23/24</td>
<td>24/25</td>
<td>25/26</td>
<td>26/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Tenure Year (with COVID extension)</td>
<td>22/23</td>
<td>23/24</td>
<td>24/25</td>
<td>25/26</td>
<td>26/27</td>
<td>27/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opt out deadline</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5/4/21</td>
<td>5/2/22</td>
<td>5/1/23</td>
<td>5/1/24</td>
<td>5/1/25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table assumes a candidate hired with the standard tenure clock that has had no clock stoppages other than due to the COVID pandemic.
The Tenure Process

Departmental Tenure Committee
• Department Chair + 2 elected, tenured faculty in the department
• Elected faculty serve 2 years (so membership will change during your probationary period)
• Conduct annual reviews, provide guidance re: progress toward tenure w.r.t. teaching, scholarship, and service
• Summarize the review in writing, confidentially
• The DTC becomes part of the joint tenure committee (with CTAF) for final tenure review
• Can recommend a terminal appointment
The Tenure Process

The annual DTC review is required, but you can, and should, seek additional guidance.

1. Widen your scope:
   • Seek mentors from within and outside your department, even outside WPI
   • Foster relationships with faculty outside your department that you are closely affiliated with (e.g., program colleagues)
   • Work with your cohort of probationary faculty

2. Don’t wait for annual reviews
   • Ask questions or voice concerns as they come up, don’t wait for an annual review
   • Seek information both from DTC and from CTAF at any time!
The Tenure Process

Other resources available at your convenience:

• CTAF Canvas site
  • information that explains the tenure/promotion process
  • to enroll, use https://canvas.wpi.edu/enroll/X4HR8P or contact a member of CTAF

• Morgan Center for Teaching & Learning (and the associated Canvas site)
  -especially useful for developing teaching & mentoring approaches and documenting effectiveness
Tenure Criteria: Dual Mission

**High quality teaching**, undergraduate and/or graduate, is an essential but not sufficient requirement for obtaining tenure.

**High quality scholarship** is an essential but not sufficient requirement for obtaining tenure.

**Service** is valued and considered in tenure deliberations.

--Approved by the Faculty, 1988; amended, 2011.
Tenure Criteria: Teaching Path

Excellent undergraduate and/or graduate teaching is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for obtaining tenure as a Professor of Teaching at WPI

- Teaching practice is excellent when it is of *high quality* and has *significant impact* on WPI students and curriculum.

Continuing professional growth and currency is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for obtaining tenure as a Teaching Professor at WPI

- Professional growth refers to developing knowledge, acquiring skills, and/or accumulating experiences that enhance WPI’s educational mission and visibility
- Currency refers to making intellectual contributions to and remaining active in professional communities both within and beyond WPI

Service is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for obtaining tenure as a Professor of Teaching at WPI

--Approved by the Faculty, 2021
Teaching

• Both dual-mission and teaching track candidates will prepare and submit a teaching portfolio
• Detailed guidance on how to demonstrate high-quality teaching is available on the CTAF Canvas site (“CTAF Guidance for Demonstrating High Quality Teaching”)
• CTAF is currently working to develop similar materials for teaching track faculty members
  • there will be broad overlap with advice for dual-mission faculty
  • additional guidance on demonstrating “significant impact”
Scholarship: dual mission candidates

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 (in journals and conference proceedings, depending on discipline)
- books, authored or edited
- exhibitions and performances
- professional awards
- citations in the professional literature
- presentations at professional meetings
- grant proposals and awards
- journal editorships
- reviews of papers and proposals
- patents
Professional growth & currency: teaching track candidates

• Candidates are “expected to submit materials that best demonstrate their commitment to and the impact of their continuing professional growth and currency, including how it enhances the effectiveness of the candidate’s teaching and/or furthers a general understanding of effective teaching practices”

• CTAF is actively engaged in developing materials & outreach to this group to provide guidance on how to document professional growth & currency, which may include:
  • Archived guidance documents available on Canvas site
  • Additional sessions with teaching-track probationary faculty
  • Outreach to DHs/DTCs
  • Drafting of letters to external reviewers
Service can be evidenced in many ways including, but not limited to:

- Service to WPI (e.g., faculty governance, *ad hoc* committees, administrative offices)
- Service to the department (e.g., curriculum committees, MQP coordinators, faculty recruitment)
- Service to the local community (e.g., board or committee memberships in social service, cultural, government institutions)
- Service to the professions (e.g., participation in local, national, international committees and panels, peer reviews, conference organization)

**NOTE** difference in language:

- For dual mission faculty, service is “valued”
- For teaching track faculty, service is “necessary”
Standard tenure timeline

Annual reviews with DTC in years 1-5

**Candidate submits tenure dossier in June of year 5**

JTC and faculty governance coordinator compile letters from external reviewers & professional associates in summer after year 5

**JTC meets to discuss case in A-term of year 6**

Candidate submits updates to tenure dossier by B-term of year 6

Provost reviews the case and decides whether to award tenure

DTC members interview candidate’s departmental colleagues

JTC meets in B-term of year 6 and votes to recommend/not recommend tenure & promotion

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Trustees vote on all tenure decisions at winter meeting

Decisions are communicated in writing to candidates

Candidate submits updates to tenure dossier by B-term of year 6
Components of the tenure dossier for dual-mission faculty:

• The candidate compiles a dossier by June 1 prior to their tenure year, including but not limited to:
  • CV (in CTAF format)
  • Sample publications (usually three, sometimes permission for 4)
  • 6-page statement of accomplishments and future plans
  • List of professional associates
  • Citation report
  • Journal quality report
  • Teaching portfolio (see guidance document on CTAF Canvas site)

Other components compiled by JTC/faculty governance coordinator: letters from external reviewers & professional associates, official student course reports (minus comments sections), survey responses from alumni, summaries of interviews with departmental colleagues
Components of the tenure dossier for teaching track faculty:

- CTAF is actively engaged in developing guidance on specific materials requested as part of the dossier
- The candidate compiles a dossier by June 1 prior to their tenure year, which will PROBABLY include:
  - CV (in CTAF format)
  - 6-page statement of accomplishments and future plans
  - List of professional associates
  - Teaching portfolio (see guidance document on CTAF Canvas site)
  - Other materials TBD

Other components compiled by JTC/faculty governance coordinator: letters from external reviewers & professional associates, official student course reports (minus comments sections), survey responses from alumni, summaries of interviews with departmental colleagues
Components of the tenure dossier

A COVID Impact Statement (see guidance document on CTAF Canvas site):
• Up to 2 pages on how COVID impacted or disrupted accomplishments and future plans in scholarship, teaching, and/or service
• What you include or do not include in this statement is entirely up to you; it can be very brief, or it can be very detailed
• Will be sent to external reviewers
By June 1 the DTC chooses 5-8 external reviewers
• These are senior, external scholars with expertise in your research area
• May not be research collaborators
• Are often researchers whose work you cite or who cite your work
• You’ll never know who they were
• Make sure people in your field are aware of your work!
• External reviewers receive WPI’s tenure criteria and instructions, your CV, candidate statements, sample publications, and citation report
• **CTAF working on guidance to DTCs on how to select external reviewers for teaching track candidates!
Formation & actions of the JTC

• A Joint Tenure Committee of 8 Faculty is formed from the 3-person DTC and 5 CTAF members to review the case.
  • Departmental colleagues who are on CTAF are automatically recused
  • Any CTAF or DTC member with a conflict of interest is recused
  • Candidates with program affiliations/strong interdisciplinarity can petition the CTAF chair to be permitted a 4-member “DTC”
• JTC vote:
  • All votes are strictly confidential
  • A majority of 5 affirmatives to support tenure, 4 negatives to deny tenure (vote count stops when either threshold is reached)
  • All cases result in just a recommendation for or against tenure to the provost; provost does not know vote count or hear dissenting opinions
Questions?