

# **An Overview of the Tenure Process at WPI**

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## **Meeting with Probationary Tenure-Track Faculty**

**Lauren Mathews, Chair**

**Mark Claypool, Chair-Elect**

**Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF)**

# 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](https://www.wpi.edu/sites/default/files/faculty-governance/Faculty_Handbook.pdf)

# Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (CTAF): current membership

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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

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- 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

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- “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)

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## **Your tenure review year:**

- Is your 6<sup>th</sup> 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)

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## Your tenure review year:

- Is your **stated tenure year +1** (for most faculty, this will be their 7<sup>th</sup> 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

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

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

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## **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

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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

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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

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**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

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**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

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- 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

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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

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- 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

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**Service** can be evidenced in many ways including, but not limited to:

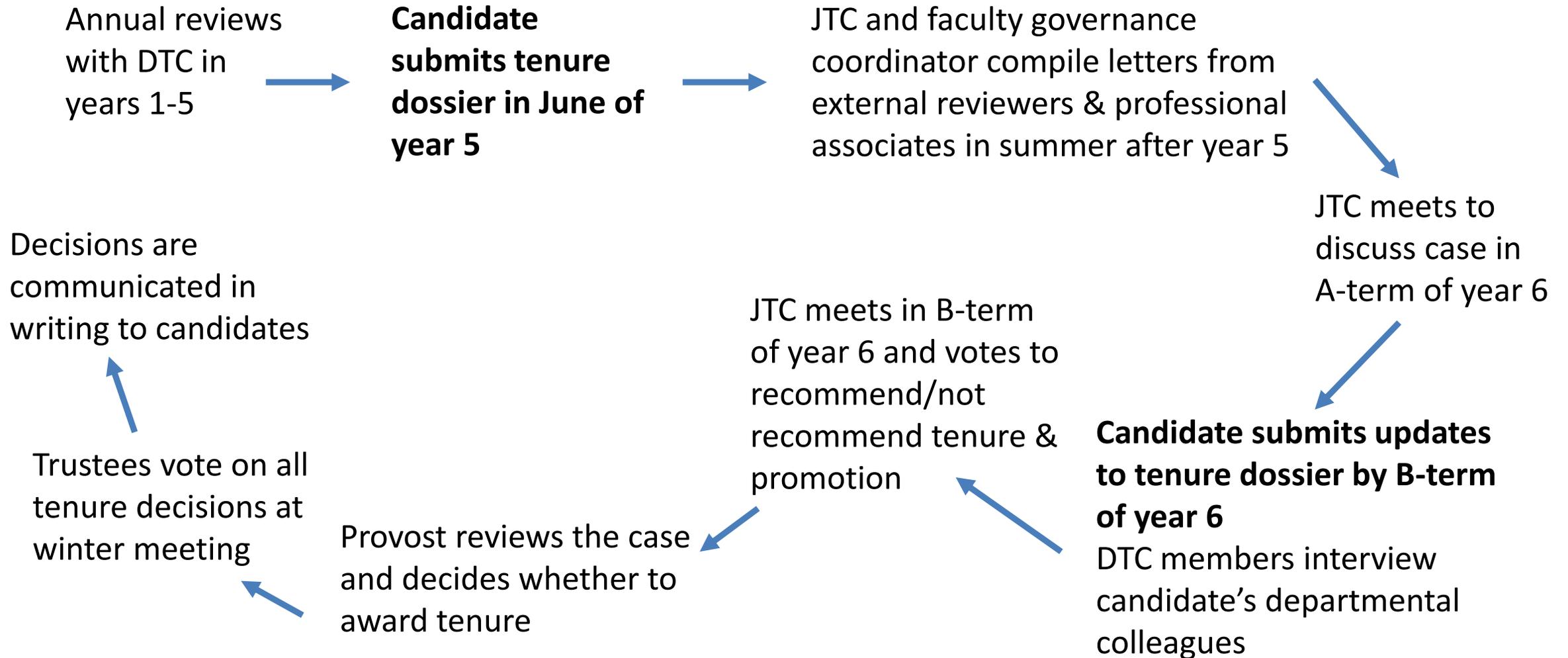
- Service to WPI (e.g., faculty governance, *ad hoc* committees, administrative offices)
- Service to the department (e.g., curriculum committees, MQP coordinators, faculty recruitment)
- Service to the local community (e.g., board or committee memberships in social service, cultural, government institutions)
- 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

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# Components of the tenure dossier for dual-mission faculty:

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- 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:

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- 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

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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

# External reviews

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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

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- 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?

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