A REVIEW OF THE TENURE PROCESS AT WPI

CTAF Meeting with Probationary Faculty

Len Albano, CTAF Chair
Bill Farr, CTAF Chair-Elect

April 29, 2015
Overview

• Purpose
• Tenure Criteria
• People
• Process
• 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
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, Administration, Board of Trustees.
• Initial appointment
  – Letter from Provost indicates timetable for final tenure review by joint tenure committee (JTC)
  – Usually in 6th year
  – May be adjusted subject to negotiations with Provost
• Annual reviews
  – Conducted at department level
  – May result in terminal appointment before JTC review
• In spring prior to final tenure review year
  – Candidate submits material for dossier
  – 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
  – Continue discussion of dossier
  – Vote if ready
  – Unitary recommendation communicated to Provost
• Provost consults with President, Dean (if A&S or Engineering dept.)
  – May consult with JTC; must consult with JTC if disagreement
• Provost communicates positive recommendations to Trustees normally at the February Trustee 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.
• 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 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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2014-15 CTAF Members

- Len Albano (CEE, 2015, Chair)
- Bill Farr (MA, 2016, Chair-Elect)
- Carolina Ruiz (CS, 2017)
- Constance Clark (HU, 2017)
- Jill Rulfs (BB, 2018)
- Marsha Rolle (BME, 2019)
- Alex Wyglinski (ECE, 2019)
CTAF, Continued

- Normal CTAF term is 4 years
- No member may serve successive terms
- No dept is represented twice
- Not eligible: Dept Heads, Provost, Deans
Dept Tenure Committees (DTCs)

- Dept Head + 2 elected tenured faculty
- 2 year terms
- 1 new member elected each year
- Normally no member serves 2 consecutive terms, unless there is a limited number of tenured faculty in your dept.
- Can **not** be CTAF members
Committee Acronyms

• CTAF …………….. (6)
  Elected from tenured WPI faculty; nominated by all T/TT faculty.

• At-Large CTAF …. (5 = 6 - 1)
  One recusal per case. Recusals due to same dept as candidate, or random.

• DTC ……………… (3 = 2 + 1)
  Dept Head + 2 elected tenured faculty.

• JTC ……………….. (8 = 5 + 3)
  Considers a specific case. Membership is different for each candidate.
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  – DTC
  – Candidate
  – CTAF
  – JTC
  – Provost
• Frequently Asked Questions
• Open Question and Answer
• **Annual Candidate Reviews:**
  – **Frequency:**
    • Annually
    • If candidate is away from campus, perform as soon as possible upon return.
  – **Recommended Content of the Review:**
    • DTC guidance for teaching, scholarship, service
    • Forewarn of all items required by the JTC
  – **Written Acknowledgement Review Was Performed:**
    • Letter signed by all 3 DTC members
    • No information on review content
    • To Penny, by May 1st
    • CTAF validates the DTC reviews have been performed
  – **Other Dept Reviews:**
    • Some departments conduct other candidate reviews on their own (e.g. teaching, etc.), but these are separate from the tenure reviews which focus specifically on the tenure criteria.
• **The List of External Reviewers:**

  – **Initial Preparation of the List:**
    • Performed by the 2 elected DTC members (without the Dept Head). The DH can help, but does not take the lead. Potential conflict of interest if DH also hired the candidate.
    • We aim for about 9-10 names on the list, and hope for 7-8 responses.
    • Excluded from the list: Any member of the JTC
    • Candidate Contribution?
      – Does not normally suggest names for the list
      – Can provide conflict of interest names to be considered by JTC
  – **Money to Reviewers?**
    • CTAF has never paid money to a reviewer, even when conventional for a discipline.
    • Some departments do this on their own accompanied by a disclaimer letter.
  – **Deadline for Receipt of the List to CTAF:**
    • Preliminary list by late May/early June for JTC review of strategy.
  – **Review of the Final List:**
    • By the candidate’s JTC in the late May/early June meeting. “After consulting with colleagues on campus, the JTC develops a list of outside references to evaluate the candidate…..”
    • Final list to Penny early June
DTC Duties

• **DTC Department Interviews (for the B-term Meeting):**
  – **When?**
    • Between 1st and 2nd JTC meetings.
  – **Performed By Whom:**
    • Both elected DTC members (without the DH).
  – **Interview Whom?**
    • All available tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the dept.
    • If candidate has interdisciplinary appointment, relevant tenured and tenure-track faculty from outside department included
    • If a dept member is away on sabbatical or at a project center, interview can be by conference call, so long as both DTC members are present, or by email
    • If an interview can not be performed, state in your summary how many tenured and tenure-track dept members there are, and how many interviews were performed
  – **Written Transcript:**
    • Provide a written “verbatim” transcript to JTC for the 2nd meeting in B-term
    • Refer to Professor A, B, C, etc.
In the year you come up for tenure, you will provide to Penny by early June:

- **Final List of Professional Associates** (Penny will ask for about 5-8 names, but you can provide more. Can not include any JTC member) (Preliminary list to your DTC April or early May)

- **CV** (CTAF provides a recommended format to facilitate our review)

- **Personal Statement** (Not to exceed 5 pages)

- **6 Copies of 3 Selected Publications** (this can be expanded by petition to CTAF)

- **Citation Index** (if applicable, for all publications)

- **Additional Materials** (as you wish)
Professional Associates are colleagues (at WPI or elsewhere) who can provide insights on your accomplishments with respect to teaching, scholarship, and service. You are encouraged to identify individuals who know you and are familiar with work.
Candidate Information

Late June: Who Sends What to Whom?
• Penny sends cover letters, tenure criteria, and dossier to the External Reviewers.
• Penny sends cover letter and tenure criteria to the Professional Associates.
• Candidate sends dossier and any additional material you wish to the Professional Associates.
• Penny sends surveys to randomly chosen classroom and project alumni (not current students).

Your Final Materials for Review Will Contain:
• Material Provided by Candidate: CV, Personal Statement, citation information, copies of selected reprints
• Material Provided by Penny: tally sheets of numerical results from alumni surveys, alumni comments from open-ended part of survey, course evaluation summary sheets
• Letters received from External Reviewers and Professional Associates
• From your dept: verbatim notes from the DTC interviews of all tenured and tenure-track faculty in your department, and an introductory letter from department head
• Selected IQPs, MQPs, theses and/or dissertations
**Approximate CTAF Schedule**

- **March or Early April: Elections**
  - COG elections of new CTAF members.
  - Dept elections of new DTC members.

- **Late March or Early April: Candidate Letter**
  - Sent by Penny
  - List of materials to be sent to her by early June
    - List of Professional Associates: 5-8 names, can not include any JTC member.
    - CV (in suggested format).
    - Personal Statement not to exceed 5 pages.
    - 6 copies of 3 selected publications.
    - Citation index of all their publications, if applicable.
    - Yes the candidate may provide additional materials.
• **Also Mid-Late April:**
  – CTAF reviews any **conflict of interests** for CTAF members and determines member **recusals**
    • A CTAF member from the same dept as a candidate is automatically recused from that case
    • If none exists the recusals are done “in turn”
  – The **JTC membership** is determined for each case to be considered.
    • Includes new incoming DTC members
    • Includes new incoming CTAF members
  – Sends letters to Department Heads
  – Schedules the early June JTC meetings.
Conflicts of Interest

**POTENTIAL REASONS FOR A CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

- Familial relations, including past and/or present relationships created by marriage (e.g. in-laws)
- Past and/or present amorous relationships, other than marriages
- Past and/or present business relationships
- Past and/or present cases involving litigation
- Individuals named in past and/or present academic freedom cases
- Advisor/Advisee relationships at the M.S. or Ph.D. level
  - Not simply thesis or dissertation committee members
- Research collaborators.
  - If research program would be strongly affected by the tenure outcome
  - Incidental collaboration or paper co-authorship OK
• **Early June Meeting:**
  – All members of the JTC are **not** required to be present
  – Discuss:
    • Any **conflict of interest** for JTC members
    • List of **External Reviewers provided by the DTC**. We want about 7 letters received, so list should have 10 names if possible
    • List of **Professional Associates provided by the candidate**, to ensure minimal overlap with the list of External Reviewers
    • Discuss any questions on procedural issues
    • Remind the members about the meeting times for A and B terms, usually 12-2, Tuesdays/Thursdays. Each JTC will need one meeting time in A-term, and at least one in B-term
    • Remind DH about required letter for candidate
    • Remind members about the upcoming deadline for final lists to Penny.
  
  – The merits of the case are **not** discussed.
Preparation for JTC Meetings

• **Early June:**
  – Deadline for Penny’s receipt of candidate’s dossier, and final lists for External Reviewers and Professional Associates.
  – This time is the point at which direct open communication with the candidate about tenure ends.
  – But candidate can always ask procedural questions.

• **Late June:**
  – Penny sends cover letters (including summary of WPI’s tenure criteria or the criteria list itself) and dossier to the External Reviewers.
  – Penny sends cover letter and WPI’s tenure criteria to the Professional Associates.
  – Candidate sends dossier and any additional material you wish to Professional Associates.
  – Penny sends surveys to randomly chosen classroom and project alumni (not current students).

• **Late August:**
  – Penny provides the Red Folders to JTC members.
  – JTC members review complete dossier prior to first meeting in A term.
JTC Process

- **A-Term Meeting, 2 Hr Meeting for Each Candidate:**
  - 1st formal JTC meeting to discuss one candidate
  - All members must be present, or the meeting is rescheduled
  - All discussions are completely confidential
  - JTC Chair reviews tenure criteria, and determines any new conflicts of interest
  - Department Head provides written statement and provides a brief oral introduction to the candidate
    - This is not written in the Faculty Handbook, but has become a tradition.
    - Purpose of statement is to introduce candidate, and to orient JTC members to possible unusual aspects of case particular to the discipline, or the position.
    - Statement does not advocate for or against tenure
  - JTC discusses the complete dossier:
    - **Material Provided by the Candidate:** CV, Candidate Statement, citation information, copies of selected reprints
    - **Material Provided by Penny:** alumni tally sheets, alumni comments, course evaluation summary sheets
    - **Letters Received** from External Reviewers and Professional Associates (in Penny’s office)
  - The discussion is guided by WPI’s tenure criteria.
• **Homework Between A and B Terms:**
  – JTC members review projects, theses, dissertations. Usually about 3-5 totally chosen by the JTC Secretary.
  – DTC conducts department interviews and solicits additional letters if needed.
  – Track down missing letters of recommendation
  – **Candidate should update the dossier.**

• **B-Term Meeting(s):**
  – 2\textsuperscript{nd} formal JTC meeting. All JTC members must be present.
  – Review of new material.
  – Discussion of department interviews.
  – Discussion of projects, theses, dissertations.
  – Additional discussion of dossier, guided by the tenure criteria.
  – If all are ready, vote. If not, schedule additional B-term meeting.
The Vote:
- Secret ballot. No abstentions, each person must vote yes or no.
- JTC Chair and Secretary count votes until they get either 5 Yes votes, or 4 No votes. They show only these ballots to the JTC.
- This determines the unitary recommendation to Provost.

Following the B-Term JTC Meeting:
- Short Summary Letter to Provost:
  - Drafted by DH or DTC, and JTC Chair.
  - No minority opinion goes in the letter. Prevents class system of tenure.
  - All JTC members edit, then sign the letter. Signature indicates participation in and validity of process, not necessarily agreement with recommendation.
  - Deadline: Sent to Provost before the end of B-term

All dossier materials are held in Penny’s office.
• **The Provost:**
  – **Materials Received:**
    • Same dossier as the JTC
    • JTC recommendation letter
  – **Review:**
    • Usually **Dec and January**
    • Provost has access to complete dossier (but not Red Books and notes of JTC members)
    • President and Dean (if applicable) also have access to dossier
  – **Meeting with JTC?**
    • **May** ask to meet with the JTC to discuss its recommendations.
    • Provost must meet in case of disagreement with JTC recommendation
    • Purpose is to summarize key points of discussion for Provost – issues raised that may not have been clear from dossier
    • JTC does not revote or advocate for a position.
• **The Provost:**
  – **Final Recommendation:**
    • Provost consults with President
    • If candidate is from Arts and Sciences or Engineering department, Provost may consult with relevant Dean
      – Dean who functions as department head on JTC (e.g. Business, IGSD) cannot be consulted independent of JTC
    • Provost consults with Academic Planning Committee, which is a subcommittee of the WPI Board of Trustees
    • Provost sends final recommendation to the Board of Trustees
    • Usually at the winter Board meeting (late February)
  – **Candidate Notification:**
    • Varies from Provost to Provost
    • Usually the week before the winter Board meeting
Stopping Your Tenure Clock

• See Faculty Handbook, Section-2, Page-3.
• Clock can be stopped for up to 2 years.
• Types:
  – Unpaid full time leaves
  – Intervals of part-time employment
• For situations including, but not limited to:
  – child bearing
  – child rearing
  – personal or family member’s health
• Must be negotiated with the Provost.
Tenure Appeals Process

WPI’s Faculty Review Committee:

• If you are 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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• Frequently Asked Questions
  – Disclaimer: Some "answers" are advisory in nature. Specifics of each case relative to tenure criteria may be different!

• Open Question and Answer
Frequently Asked Questions: Criteria

• Criteria were originally approved in 1988: Will there be revisions?
• Has interpretation of criteria changed?
  – Modified in 2011 to explicitly state interpretation that high quality teaching and scholarship must be sustainable.
  – Can high quality teaching continue when candidate teaches “normal” load and typical student populations for department?
  – If funding is necessary for scholarship, has candidate shown ability to continue high quality work, or was work done by burning through startup package?
• What distinguishes those who recently passed vs. those who didn’t?
  – No unifying characteristic of unsuccessful cases. In general, problem is weakness in multiple aspects of criteria for either teaching or scholarship.
  – Be sure your materials are as clear as possible for indicating your strengths in meeting tenure criteria!
  – Be sure you are getting adequate support and guidance from your department.
Frequently Asked Questions: The Dossier

- What materials do I provide to my Professional Associates?
  - Penny sends a summary letter, but you usually provide at least your resume, citation list, Personal Statement (5 pages max), 3 reprints. You can provide more.

- Who qualifies as a Professional Associate?
  - Colleagues (either at WPI or elsewhere) who know you, are familiar with your work as a scholar or teacher, with whom you may have worked.

- How many Professional Associates should be on my list?
  - Penny’s letter will ask for 5-8, you can include more.
  - You should make sure they are willing to provide a letter.

- Am I allowed to view the Professional Associates letters in advance?
  - Unless they share it with you, you don’t get to see these.

- Is there any way to get feedback from people outside the department in the dossier seen by the JTC?
  - Candidate can choose anyone to be a professional associate and write reference letter.

- What will the External Reviewers see?
  - CV, tenure criteria, citations list, candidate statement, 3 reprints chosen by you.
Frequently Asked Questions:
Scholarship

- Is there an absolute quantitative threshold of scholarly productivity?
- How much is “enough”?
  - Criteria are described in terms of quality. CTAF does not have a numerical threshold. Some departments may establish numerical targets at annual reviews as a threshold for bringing candidate’s nomination forward.
  - Quantity is relevant. You can’t demonstrate quality without some publications, but just recycling the same idea with incremental changes isn’t impressive either.
Frequently Asked Questions: Scholarship

• How is quality of scholarship evaluated? Does anyone read papers?
  – Letters from external references and professional associates are very important. From letters we can tell which reviewers actually read the materials provided (most do).
  – Often external reviewers are familiar with candidate and provide comments on work beyond what is submitted.

• In JTC discussions, do departmental members get extra “weight” for evaluating high quality scholarship?
  – No extra “weight” – all members of JTC should contribute equally to evaluation of scholarship relative to criteria.
  – Other members of JTC may look to DTC members for clarification of discipline-specific issues such as quality of journals, relative importance of journal papers vs. conference papers vs. books / book chapters, etc.
  – Other information for evaluating quality of scholarship comes from external references, department colleague interviews. Be sure people know what you are doing!
Does grant proposal writing “count,” or only obtaining grants?
  - Writing a proposal is a scholarly activity and even an unsuccessful proposal shows activity toward building a high quality program of scholarship.
  - If candidate’s discipline requires funding to perform high quality scholarship (e.g. expensive labs, supported graduate students) then obtaining sufficient funding is critical.

From which sources is funding expected?
  - Depends completely on department and field of scholarship. Funding is not expected for every discipline. Key is what is needed for candidate to sustain high quality scholarship.
Frequently Asked Questions: Scholarship

- How is collaborative work evaluated?
  - Depends on individual case. Key indicators are reasons for collaboration, who are the partners, and candidate’s contribution.
  - Collaboration is often appropriate, for example in an interdisciplinary field or with a partner who has resources WPI does not have.
  - Candidate must show a leadership role in some aspect of the collaboration. A role that is only “enabling” may not be a way to demonstrate high quality. Examples that might raise concern would be continuing to work in a secondary role with one’s PhD advisor, or with a colleague in WPI who dominates research and does not allow candidate to demonstrate leadership.
  - If collaboration is a significant part of scholarship, consider choosing one or more professional associates who can comment on candidate’s contribution in a collaborative role.
Frequently Asked Questions: Teaching

• Is graduate teaching required?
  – Not necessarily. In a department where high quality teaching would be demonstrated primarily through undergraduate classes, a record showing only undergrad teaching would not be unusual.

• Is there a numerical threshold for teaching evaluations?
  – No. JTC recognizes that expectations are different; for example, large enrollment, required, out-of-department courses vs. advanced in-major courses. Numerical results corresponding to high quality teaching would be different.
Frequently Asked Questions: Timing

• When is the last time to update my dossier?
  – Usually in the break between A and B terms, and definitely before B-term meeting.

• When do I get notified by the Provost?
  – In positive cases, usually the week before the winter Board of Trustees meeting (end of February).
  – In negative cases, before that.

• Can you initiate the tenure process early yourself?
  – Yes, but only under extremely rare circumstances (violation of academic freedom, exceptional contribution). JTC has option to table in “early” cases.
  – Handbook specifies higher requirement to meet exceptional contribution requirement.

• Who decides on delaying tenure?
  – Years to tenure review are specified in appointment letter. Change in clock is negotiated with Provost.
Frequently Asked Questions: What if ...

- Is there only one chance for tenure?
  - At scheduled review, only options are recommend and deny.
- Is there any appeal process if candidate receives a terminal appointment before the tenure review year?
  - Yes, candidate can appeal to FRC (procedure in Faculty Handbook). CTAF would only be involved if FRC is concerned about infringement of academic freedom.
- What happens if I don’t get tenure?
  - You usually receive a terminal appointment letter for a final year beginning July 1, and you can appeal to the FRC.
Frequently Asked Questions: What if ...

- What proportion of people get tenure?
  - There is no targeted yield. Every case is considered individually on its own merits.
  - Not all TT faculty reach JTC review for a variety of reasons.
  - Of the TT faculty who reach JTC review, a large percentage receive tenure.
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Handouts

- Printout of these slides
- WPI Tenure Criteria
- CTAF’s letter to candidates
- WPI Conflict of Interest Statement
Questions

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