TO: Chairs and Directors
FROM: Paul B. Bell, Jr.
Dean
DATE: January 13, 2011
RE: External Letters of Evaluation for Tenure & Promotion Candidates

As you begin the tenure and promotion review process for the 2011-2012 academic year, an early task is securing Dean’s Office approval of your list of proposed external evaluators. In so doing, please follow the following guidelines:

- The College of Arts & Sciences requires that at least six confidential letters of evaluation be included in dossiers for both tenure and promotion and for promotion-only cases. These letters must be from off-campus scholars or distinguished professionals in the candidate’s field and should provide an independent, unbiased evaluation of the candidate’s scholarly attainment. A dossier may contain more than the minimum number of letters, and copies of all confidential letters of evaluation that were solicited and received must be included in the dossier.

- To achieve the goal of providing a minimum of six letters in the dossier, we request that you submit to the dean’s office for approval a minimum of 10 names of persons to whom requests will be sent. This will allow for rejections from potential evaluators and late responses. If you are unable to obtain commitments from a sufficient number of persons from your initial list, you should submit additional names to the Dean’s Office for approval. For each proposed evaluator, please provide the information indicated in the attached sample.

- The Chair and/or Committee A are responsible for the selection of the external reviewers, subject to approval by the Dean’s Office. However, units should allow, indeed encourage, the candidate to suggest some names, but no more than half of the reviewers from whom letters are solicited may have been recommended by the candidate. The reviewers must hold a rank at a peer institution that is equivalent to those eligible to vote on the tenure and/or promotion decision at OU. In addition, the external evaluators may not have close academic or personal connections with the candidate. Ph.D. advisers and committee members, coauthors and close personal friends should not be asked to evaluate the candidate. In rare cases, such as when a candidate has a very narrow and specialized field of expertise, one or two evaluators with a close professional connection may be included, but it is the responsibility of the unit to explain and justify in writing in the dossier such exceptions to the general guidelines.
Once you have received approval of your list of evaluators from the Dean’s Office, you may proceed to solicit the letters. The Provost, on the advice of Legal Counsel, requires that the following information be included in requests for external letters of evaluation:

“As part of this review process, we are soliciting assessments of Professor _____’s research contributions from academic colleagues and distinguished professionals outside of the University of Oklahoma. These letters of evaluation are treated as confidential by the University to the extent we are permitted to do so by law. These assessments will become part of Professor _____’s tenure dossier to be reviewed in accordance with our procedures for the tenure decision which generally includes review by the departmental tenured faculty, a select group of college faculty appointed by the dean, the Campus Tenure Committee, and relevant administrators at the University of Oklahoma. We ask for your letter of evaluation and a copy of your own curriculum vita to include with the tenure dossier. In your letter, it is important that you elucidate the extent of your professional and personal relationship with Professor ____; the intent is to identify potential cases of partiality or conflicts of interest that might otherwise not be known by us. We ask that evaluators not provide comments as to whether a candidate should or should not be awarded tenure at the University of Oklahoma but rather comments on how the candidate’s research record compares with those who have recently been awarded tenure at your institution.”

In the tenure/promotion dossier, the academic unit should complete the “Description of External Evaluators” form that justifies the particular evaluators chosen and provide a CV for each evaluator.

Please email your list of proposed external evaluators to the Associate Dean for your unit no later than June 30, but preferably much sooner. See the attached sample of the format to submit information. Please indicate which names were proposed by the department and which were proposed by the candidate. Your request should include each evaluator’s name, rank, tenure status, and institution as well as at least a one-sentence rationale for proposing that individual as an evaluator. In some cases, potential evaluators are not at universities but rather at non-academic institutions (labs, agencies, museums, foundations, etc.). In such cases, indicate the person’s current institutional role and prior university academic roles, if any.

As soon as the Provost issues her annual call for tenure and promotion, which we anticipate will be in June, we will provide you with additional information concerning deadlines for later stages of the tenure and promotion review process. Typically, dossiers are due in the Dean’s Office by November 1. Please contact Suzanne Harrell or the Associate Dean for your unit if you have any questions about this or any other aspect of the tenure and promotion review process.

Attachment
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EXAMPLE FOR SUBMITTING EVALUATOR RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEAN’S OFFICE

1. Name
2. Rank
3. University
4. Department
5. Tenure status
6. Connections with candidate
7. Qualifications

Suggested by Department
John Smith
Professor
Ohio State University
Department of History
Tenured: Yes
Connections with candidate: None

Professor Smith is a specialist in modern Japanese history, chiefly interested in the history of science, medicine, higher education, and business in Japan. In 1985-86, he held a research fellowship from the National Science Foundation. His 1989 book, *The Formation of Science in Japan*, received the 1992 Pfizer Award of the History of Science Society and was issued in paperback in February 1993. In March 2001, he was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship to write a book on Japan and the Nobel science prizes, 1901-1949.

followed by other department suggestions

Suggested by Candidate
Jane Jones
Professor
Princeton University
Department of History
Tenured: Yes
Connections with candidate: Met at conferences, no personal ties

Professor Jones studies modern and contemporary Japan, with research interests in relationships between state and society, the links between culture and popular economic behavior, and locating Japan within a global or transnational history of ideas and institutions. Jones uses the labor movement in Japan as a lens to examine the country’s rapid transition, beginning in the late 19th century, from oligarchic rule to interwar democracy, wartime fascism, and the present postwar order.

followed by other candidate suggestions