

November 10, 2017

To: Kathy Johnson, Executive Vice Chancellor
Margie Ferguson, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
From: School of Liberal Arts Faculty Assembly
RE: Potential Change in Interpretation of P&T Committee Size

By a vote of **X to Y**, the faculty of the School of Liberal Arts stand opposed to the reinterpretation of the long-time understanding of the campus P&T guidelines with regard to the minimum number of members on a committee, which the school has understood for at least the past two decades to be a committee of no fewer than four. Our opposition to this reinterpretation is three-fold.

First, and most importantly, primary committees are charged with evaluating a candidate's activities and scholarship in his or her primary areas of expertise, hence the name “primary” committee, also often called at many universities “departmental” committees. Requiring more than 4 primary committee members will fundamentally change P&T in most departments in the School of Liberal Arts, especially in cases when there are associate professors going up for promotion, as most do not have more than four full professors (not including the chair). The implications of a change in primary committee size will be that for many P&T cases, faculty from other disciplinary areas will have to be recruited to participate on primary committees. This is counter to the spirit of peer review as primary committee members should be expected to understand the norms of scholarship in the candidate's primary field, and when a majority of a committee come from outside of the primary field simply so that some arbitrary target number or reviewers can be met, the disciplinary evaluation is diluted or lost.

The importance of the primary committee’s role in the P&T process is, in fact, highlighted in the current campus and school P&T guidelines and IUPUI Faculty Guide. The following excerpts underscore the disciplinary expertise that is assumed by the primary committee in its evaluative process. (Text italicized to emphasize key role of disciplinary expertise in the review process.)

Department Primary Committee (School P&T Guidelines)

- *Evaluate* anthologies, books, journals and other venues in which the candidate's works have appeared or will appear, and will summarize their relative standing in the candidate's field.
- *Summarize and evaluate* invited and volunteered conference papers, talks, poetry readings, performances, etc., that the candidate has given, and, when possible, assess the relative importance of the meetings (conferences, colloquia, etc.) at which the contributions were made.
- *Summarize the relative importance to the department and institution* of the candidate's scholarly and creative production. If the candidate is said to have (emerging) national or international standing, this claim must be substantiated.
- *... assess the coherence, quality, development, and potential value of the candidate's overall research and creative activity agenda and also assess the relevance to that general agenda of all individual scholarly products.*
- The committee will *evaluate* local, regional, national, and international awards or recognition the candidate may have won for teaching, and determine their importance.
- The committee will *evaluate and comment on the candidate's teaching effectiveness.*

Department Primary Committee (Campus P&T Guidelines)

- *The primary committee is asked to consider reviews of unsuccessful grant submissions. Analyze the pattern of grant success, where applicable, and include a summary in the committee's vote letter for promotion and/or tenure. Please review the candidate's level of funding in light of the present context for funding in the field.*
- *If invited presentations are vital evidence for candidates' reputation in their field, the quality of these invited presentations should be addressed at the departmental level. ...*

Review letter and vote from the Primary/Department Committee

- *The written recommendation of the primary committee, including the committee's evaluation of the faculty member's teaching, research and creative activity, and service or the librarian's performance, professional development, and service... In the case of tenure recommendations, the statement should include an evaluation of the likelihood that the candidate will continue his or her activity in these three areas based on past performance and future plans (p. 15).*

School P&T Committee (Campus P&T Guidelines)

In evaluating a candidate for promotion and/or tenure, the committee will carefully consider all the information provided by the candidate, *as well as the recommendation of the primary committee* and the department's chair. The committee shall also take into consideration the *guidelines and criteria for promotion and/or tenure of the candidate's department. ...*

The SLA Promotion and Tenure Committee will evaluate the recommendations of the primary committee and the department chair, taking into consideration *whether the recommendations are based on adequate peer review*, whether the rights of the candidate have been safeguarded in accordance with university-established procedures, and whether the academic mission, responsibilities, and expectations under which the candidate had originally been hired have been taken into account.

IUPUI Faculty Guide

Promotion considerations must take into account the individual's contribution to the school/campus mission *as well as differences in mission of varying primary and unit levels* (p. 38).

[Third-year review] The chief purpose of the REVIEW is to provide tenure-probationary faculty members with feedback from the school or unit level review committees regarding their cumulative progress toward promotion and tenure. Hence, other than the department chair or school dean, *involvement by the department's Primary Committee (where applicable) and/or the school's Unit Committee (where applicable) in the REVIEW is essential* (p. 49).

The tenure review is a multi-level review, *conducted at the primary, unit, campus, and university levels* (p. 51).

Second, as would be the case in smaller departments with only a couple of full professors, the logistics of simply having to find four or five full professors (rather than one or two) somewhere in the school and/or across campus who also were not already serving on the School P&T Committee would be next to impossible. Multiply that by three or four candidates who might go up for promotion to full professor in any given year; there may well not be enough full professors in the school to do what is being proposed, especially once you remove any who are either serving in an upper administration role or on a

sabbatical leave; at the least, every eligible full professor in the school may well be required to serve on a primary committee every year in one department or another. This is overly burdensome and unrealistic.

Third, if a smaller department with two full professors were in fact required to enlist five additional full professors from outside the department and possibly the school, how then would the make-up of this committee differ from the current school-level P&T committee? In essence, we would simply be instituting two school-level reviews.

To summarize, first and foremost, we believe this proposed change in policy will result in defeating the repeated insistence of not only campus policies and P&T guidelines but also of the Office of Academic Affairs that P&T should at its foundation be driven by departmental norms as evaluated by disciplinary peer review. Indeed, IU Policy ACA-38 on Faculty & Librarian Promotions states that “In all cases the candidate’s total record should be assessed by comprehensive and rigorous peer review.” We see the implementation of the proposed changes in primary committee size as working against the spirit of this policy in that in many cases primary committees would be required to pull in faculty outside of the disciplinary context simply in order to meet an arbitrary minimum number of members on the committee. Beyond that, the logistics and implications of such a change are more than a little problematic. With a primary committee of at least four faculty members, we simply do not see a problem that is in need of being fixed, and primary committees of this size are in fact more the norm across universities and colleges in the U.S. than the exception.

The faculty of the School of Liberal Arts stand opposed to the proposed reinterpretation of the minimum committee size for P&T deliberations.