Faculty Evaluation Part 1: Preparing for Faculty Reviews

A Workshop for Faculty 2-Yr, 4-Yr, and P&T Review Committees

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UD ADVANCE Institute

o Originally funded by an NSF ADVANCE Institutional Transformation award and currently funded by the provost's office

o Focus is on faculty diversity and excellence

o Core work involves the development and dissemination of research-based initiatives surrounding faculty development, diversity, and positive departmental climates

o Programs and initiatives are for all faculty

Agenda

1. Introduction & Background
2. Topic 1. 2-/4-yr peer review as a mentoring opportunity*
3. Topic 2. Communicating with each other and the candidates
4. Topic 3. Selecting and communicating with letter writers
5. Closing thoughts

* The faculty senate is evaluating a proposal to move from 2- & 4-yr reviews to one probationary review in year 3.

= interactive discussion

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Workshops for Faculty Evaluators – Why (Now)?

2020 COACHE Results

o Low levels of satisfaction surrounding tenure policies and clarity of expectations

o Lower levels of satisfaction for women and URM faculty relative to other groups
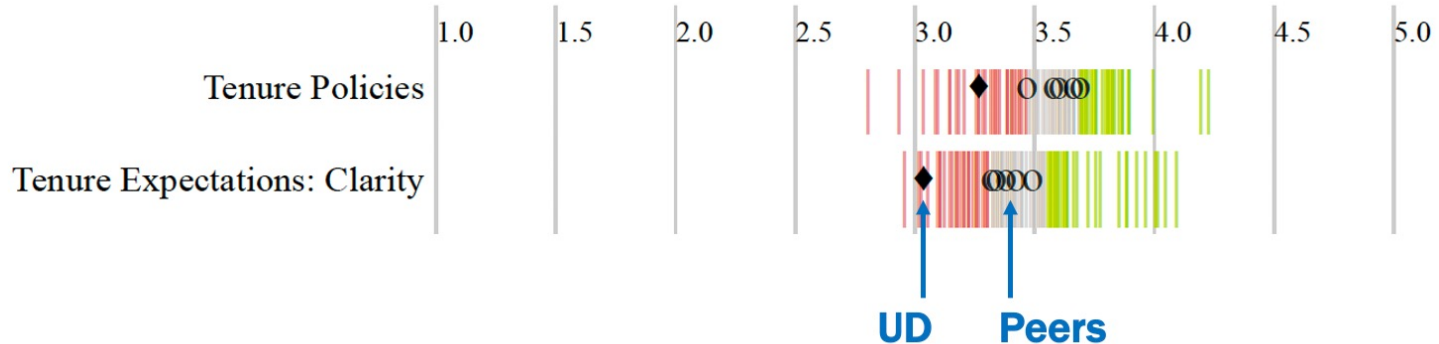
Peers, Chosen by UD: Indiana, Pittsburgh, Rutgers, Maryland, Virginia Tech

Scope. Two Types of Workshops for Faculty Evaluators

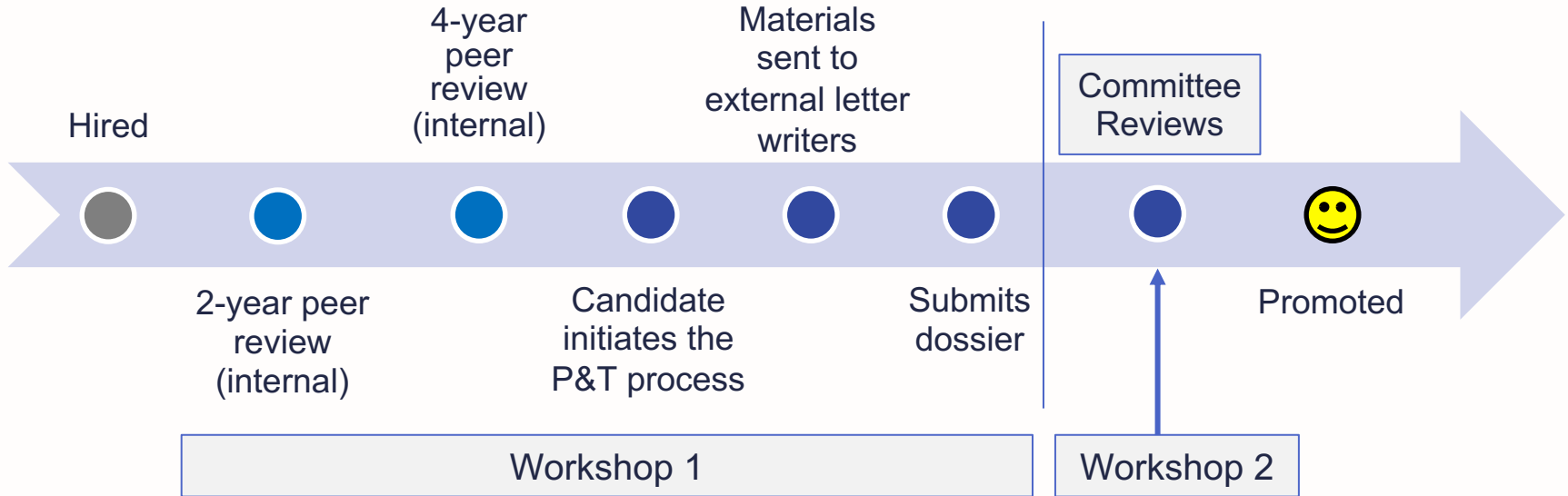**Workshop 1**, Spring 2024: Preparing for Faculty Reviews
- o Strategies to foster smooth and transparent evaluation processes (P&T, peer review)

Workshop 2, Fall 2024: Best Practices for Fair Evaluation of Faculty –
- o Mitigating against evaluation errors or biases

Bias can occur at both stages. Each workshop will discuss the potential for bias and provide suggestions for mitigating against it.

Scope. Illustrated Using Timeline for Promotion

Hired

2-year peer review (internal)

4-year peer review (internal)

Candidate initiates the P&T process

Materials sent to external letter writers

Submits dossier

Committee Reviews

Promoted

Workshop 1

Workshop 2

Workshop 1 Goals

Encourage committees to...

o Think about 2-/4-year review as a means of clarifying the P&T process

o Formalize communication processes w/in the committee and w/ the candidate

o Help departments think about ways in which they might want to revise and formalize their procedures (and possibly also their P&T documents)

> Recognizing that departments vary considerably in their processes, today's discussions will be general. Consult with your department/college on practices specific to your unit.

> It is the candidate's responsibility to establish their case for promotion. We, as their colleagues, should mentor them along the way.

Provost Office Online Resources

Promotion & Tenure Information for Candidates and Reviewers

- 2023 UD P&T Memo
- 2023 eBinder System Overview Video
- P&T Policy Review August 2023
- Mentoring for Success: Annual Appraisals, Peer Reviews, P&T
- COVID Impact Statement Resource
- Evaluating COVID Impact Statements
- Timeline of COVID-19 Pandemic and Administrative Decisions

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Date: May 17, 2023

To: Deans and Department Chairs/School Directors

From: Matt Kinservik
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

Subject: 2023-2024 Promotion and Tenure Process

The online UD Promotion and Tenure system will be available for the 2023-202[ ]
tenure cycle on **Tuesday, June 6, 2023**.

Training Opportunities

A training session for candidates and reviewers will be held on Wednesday, May [ ]
this session, we have also prepared video tutorials for candidates and reviewers t[ ]
in the 'Faculty Promotion & Tenure' tile on the My UD site, https://my.udel.edu

https://provost.udel.edu/faculty/faculty-affairs/promotion-and-tenure/

UD ADVANCE Research, P&T and Peer Review

UD ADVANCE conducted in-depth interviews w/ recently promoted UD T/TT associate professors to learn more about:

- How UD faculty learn norms surrounding P&T procedures and expectations
- Whether and to what extent 2-/4-year peer reviews help to clarify elements of the process

Questions centered on their experiences with promotion and tenure, pre-tenure peer review – as well as mentoring and resources that they used to help them prepare for these reviews

UD ADVANCE Interviews, Some Key Findings

o   Respondents report lack of clarity in P&T procedures and expressed concerns about subjectivity and potential for bias

o   Interview subjects outside the norm were especially affected by lack of clarity
     - Ex.: Interdisciplinarity, atypical workload, methodology, split lines

o   Most mentoring surrounding P&T is self-initiated and informal

o   2-/4-yr reviews are relatively unhelpful in clarifying P&T processes and expectations

o   Turnover in departments and reliance on institutional memory can lead to shifting standards

2-/4-Yr Reviews

UD ADVANCE Research Findings

o Interviewees report lack of clarity in procedures and expectations
o Some departments over-rely on institutional memory (which can be unreliable)
o Most mentoring is self-initiated and informal
o Written feedback is often mild and not useful
o Inconsistency within and across departments - depth of review and submitted materials

These factors can lead to shifting standards and raise a risk of bias.

Discussion

- UD's current policy requires 2-/4-year peer-review letters to be included in P&T dossiers. What are the pros and cons of including negative feedback in the peer-review letter?
- What are some ways to mitigate against any negative effects of having the peer reviews in the dossier?

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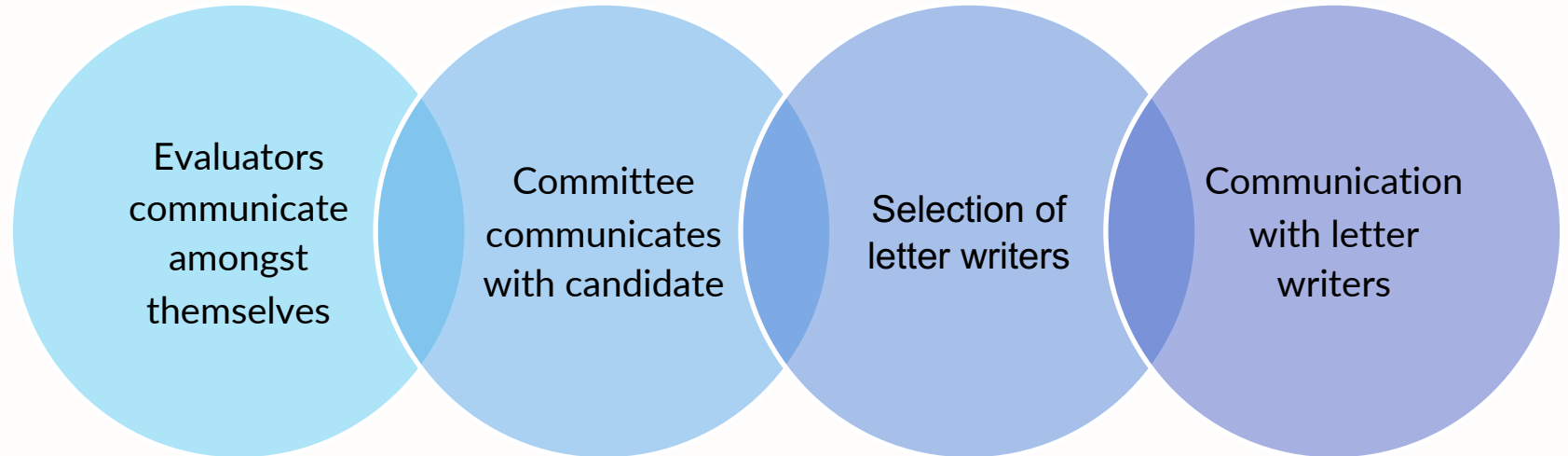**2-/4-yr reviews should be a mentoring opportunity.**

What might this look like?

o   Treat the review as more than contract renewal but also as an opportunity to help the candidate understand P&T processes and expectations

o   A committee member should meet w/ candidate early to discuss the process

o   Encourage candidate to seek out sample materials from colleagues

o   Find a formal means to provide meaningful feedback that will help the candidate grow and improve

o   Candidates should follow up later with mentors on their progress

o   Consider adding language about 2-/4-year reviews (procedures and evaluation standards) in P&T documents

Preparing for P&T Review: Key Steps

Evaluators communicate amongst themselves

Committee communicates with candidate

Selection of letter writers

Communication with letter writers

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P&T: Communicating with Each Other

Committee members responsible for preparing the committee recommendation should meet amongst themselves – or even better, with the voting members of the department – to agree on and inform new members of key items related to process and evaluation

Examples:
- What to communicate to the candidate
- Materials required for a workload-appropriate evaluation
- Process for selecting external letter writers
- Guidelines for letter writers

We will talk through these and other examples in what follows.

P&T: Communicating with the Candidate

As with peer review…

o   Clear departmental protocols and standardized communication with a candidate can reduce confusion and the risk for bias

o   We recommend meeting with each candidate shortly after they declare their promotion candidacy to talk them through what to expect during the months before they submit their dossiers (specific recommendations on next slide)

Even though some information can be found in the Faculty Handbook or departmental documents, these resources can generate meaningful questions

Communicating with the Candidate, Recommendations

o   Be consistent in how you communicate with candidates

o   What to communicate: Location of policies, departmental due dates, the process of selecting letter writers, materials for letter writers, final dossier materials

o   Consider creating a document that you can share with candidates and can regularly update to reflect departmental policies

o   Discuss with the candidate the pros and cons of sending external letter writers covid statements and workload statements and let them decide

Selecting External Letter Writers

UD ADVANCE research suggests that this is a source of confusion at UD.
The faculty handbook provides a guideline, but it leaves room for interpretation:

> FHB 4.4.12: A candidate will submit a list of potential reviewers, some of whom will be approached for recommendations. The department committee will suggest additional reviewers.

Selecting Letter Writers, Some Points of Confusion

o How many letters will you require?

o How many names will you need (from the department and the candidate) to get there?

o How many will you allow the candidate to strike, if any?

o Who decides the final list?

o What is the process of choosing the final list?

Discussion Q: In what ways might gamesmanship interfere with the process?

Selecting Letter Writers, Recommendations

o   The overall pedigree of the evaluator is generally not as important as their status as an expert in their field

o   Think carefully about appropriate letter writers for faculty whose research is nonstandard for the department (e.g., qualitative research in a quantitative department, interdisciplinary, or CT)

o   To mitigate against gamesmanship and bias, the department ought to have standardized protocol for selecting letter writers

In short, the process should be fair, comprehensive, and transparent while respecting the importance of selecting objective/neutral reviewers

Communicating with Letter Writers

Communicating with letter writers about the basis of and guidelines for evaluation is a very important part of the promotion process.

Discussion:
- What should be communicated to letter writers when you send them evaluation materials?
- What are some things that are sometimes included that we might reconsider?

Recommendations for what to communicate to letter writers

o If you don't already have one, consider developing a "standard" letter template to potential reviewers. If you have one, does it need updating?

o Be sure the letter includes the information and materials a reviewer will need to do a workload appropriate review. For example,

  o Include the departmental P&T document so that candidate can be reviewed based on departmental standards (regardless of how they compare to high-fliers in the field)

  o Provide guidance surrounding evaluation of a candidate whose workload is atypical or whose research area is between disciplines

  o Explain UD's COVID-related P&T policies and, if included in the materials, the intended role of a COVID impact statement for in evaluation

  o For those who came to UD with time in rank, explain UD's policy on how to consider accomplishments completed prior to UD

Collecting your thoughts

Take five minutes to write down at least one thing that you plan to take back to your department to address one or more of the following goals:

- ○ Leverage 2-/4-year reviews as a means of clarifying the P&T process
- ○ Formalize communication processes w/in the committee and w/ the candidate
- ○ Formalize 2-/4-year review and P&T procedures in other ways

For consideration as you move forward

UD ADVANCE research suggests that some pre-tenure and P&T committees sometimes rely heavily on institutional memory. This can create confusion and risks shifting standards. To mitigate against these downfalls:

- o Committees or the department should meet early to discuss the process and any aspects of the P&T evaluation standards that may be unclear
- o Committees should plan all of this out before meeting with the candidate and should share this information with the candidate
- o Committees/departments should develop written resources to help guide committees and candidates

More to come in the Fall on minimizing the effects of evaluation errors.

Thank You!

Contact Us
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www.udel.edu/advance

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