Administering the APT Process

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Agenda

1. General Considerations
2. Reminder: Process
3. Expectations of APT Committees, Chairs, Deans
4. Teaching Portfolios
5. What We See/What Can Happen
6. COVID-19 and Flexibility/Support

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Tenure is

- Earned based on demonstrated **excellence** in research, teaching, **and** service

- Granted by an academic institution to those who demonstrate a capacity for a lifetime of scholarship, teaching, and service

- A commitment by the University and State of Maryland to continuously **support faculty for the next few decades**

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Tenure is not

- Just about the candidate. It's also about the
    - Department, College, University, USM, and State of Maryland

Defining Excellence

- You (i.e., your department) are the experts in your area

- You (i.e., your department) establish the criteria for excellence in that area, answering the question:
  - What does excellence in…
    - Research
    - Teaching
    - Service

  Look like in your field/unit?

  How is excellence measured?

- You and your department colleagues are responsible for **articulating** and **demonstrating** how the candidate(s) has achieved "excellence"
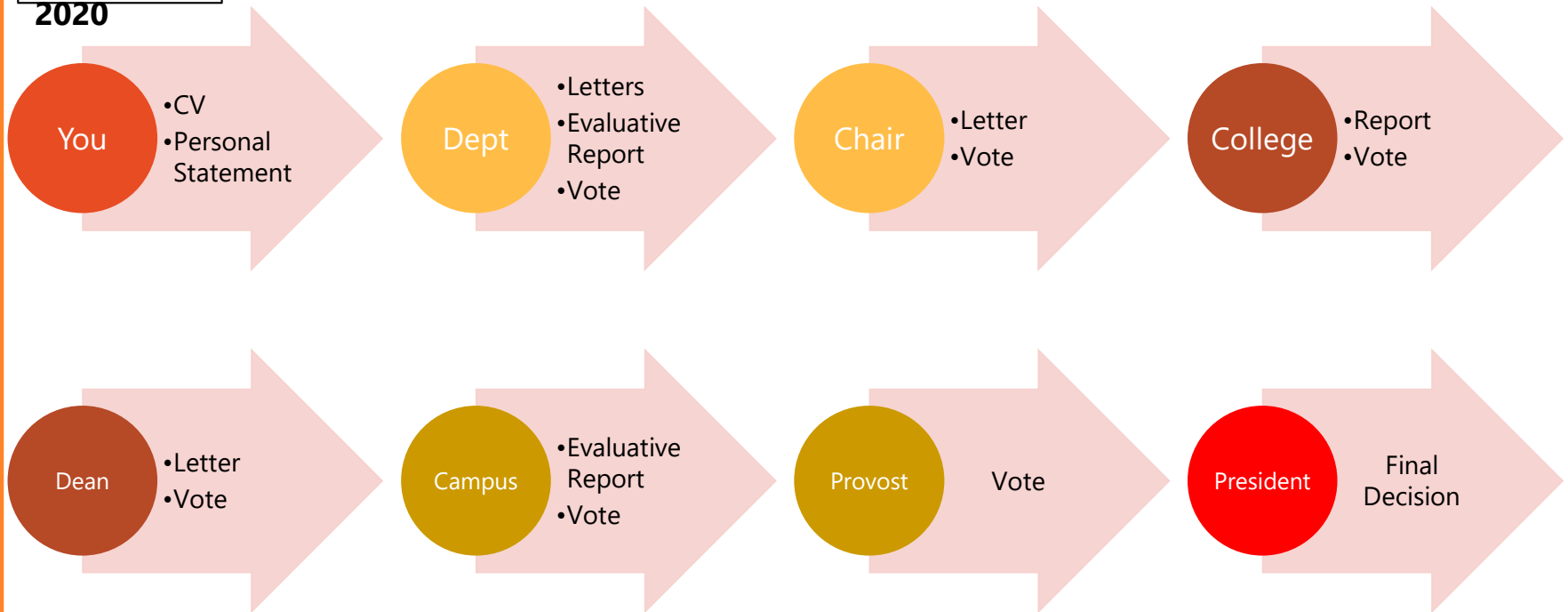
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The APT Process

You
- CV
- Personal Statement

Dept
- Letters
- Evaluative Report
- Vote

Chair
- Letter
- Vote

College
- Report
- Vote

Dean
- Letter
- Vote

Campus
- Evaluative Report
- Vote

Provost
Vote

President
Final Decision

May 2021

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You Need to Know

- USM Policy
- UMD Policy and Guidelines
  - Modified COVID Guidelines
- Departmental Criteria
  - Secondary unit if joint appointment
  - Modified tenure criteria, if applicable
- Process
  - Department
  - College
  - Campus
- Culture
- Why a particular candidate was hired
- What the expectations are/were for the candidate

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The APT Committees

- Seek to understand **the candidate** and their work in **your unit**

- The most important thing a dossier does is **tell a story**, in particular the candidate's story

- It is a narrative with several layers and parts*
  - Told by 3 different committees (Department, College, Campus) and 3 different university officers (Chair, Dean, Provost)
  - The goal and hope is that the compilation does justice to the case
  - [Ultimately, it is the President who has the most information in the decision to grant tenure]

* There may be more layers if there is a joint appointment

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Committees, APT Chairs, Chairs

- Lower level committees (Department) emphasize
  - Field and departmental expectations (metrics, criteria, definitions of excellence)
  - Field and department assessments and evaluation
  - Technical aspects of a case (reports, letters, external evaluator selection criteria)

- Higher level committees (College, University) focus on a professional evaluation of quality and impact indicators
  - By the department (guided by written criteria)
  - By external evaluators

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Committees, APT Chairs, Chairs

- Administrators should ensure:
  - A clear, accurate, and concise presentation in the dossier
  - Departmental, College, and University processes are followed
  - Established criteria are applied

  → If something doesn't look right to you, others further up will notice too

- General rule: avoid non-conventional practices and expectations
  - These can and often do cause potential harm to candidates

- When in doubt, call OFA

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Teaching Portfolios

- Required with 2015 APT revisions
- Are the candidate's to create and assemble
- Are an excellent opportunity to expand on the candidate's instructional contributions
  - Course creation/design/redesign
  - Mentoring
  - Pedagogy, Philosophy

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Teaching Portfolios

- Encourage candidates to view their teaching portfolios an opportunity
- It is one of the few components of the overall dossier that they control
- TLTC – excellent resources, workshops, guidance
  - https://tltc.umd.edu/portfolios

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What We See

- The use of non-standard/recommended external letter writer request letters
  - Without expected question for evaluators to answer or missing key elements (i.e., tenure delay language)
  - **If modified, need to have reviewed by OFA; should also discuss with the Dean if in a departmentalized college**

- Solicitation of external letters from multiple associate professors, typically without rationale for doing so
  - Policy says associate professors are OK
  - Practice and expectations are that letter writers should be full professors or equivalent

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What We See

- Discussion of personnel matters irrelevant to the deliberations (and in some cases that should be handled through other processes/policies that ensure due process for all parties)

- Inappropriate communication with candidates about their cases during the APT process

- Different processes for different candidates seeking promotion/tenure in the same unit at the same time (typically due to different procedures adopted by record preparation committees)

- Missing elements to dossiers

- Different data (i.e., publication counts) in different parts of the dossier (Summary Statement of Achievements, Committee Reports)

- Different vote counts (in Committee Reports and on the transmittal form)

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What We See

- Not providing the candidate the requisite time to review and sign off on materials – or not providing them to candidates at all

- Personal statements that are too long (5 page max)

- The wrong person's materials submitted:
  - In parts of main dossier
  - Wrong teaching portfolio/supplemental materials

- Emeritus faculty (now at another university) as external letter writers
  - They still hold appointments here

- **We urge you to adopt a thorough review process to ensure the dossier's accuracy**
  - Not doing so can cause delays at the campus level while we sort all this out

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Please…

- Familiarize yourself with the standard dossier ahead of time
- Review the guidelines – they undergo periodic updates
- **Don't send forward problematic dossiers** (procedure, due process)
  - If you think there is a problem, other levels will too
  - Don't be afraid to ask questions of lower levels or even send dossier back
    - If you don't, others may, causing delays and other issues

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Please…

- **Quality control**
  - Someone needs to ensure that the dossiers get to us
    - On time
    - Clean

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Things To Think About

- Set and manage candidate expectations – this is a year long process
- Don't delay: your delay causes delays throughout the process
  - Your delays become our delays
  - Lack of quality control forces the Campus APT Committee to clean things up
  - Sometimes the campus level can't fix the problems that should have been resolved earlier
  - At best, this can cause delays in notifying candidates
  - At worst….
    - Don't ask the Campus APT Committee or Provost to resolve problems

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Things That Should Be Avoided

- **Ignoring the guidelines**
  - Length of personal statements (5 pages max)
  - Not using recommended external evaluator letter request
  - Using collaborators as external evaluators

- Not adhering to **standard unit procedures**
  - It may be useful to assemble the APT committee **ahead of time** to get ready
  - Avoid "**rogue**" processes

- **Cutting corners** (higher committees will notice)

- Creating a **problem for the candidate**

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Things That Should Be Avoided

- **Not selecting substantive external letter writers**
    - Peer institutions or highly regarded Departments/Units, entities (Labs)
    - Letter writers who are appropriate to the candidate's area
    - Full professors/equivalent – or strong rationale for other choice
    - Follow rules regarding **collaborators**

- **Learn how to interpret letters**
    - Particularly if they contain negative comments or raise concerns

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Things That Should Be Avoided

- **Assuming that others understand** candidate's research/field

- **Ignoring/downplaying the negative reactions** from evaluators or faculty at your level
  - Peer judgment is critical to the process
  - Don't dismiss the evaluators you have chosen
  - Don't dismiss the faculty at your level who disagree with promoting the candidate

- Bottom line: Ensure a rigorous and fair process, **arguing points as needed**

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What We Can (and will) Do

- Ask questions of lower levels
- Bring unit representatives forward to Campus APT Committee
- **Send dossiers back for reconsideration**

- [Appeals]
  - Many of the issues we see are either procedural or due process violations – and appealable

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Parting Comments

- Fields change
  - Review departmental APT guidelines and procedures periodically
  - If co-authorship is on the rise, learn how to assess this
  - If large-scale teams are used, find ways to determine and demonstrate the individual candidate's contributions
  - If forms of scholarship are evolving, learn how to assess this

- Provide **context**
  - Help others better understand the candidate's record

- Avoid harming candidates for issues that they did not create
  - Choice of external letter writers
  - Errors in dossiers (e.g., Departmental reports, chairs letters)

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Parting Comments

- Issues on the horizon
  o Open Access publications
  o "Predatory" journals and conferences

  o https://libguides.ucd.ie/publishing/predatory
  o https://thinkchecksubmit.org/

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APT and COVID-19

- We recognize the disruption that COVID-19 is causing to both instruction and research

- We all need to be flexible and understanding of the circumstances and the impact on faculty and the APT process

- We have issued guidance for meeting modifications due to COVID

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APT and COVID-19

- Course Evaluations for Spring 2020
  - Not to be used in APT evaluations
  - Faculty can elect to include in their teaching portfolios should they wish

- COVID-19-related tenure delay of one year
  - June 1, 2020: mandatory review year 2020-2021
  - June 1, 2021: mandatory review year beyond 2020-2021
  - Those who miss the window or realize impacts later can request tenure delays for personal/professional reasons as per policy

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In Conclusion

- Communicate with
  - Faculty Affairs
  - Unit staff preparing dossiers for transmission
  - Others as necessary

to ensure that all runs smoothly

- When in doubt, ask OFA

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