Administering the APT Process

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Agenda

1. General Considerations
2. Expectations of APT Committees
3. What the University Committee looks for in an APT package
4. Discussion
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Tenure is...

• ...earned, with the purpose of protecting academic freedom

• ...granted by the University (and state) to those who demonstrate a capacity for a lifetime of scholarship, teaching, and service

• ...signifies a willingness by the University and State to continuously support faculty for the next few decades
Tenure is not...

• ...just about the candidate
  • Department, College, University, USM, and State of Maryland

• ...protection against demonstrated incompetence, moral turpitude, professional or scholarly misconduct, willful neglect of duty
Promotion is...

• ...a demonstration of continued (and enhanced) excellence in research, teaching, and service
  • The “bar” is higher
• ...a reflection of accomplishment and continued promise
• ...earned
• ...free of a timeline
  • It’s not about how long you’ve been an Associate Professor
Playing by Uniform APT Rules

• ... doesn’t have to mean being uniform in all counts
• You (i.e., your department) are the experts in your area
• You should establish the criteria for excellence in that area
In a Nutshell

• The main expectation of the APT committees is that every unit takes the APT process seriously
• One size does not fit all
• We should all abide by rules that seek excellence
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From the USM Policy

“The criteria for tenure and promotion in the University of Maryland System are:

(1) teaching effectiveness, including student advising;
(2) research, scholarship, and, in appropriate areas, creative activities; and
(3) relevant service to the community, profession, and institution.”

ALL THREE, and especially the TOP TWO, are taken very seriously
From the UMCP Policy

• “The University of Maryland is dedicated to the discovery and the transmission of knowledge and to the achievement of excellence in its academic disciplines” (l. 28).

• The tenure/promotion process is critical to the attainment of excellence
The APT Committee

• Seeks to understand you and the work you do in your unit

• The most important thing a dossier does is tell a story, in particular your story

• It is a narrative with several layers
  • Told at the Department, College, and Campus levels by
    • Chair, Dean, Provost
  • The goal and hope is that the conglomerate does justice to the case
The APT Process

candidate

department

chair

college

dean

campus

provost
Committees

• Department
  • Emphasis on surface aspects (worrying about the essential aspects of a CV, the spelling, the neatness)
  • Often comes at the expense of genuine substance

• Higher level (College/Campus)
  • Cases in higher committees do not depend on neatness
  • Focus on professional assessment of impact and quality
    • By field
    • By department (guided by written criteria)
    • By external evaluators
What is important...

... is to **show the significance of your work**, your program, your achievements
  • Are you a leader in your field who should also become a senior member of the university?

• That’s your story, and telling it accurately and profoundly often requires **taking a step back for perspective**
Things to Think About

• Be **critical** with yourself and your discipline

• **Reach out to peers**, get to understand what they do and to get them to understand what you do

• **Don’t procrastinate**. Think of your case from the day you are given tenure – and keep asking yourself how you’re progressing within the professorial track

• Be **proactive** in the profession and keep a **record** of your activities and your achievements

• **Measure your results**
  • Don’t take them for granted
  • Make sure you understand the measures of impact and criteria in your unit
Things to Avoid

• In general, don’t try to get your friends or collaborators to write evaluation letters!

• Avoid reusing letter writers from your tenure case
  • You won’t know who these are, but can help by not suggesting the same names

• Take seriously both positive and the negative criticism
  • Address any issues head on and rationally
  • Be demanding and honest with yourself
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Indicators

• Everyone knows his/her field is unique

• You need to establish your own indicators of excellence – and to apply them

• What does your field (peers outside the university) determine as measures of success in your area?

• Your best strategy is to clearly determine these indicators, and then to show how you follow and meet them...
  • ...in the context of your unit’s criteria
Key Questions to Ask and Answer

• What counts as “peer review” in your field?
  • Are these standards applied at peer institutions?

• What counts as “metrics of impact” in your field?
  • Are these taken seriously at peer institutions?
    • (What will external reviewers use to assess your record)?

• How does your field define “regional”, “national” or even “international”?

• How do you delineate the differences between research/creativity, teaching/mentoring and service?

• What is considered entrepreneurial and innovative in your field?
The University is Changing

- A culture of cooperation and interdisciplinarity is growing
- Great societal issues (climate change, renewable energies, social justice, international cooperation) are more and more central
- The university is beginning to value innovation and entrepreneurship
- If your creativity falls into these dimensions
  - At this point in time you need to make a special effort to spell out what this means in your case
  - (So that your colleagues understand and appreciate your approach)
And More to Consider

• Mentorship is critical
• Learn the culture of the institution and your department
• Establish connections within department
• Find out spoken and unspoken expectations of tenured faculty
• Become familiar with the promotion process
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