DATE

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for agreeing to serve as an external reviewer for Professor \_\_\_\_\_\_’s application for promotion to Professor. This is a labor-intensive task, and your willingness to lend your expertise to assist us in this review is deeply appreciated. As each institution’s process differs with respect to promotion, this e-mail seeks to provide some insight into Skidmore’s process. Skidmore College is a selective, private liberal arts institution where teaching is paramount; on average, our faculty teach 5 courses or the equivalent each academic year. Promotion files are evaluated according to three areas: teaching, scholarship/creative work, and service, and we are asking you to specifically address the candidate’s scholarship/creative work.

Candidates for promotion select their own external reviewers. We encourage candidates to choose expert reviewers who have the knowledge base and vantage point to critically evaluate their work fairly and objectively. While this does not preclude candidates from choosing reviewers that they know, we recommend candidates select a range of letter writers that have the expertise, stature in the field, knowledge of the candidate's research, and familiarity with the liberal arts setting to write the most effective letters. It is helpful if you would contextualize your relationship to the candidate in your letter and briefly describe your credentials.

The promotion process at Skidmore has three stages. During the first stage, the applicant’s file is reviewed by the home department, and a recommendation regarding promotion is made to the Promotions Committee (PC). The PC is a multidisciplinary committee of five faculty representing various college divisions (i.e. humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, arts, pre-professional programs). The PC reviews the file along with the letters written by the candidates’ colleagues in their home departments/programs, other colleagues within the College, and the external reviewers. In terms of your letter, it will be read by members of the PC, the Associate Dean of the Faculty, and the Dean of the Faculty, and colleagues in the candidate’s department. The candidate will not have access to your letter.

It is likely that the PC members are not familiar with the candidate’s disciplinary conventions, so external letters are of the utmost importance in helping them understand the importance and relevance of the candidate’s work in the discipline. The PC depends heavily on the external reviews in their assessments. Once the file including all letters is reviewed, the PC makes a recommendation to the President regarding promotion. The President then makes his recommendation to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

Letters that are most useful to the PC do the following:

* Provide a perspective on publishing or exhibition conventions in the discipline;
* Speak to the quality of candidates’ work;
* Position candidates’ work in the broader disciplinary context;
* Address the quality of candidates’ dissemination outlets;
* Illuminate the nature of the scholarly or artistic process, for example:
  + What sort of intellectual, scholarly, or artistic effort was necessary to produce the work?

In addition, I have included language from our *Faculty Handbook* that specifies the criteria for scholarship that merits advancement in rank from Associate to Full Professor:

“[A] record of sustained and significant engagement with the candidate’s discipline(s), continued development as a scholar or artist, and evidence of success in completing some substantial aspect(s) of research or artistic agenda beyond the candidate’s accomplishments at the time of promotion to Associate Professor. Through their research or creative work, Full Professors are expected to have developed a mature perspective on their field(s) that enables them to situate both their own work and the work of their students in the landscape of their discipline(s). Full Professors are also expected to continue their engagement with their scholarly or artistic discipline(s).”

Again, we understand that reviewing a colleague’s body of work takes time and considerable effort. Thank you for your assistance with Professor \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s review.

Please let ­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_ know, how you would like to receive the materials for review: either electronically in a shared file or hard copy. We will follow up with you.

Please address your letter to the Promotion Committee, and send it to the following address to the attention of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. You may also scan the letter and e-mail it. **The letter is due on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,**

Skidmore College

Department of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Attn: ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

815 N. Broadway

Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In gratitude,

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