

# Preparing Tenure Letters

Spring 2021

## Contacts:

- Appointments & Tenure Committee (ATC)
  - Mary Crone Odekon, Chair 2020-2021
  - Sara Lagalwar, Chair 2021-2022
- Michael Orr, Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Pat Fehling, Associate Dean of the Faculty for Infrastructure and Academic Affairs
- Aaron Kendall, Learning Experience Design & Digital Scholarship Support (LEDS)
- Sue Blair, Senior Administrative Coordinator in the Office of the DOF/VPAA

# Outline of the meeting

## Overview of tenure letters

“External” letters – from people outside Skidmore

“Internal” letters – from people at Skidmore, but not in the candidate’s  
primary Department/Program

Department/Program letters

Chair/Director letters

Additional guidelines

Discussion

# External Letters

We suggest that Chairs and Program Directors (CPDs) identify potential external reviewers in consultation with candidates, contact the potential reviewers to see if they are willing, and then send the official letter of request. (We do *not* suggest making the candidate responsible for reaching out to potential reviewers.)

Context on the purpose of the letters is in the “Guidelines on Assembling Materials for Tenure,” posted under “Forms” on the DOF site, and included as an appendix in the CPD Handbook.

A template for the message to request letters is in the Appendix of the CPD Handbook, “ATC Instructions for External Reviewers.” It should be modified to include the appropriate deadline for your departmental procedures. It can also be useful to provide department/program context that may not be clear from the standard template, such as specific issues related to teaching load and research infrastructure.

College Deadlines:

- Chairs/Directors send requests to reviewers by June 1, and a list of those reviewers with contact information should be sent to Sue Blair by June 1.
- Chairs/Directors forward external letters to Sue Blair by September 10.

Department/program procedures may involve earlier deadlines than these.

# Internal Letters

Typically, the candidate suggests the names of 3-5 members internal to the campus community but outside the department. Most often, these address the service component of the file.

A template for the message to request letters is on the ATC and DOF sites. It should be modified to include the appropriate deadline for your departmental procedures.

## College Deadlines:

- Chairs/Directors send requests to reviewers by June 1, and a list of those reviewers should be sent to Sue Blair by June 1.
- Chairs/Directors forward internal letters to Sue Blair by September 10.

(Note that these now match the deadlines for external letters.)

Department/program procedures may involve earlier deadlines than these.

# Department Letters

Letters should be solicited from “full-time faculty and those holding shared appointments in the department concerned (in the ranks defined in Part One [Faculty Rights and Responsibilities], Article VI [Appointments to the Faculty], Sections A [Tenure-Track Appointments] and E [Non-Tenure-Track Appointments], number 2b [Artist- or Writer-in-Residence]) who are in at least their third year of full-time service at Skidmore,” as described in the 2019-2020 Faculty Handbook.

A template for the message to request letters is on the ATC and DOF sites. It should be modified to include the appropriate deadline for your departmental procedures.

## College Deadlines:

- Chairs/Directors send requests to department/program members by September 5.
- Chairs/Directors forward department/program letters to Sue Blair by October 1.

Department procedures may involve earlier deadlines than these.

# Chair/Director Letters

From the *2019-2020 Faculty Handbook*: The Chair, in the letter of evaluation for the candidate, shall clearly state the procedures employed in reaching a departmental recommendation. The Chair shall clearly state whether the department does or does not recommend for tenure, and why, according to the criteria for continued service. Furthermore, the Chair shall clearly state the extent to which a candidate's particular abilities will continue to be needed, as far as the department's future can be projected.

## College Deadlines:

- Chairs/Directors forward their letters to Sue Blair by October 1.

Department procedures may involve earlier deadlines than these.

# Additional Guidelines

See the *Chair/Director Handbook*

*PART ONE ~ PERSONNEL*

*II: Faculty Evaluation*

*E. Suggested Guidelines for Writing Letters in Reappointment and Tenure Cases.*

We will look at these guidelines together.

Keep in mind:

- Department/program members should carefully address the tenure file in their letters, and also include any relevant information that is not already in the file.
- Most members of ATC and the Office of the DOF have specialties far outside that of the candidate; this is one of the reasons it helps to hear from each department member.
- It will be useful to include some perspective on how the pandemic created specific constraints for the candidate, and how the candidate rose to these challenges.

# Additional Guidelines

Possible outline for Chair/Director letters:

- Short statement on whether the department supports the candidate for tenure
- Brief summary of the candidate's appointment and timeline, including any idiosyncrasies related to interdisciplinary or joint appointments, previous experience, stopping the tenure clock, etc.
- Brief summary of departmental procedures regarding tenure. Who meets to discuss the candidates and when? How are external reviewers chosen? If there were changes in leadership during the candidate's pre-tenure years, it would be good to note who else mentored the candidate.
- Discussion of teaching
- Discussion of scholarship
- Discussion of service
- Brief discussion of importance to the department
- Brief summary of why the department concluded as it did

# Questions/Discussion