



To:	Keith Nainby, Speaker of the Faculty, 2020-2021
From:	Heather Coughlin, Chair, University Retention, Promotion, and Tenure Committee (URPTC), 2020-2021
Date:	May 3, 2021
RE:	Annual Report of the URPTC, 2020-2021

Members of the 2020-2021 URPTC are Heather Coughlin (Mathematics) [Chair], Keith Nainby (Communication Studies), Koni Stone (Chemistry), Steven Filling (Accounting), and Shradha Tibrewal (Social Work).

URPTC notes:

- starting AY 2021-2020, all RPT candidates will begin their review cycles at the same time early in the Fall semester - both 2-year candidates and 3+ year candidates.

URPTC requests:

- all members of the University continue to reflect upon how the physical distancing orders, including campus and other closures, have impacted their professional activities. This is crucial for the discussions of understanding RPT reviews for future evaluators and candidates.
- Faculty governance and administrators compose a memorandum of understanding of how to interpret the impact of the pandemic on RPT reviews.

URPTC continues requesting:

- departments plan for WPAFs should a candidate choose not to use Interfolio. For now, WPAFs continue to need to be electronic, and the Office of Faculty Affairs will need to create a One-Drive folder.
- departments follow the proposed RPT Procedures section II, approved by the Academic Senate and President Junn in Spring 2020, and include language in their departmental elaborations concerning earning tenure, promotion to Associate, and promotion to Professor; and language concerning early consideration for each of the three.
 - Departments are cautioned to ensure the language focuses on the work of faculty and not on the faculty as people. It is exceptionally difficult to describe exceptional work without comparing the faculty to others (which is explicitly forbidden).

Review of AY2020-2021:

URPTC is exhausted.

The committee worked very hard, under unprecedented circumstances, to ensure that the RPT process proceeded as specified in policy and procedures. In pursuit of that goal the committee met on multiple occasions with administrators or FAC, held multiple email discussions with administrators or FAC, met with departments when requested, and held multiple workshops for DRPTC members and for candidates to review campus policy and process.

Given the impact of the novel Covid19 pandemic, URPTC volunteered their time to meet with the Provost and Deans before the start of the Fall semester to create a joint statement concerning RPT



evaluations. The goal was to have the statement completed in time for second year candidates to include in their WPAFs. We thank the Provost and Deans for collaborating on the statement released August 24, 2020 (attached). Later in the Fall, Speaker Nainby lead the Academic Senate in passing 27-AS-SEC.

We question whether or not the joint statement and senate resolution rise to the level of a memorandum of understanding. In our opinion, it was clear from this year's review that these statements were not treated as such by some reviewers- specifically, some department reviewers and deans. URPTC has requested that President Junn implement a performance review of one dean based on their RPT recommendation of a candidate. These occurrences do not bode well for the future as people will have strong differing opinions on the lasting impact of the pandemic. At the writing of this document, we do not have confirmation as to how Provost Greer implemented the joint statement, though all indications are that she did follow the agreement. We HIGHLY recommend a formal MOU be written, and URPTC be included in the negotiations as four of the five of next year's URPTC are returning members and can share their experience from this year.

Also occupying URPTC's time since before the start of Fall and through most of the Fall, was the issue of WPAF platforms. The Committee, Dr. Jake Myers, (former Associate Vice President, Office of Faculty Affairs), Provost Greer, and CFA representative Dr. Dave Colnic explored options for candidates to submit their WPAFs. An inordinate amount of time was spent on this endeavor due to the unwillingness of the AVPFA to recognize an option besides Interfolio was necessary and achievable. Unfortunately, the arguing resulted in the AVPFA being formally uninvited from future RPT workshops. In the end, we circled back to the solution from last year: Interfolio or One-Drive. Except this year, faculty would be responsible for scanning/uploading, but the University would need to provide support. We created a couple of outreach emails and a survey encouraging faculty to make their support needs known to their department chair/dean to scan documents or how to report when some documents could not be retrieved/scanned due to the pandemic. In the end, all but one candidate used Interfolio. We found Interfolio to be a slow and clunky interface for the large number of files reviewed.

Additionally in the Fall (which is usually URPTC's down-time), time was spent with AVP Myers and Provost Greer on figuring out what RPT review looks like without one or possibly two semesters of student perceptions of teaching not included in a WPAF. We are grateful that once we realized the conversation should be led by FAC, they enthusiastically took charge and included URPTC as advisors. FAC Chair Dr. Steven Woods, Speaker Nainby, and I shared the results in an email to faculty dated January 8, 2021 "Recommendations to the Faculty for Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness: AY 20-21." Within this was also a response to the letter dated December 18, 2020 from President Junn and Provost Greer, "Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) Evaluations for Fall 2020." Though trying to claim otherwise, that confusing letter undercut much of the work done between faculty governance and administration concerning RPT review and student perceptions of teaching.

These vigorous debates are another indication that a formal MOU concerning the impact of the pandemic on RPT review should be developed, implemented, and upheld.

Last year, the FAC Ad-Hoc Committee on RPT convened, charged with evaluating our campus RPT policies and procedures. They examined necessary components of departmental elaborations, the time line, and the role of the president in our process. In Spring 2020, changes to policy and procedures were approved by the Senate and President Junn. Creation of the AY 2021-2022 calendar is presently being worked on. Reminder, all faculty undergoing RTP review will be submitting their WPAF in the beginning of Fall semesters.



Also, departmental elaborations are supposed to be updated to include statements on the awarding of early tenure or promotion. Experience from this year is consonant with the last several years – our campus conversation about departmental elaborations continues, and it continues to be the case that while some parties to the conversation feel that some departmental elaborations are too prescriptive, other parties argue that some departmental elaborations do not provide enough guidance for candidates and the various levels of review. URPTC hopes that those conversations will continue and that faculty will continue to assert their primacy over matters of curriculum, research, and faculty status. At the writing of this report, the URPTC is reviewing revised elaborations from ten departments, we do not expect to make it through all. The aforementioned work severely cut into our emotional capacity needed to discuss elaborations and how they might impact faculty. We will do what we can.

Of comfort is that, as usual, reading the 2020-2021 RPT files was an amazing and inspiring experience. Our colleagues accomplish excellence in the classroom and in their scholarly endeavors with very limited resources. The work faculty put in switching to distance learning is awe-inspiring. The time spent on the pedagogical shifts of this past year needs to be enunciated by faculty and honored by all RPT reviewers. We were impressed with how much the candidates have accomplished and how much they care about our students and our community.

The 2020-2021 cycle consisted of 79 reviews: 18 under Fall review and 61 (50 full and 11 partial) under Spring review. We reached agreement with Provost Greer on recommendations for all candidates. Given the changes to RPT policy, since agreement was achieved, the Provost's recommendations are, in-fact, decisions. This is truly a testament to the strength of our campus RPT policy and process.

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the continued support of CFA representative Dr. Dave Colnic. Also, we could not have done this job without Ms. Wendy Miller and Ms. Nancy Moghadas (Office of Faculty Affairs). Ms. Miller retired in Fall 2020, yet allowed us to call and access her vast knowledge of the RPT process and procedures. We welcome Ms. Moghadas as our main clerical support. Their patience, advice, commitment to excellence, organization across distance communications, and attention to detail, were very much appreciated.

As Chair of the Committee, I wish to express my gratitude for the support and fortitude of this year's committee. As was commented on last year's committee, this year's committee members are to be commended for the seriousness and commitment with which they served.

Heather Coughlin, PhD URPTC Chair, 2020-2021



To:	Tenure-line Faculty
From:	Provost Greer, Dean Evans, Dean Gomez-Arias, Dean Myhre, Dean Tuedio, Speaker Nainby, URPTC Chair Coughlin, URPTC members Filling, Nainby, Stone, Tibrewal
Date:	August 20, 2020
RE:	RPT evaluations in the context of COVID-19 pandemic

The novel COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted every aspect of our lives. Departmental RPT elaborations were written and adopted without clauses addressing how natural disasters such as a pandemic might impact candidates. Every aspect of faculty work has been affected by the current COVID-19 conditions. The process for a department to change their elaborations cannot happen in time for revised elaborations to be used in the upcoming cycle of reviews. Once the evaluation process has started, the review criteria cannot be changed. The start dates for review are August 28, for the 2nd year evaluations and October 1, for everyone else. Therefore, it is paramount that we consider the effect of the pandemic when applying the existing departmental elaborations to the evaluation of faculty.

Our campus “Principles, Criteria and Procedures for Retention, Promotion, and Tenure Review” policy, states in Section V: F, “It shall be the responsibility of the Departmental RPT Committee Chair and the candidate to gather information pertinent to the RPT review, including student evaluation of teaching data and a current vita.” In Section V: G, “The Departmental RPT Committee shall be responsible for providing detailed description and evaluation of the candidate's performance for each of the stated criteria. The purpose shall be to communicate all pertinent information about the candidate to subsequent levels of review.”

The Principles, Criteria and Procedures policy, and departmental elaborations were written and reviewed without clauses addressing the impacts of natural disasters. Thus, candidates should include statements of how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their teaching, RSCA and service. Then, Department RPT Committees, in their “detailed description and evaluation,” should include statements of context so that subsequent levels of review, in conducting their independent reviews (Sections V: H, I, J, K), may develop understandings of the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic and limited access to campus have impacted the candidates’ teaching, RSCA, and service activities in relation to the departmental elaborations.

As a guide, we recommend that department RPT committees consider the following:



1. Acknowledge the value of the research, training, and preparation work of the faculty member in transitioning to fully remote delivery modes involving both pedagogical and scholarly adjustments.
2. Recognize and support changes, even drastic ones, in the research, scholarship, and creative activity agenda of the faculty member in response to the new challenges and opportunities they face. Explicitly noting that COVID-19 has interrupted virtually everyone's scholarly activity agenda would be wise, including acknowledgement of how said interruption impacts faculty research productivity and metrics in the coming years.
3. Take a comprehensive view of the faculty member's work in teaching, service, and research, scholarship, and creative activities with an understanding that an imbalance among the three areas may be an appropriate and desirable response to the needs of the institution and our students during this pandemic.

We must take into consideration the unusual circumstances all of us have been under due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage departmental level reviewers to do the same. While we are focused on the immediate impact of the pandemic, this document should also be considered relevant to future RPT reviews for all tenure-track Assistant and Associate Professors in active service during the COVID-19 pandemic which began in 2020.