M E M O R A N D U M

Date: October 1, 2015
To: Tenure-Track Faculty
cc: Tenured Faculty
From: Committee on Faculty Appointments (CFA), 2015-16
Re: Reappointment and Tenure Review Process

Each year the current CFA writes to junior faculty outlining the procedures and standards that inform the work of the committee. The purpose of this annual letter is to clarify issues that are sometimes misunderstood and to strengthen communication within the College community regarding the review process. In this letter, it is not the committee's intent to provide a comprehensive account of the appointments process or to paraphrase or repeat what is amply described in College legislation, but to offer a general overview and to address the most common concerns raised by the junior faculty. More detailed information is available in *Articles of Government*, Book 1 and in the guidelines and checklists available on the CFA webpage (http://www.wellesley.edu/provost/committees/cfa).

General Operations of the CFA

In reappointment and tenure reviews, the role of the CFA is to respond to the recommendations of Reappointments and Promotions (R&P) committees. The CFA's decisions take the form of either accepting or rejecting a recommendation made by an R&P or by one part of an R&P.

The CFA often needs further guidance to interpret material provided by the R&P. If the CFA feels that it does not have sufficient information to respond to a recommendation, the Committee may ask questions (either written or oral) of an R&P. Requests for information or clarification are not uncommon and should not be interpreted by candidates as foreshadowing a negative decision. In addition, the CFA may request copies of annual conversation reports and/or class visit reports.

Faculty members on the CFA holding an appointment in the same department or program as a candidate (or who are outside members of a candidate's R&P) are recused from consideration of that case and do not participate in any of the committee's discussions. Instead, they participate as members of the R&P. The Provost/Dean of the College and Dean of Faculty Affairs are the only exceptions to this rule, because they serve on the committee in their administrative capacities.

The College's appointments process has long been characterized by its relative transparency, a transparency that is intended to benefit the candidate. The candidate receives a copy of the R&P's recommendation as well as of any correspondence between the CFA and the R&P (with appropriate redactions). It is not the practice of the CFA to meet in person with the candidate, but at any stage of the process, the candidate is free to

communicate in writing to the CFA. The CFA does not share such communications with R&Ps, so if a candidate wishes her/his R&P to see a copy, she or he should provide one directly. To further protect the candidate's privacy, members of R&Ps and the CFA are instructed to adhere scrupulously to the principle of confidentiality, and no formal announcement of the outcome of a reappointment or tenure decision is made to the College community.

The CFA gives thorough and careful consideration to each case before reaching a decision. It has been the practice of the committee never to make a decision about a reappointment or tenure case at the first meeting at which it is discussed. Every case is considered on at least two occasions, and frequently more than that. As a result, an extended period of time may elapse between the time at which a case is first considered (and written questions submitted to an R&P) and the time at which a decision is made.

Each case that comes before the CFA is considered on its own merits. The CFA does not base its decisions to tenure or reappoint on a comparison of the candidates. The College does not have reappointment or tenure quotas or caps. The College does, however, have rigorous expectations for faculty performance in each of the three main areas of activity (scholarship, teaching, and service) considered at reappointment and tenure.

The Provost's office publishes a list of faculty under review each year. This list provides an opportunity for members of the College community, past and present, to write to the CFA about a candidate coming up for review, though letters are accepted at any time. Letters from colleagues and students are welcome. The CFA does not judge a case based on the number of letters received, nor is it appropriate for faculty to actively solicit them.

Standards for Teaching

While SEQs are an important part of a candidate's dossier, they are examined critically and read carefully by the CFA in the context of the overall teaching portfolio, which includes the candidate's personal statement, the R&P's recommendation (which addresses class visits), enrollments, syllabi and other pedagogical materials, and unsolicited letters. Rather than focusing on specific individual comments, CFA members identify themes (positive and negative) in the student comments and discernible trends in the quantitative and qualitative data. We do not make the assumption that excellent teaching is necessarily synonymous with high scores and laudatory student comments. The committee recognizes that some attributes of excellent teaching (high standards, demanding or challenging coursework) or some legitimate pedagogical methods (for example, cold-calling) might be characterized negatively in some student comments. The committee also recognizes that students sometimes make errors in completing the form. These errors are generally obvious from the qualitative narrative comments, all of which are carefully read by the CFA; such errors are then noted during the discussion when we evaluate each SEQ record.

Teaching portfolios may vary with respect to the number and form of course preparations, depending on the discipline. By the time a candidate stands for tenure, however, he or she has typically had the opportunity to demonstrate effective teaching at

all levels of a department's or program's curriculum. Although opportunities and expectations again vary across fields, the CFA recognizes the importance of collaborative work with students and independent study supervision as a form of teaching. Junior faculty members often ask how to balance their own research needs with collaborative work with students. The CFA acknowledges the pedagogical value of extending research opportunities to students, as appropriate to the specific discipline or project, though an extensive record of collaboration with students does not exempt a faculty member from meeting the College's high standards for research.

Standards for Research

As noted above, the College maintains high standards of scholarly research. In every case that it considers, the committee is concerned primarily with the quality, originality, and significance of the contribution that a faculty member is making, has made, and will make to the scholarly or artistic field in which he or she works. In order to evaluate scholarly work, the CFA considers the professional expectations of each field. In doing so, it evaluates all relevant evidence, including the judgment of external evaluators (in tenure cases), the candidate's research statement, assessment by R&P colleagues, the quality of publication venues, the standards and definitions of excellence appropriate to a particular field, as well as any relevant indicators of professional standing and distinction, such as external funding. The committee finds that significant contributions to a scholarly field generally involve a record of substantial publication, but the committee does not reduce its overall evaluation of a research portfolio to the counting of publications.

Standards for Service

We look for a strong record of College and department service in every case for reappointment or tenure, although such a record will not compensate for lack of excellence in the categories of research and teaching. The CFA understands that opportunities for service vary across the College, so not all service records will look the same. Participation on committees of Academic Council and departmental committees and other forms of College service are expected, with particular note taken if a faculty member has assumed significant responsibilities in the work of a committee or on behalf of a specific college initiative.

The CFA also values public service and service to the profession. Such service might include participating in external review processes for academic journals or other publication outlets or institutions, media appearances or commentary in the public press, organizing panels and symposia at meetings of professional organizations, or serving on the governing bodies of such organizations. It is important that both candidates and R&P committees identify aspects of excellence in the service record in their statements to the CFA, since such excellence may otherwise be difficult for the CFA to recognize and evaluate.

Members of the 2015-16 Committee on Faculty Appointments:

H. Kim Bottomly, President
Andrew Shennan, Provost and Dean of the College (Chair)
Kathryn Lynch, Dean of Faculty Affairs (non-voting)
Rebecca Bedell, Art
John Cameron, Biological Sciences
Courtney Coile, Economics
Tracy Gleason, Psychology
Kim McLeod, Astronomy

Ruth Frommer, Assistant Dean of the College for Faculty Appointments