Evaluation, Tenure, and Promotion at KU – Guiding Thoughts

This guide is intended to offer clear, supportive direction for faculty as they navigate evaluation, tenure, and promotion at KU. It provides shared expectations, helpful context, and a transparent sense of how teaching, scholarship, and service are understood across colleges and our community.

Best,
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Please note: *When folders leave the department level, they are considered complete and additional materials should not be added beyond subsequent reviewer documents or responses per CBA process.*

KU context

- High-quality teaching matters in the context of our mission
- We operate within a teacher-scholar model: research, scholarship & creative activities inform teaching
- There is an expectation of attention to teaching, scholarly growth, & service

PASSHE CBA Categories for Evaluation in the KU Context

- Effective teaching and fulfillment of professional responsibilities
  - Student feedback is important
  - Peer observations inform understandings
  - Student advisement counts
  - Willingness to accept departmental work assignments and timely completion of departmental work assignments are part of this
  - Program assessment work is part of the responsibility here
  - Non-teaching assignments may be addressed in this category where AWA is received for that work (similar to if someone has a "mixed load" assignment). However, arguments may also be made that the level of service goes beyond the AWA assigned.
- Continuing scholarly growth and professional development
  - All varieties of scholarly activity apply here, including creative works
  - Items don't "count or not." Instead, it is a matter of the amount of impact or "weight" they have in this area and extent to which they signal peer-evaluated marks of quality. For example:
    - An invited article has less impact than a competitively selected work, but it still has value in the category;

- - A juried exhibition is weighted more than an invited exhibition;
    - A Nobel Prize in literature has more impact than a publication in a regional anthology of short stories;
    - Presentations of scholarly or creative work on campus are weighted less than those off campus; or
    - A DOE grant has more impact than a PASSHE grant.
  - Because we are a teaching school, our goal in scholarly activity includes contribution to the field of knowledge and/or creativity but also is about how that work reflects back into the teaching process. For both of these reasons, scholarly activity related to the field of primary teaching responsibility or expertise has more weight/impact in the review than work that may occur outside of the field.
  - Professional development activities, including taking additional graduate or non-credit courses, also are included in this category, whether they are on or off campus. However, they typically have less impact than peer-reviewed scholarly/creative activity.
  - Candidates for tenure should be able to show that they are making an impact on their field that extends beyond the campus, system, and state. There should be evidence of development in the scholarly/creative activity over the probationary period (rather than little or no activity until shortly before tenure review). Markers of peer-review by experts and dissemination in high-quality venues are important. Candidates and departments should provide context regarding the quality of work in their review documents.
  - Candidates for promotion should be able to show consistency of contribution to their fields via peer-reviewed high-quality dissemination. Consistent and/or gradually developing work completed over the period of time since the last promotion (or hire) is a strong indicator of excellence. A sustained pattern of engagement provides a more compelling case for promotion than isolated or short-term bursts of output.
- Service contribution to the university and/or community
  - All levels of campus service are part of this category. Campus service items don't "count or not." Instead, it is a matter of the amount of impact they have for the university (or community/discipline).
    - This includes curricular development work, peer mentorship and training, participation in campus events.
  - This category does not include attending professional development events/sessions meant to aid the faculty member in their growth (that goes back in the prior category).
  - Advising of student clubs and organizations belongs here. Advising students for the major/minor is in the teaching category.
  - Service to the discipline (conference planning etc.) is also included here.

Department- and Discipline-Specific Understandings

- Departments should develop shared understandings of any specialized teaching excellence needs in their area (i.e. safety protocols in the sciences and visual arts).
- Similarly, departments should have shared understandings (communicated to candidates) about scholarship in the specific arena. This may include:
  - How shared authorship is understood in a field of study;

- o What a standard article length looks like in that field (or how abstracts are understood);
- o What type of publications or exhibitions are seen as the "hallmark" publications in that field;
- o What awards are considered the highest marks of distinction in that area;
- o The relationship between conference and publication in the field of study; or
- o The differences between a solo exhibition, a group exhibition, etc.
- If a department has particular service needs and expectations (e.g. portfolio review), that should also be a shared discussion and understanding.

Formative Assessment in the Early Probationary Years

- Tenure is not about a faculty member being good or bad; it is about the match between the faculty member and the university. A poor match isn't good for anyone. This makes formative assessment crucial.
- Evaluations, including peer observations, PET committee letters, and chair letters should include frank, honest and complete feedback.
  - o Identify strengths.
  - o Identify areas for improvement.
  - o Suggest a plan for remedies.
  - o Indicate the goals to achieve.
  - o Document any significant concerns – we don't want surprises for the candidate.
  - o Celebrate successes.

Summative Assessment Nearing Tenure and Beyond

- The tenure evaluation should be based on aggregated formative assessment of the probationary years.
- While student feedback results may be present for limited semesters in some cases, all elements of promotion evaluation should involve a consideration of activity since the last promotion (or since hire).
- In tenure review and promotion to Associate Professor, development over time is a typical path, such that service increases and broadens, scholarly/creative activity develops and extends to wider audiences, and teaching shows more markers of excellence.
- In promotion to Full Professor, ongoing and high-quality efforts in all areas of review over time are expected to be seen. Bursts of activity in the year of promotion are less indicative of such excellence that consistent and quality work. Some candidates may show slightly more effort/impact in service, while others show slightly more in scholarly activity. However, a high degree of quality is expected in all areas for promotion to this highest level of the professorate.

Review as a Rhetorical Argument Backed by Empirical Data

- While we are assessing candidates on empirical evidence, all evidence calls for analysis and interpretation.

- Candidates should remember that they are making an argument. Their discussion of past goals, achievement of those goals, and their future plans frames all evaluations. Issues should be acknowledged and improvements made (or planned) should be discussed.
- Reviewers at all levels should carefully review not only the candidate's discussion but all evidence.
- All reviews should be evidence based, linked to criteria, and characterized by thoughtful and careful review of all materials.
- All review letters should include context that will enhance subsequent reviewers' understanding of the candidate's achievements and areas of development.