

TO: Deans of academic colleges
FROM: Provost Patrick Wolfe
RE: External letter-writers for the upcoming round of promotion & tenure (AY24-25)

28 May 2024

Choice of external letter-writers assessing suitability for promotion & tenure, and language for the message soliciting letters

1. Our overarching goal is to be recognized as a top-five U.S. public research university. Internal promotion & tenure cases have the same expectations for scholarly impact and quality, and a demonstrated track record reflecting these expectations, as do external senior hires.
2. As always, the primary committee in the hiring department must independently seek external letters of assessment, with the number chosen by the primary committee exceeding the number chosen by the candidate. The **minimum** number of letters should be 8, noting that additional letters provide the potential for more evidence and hence an even more robust assessment.
3. Letters of assessment must be sought objectively without fear or favor from demonstrably leading scholars at leading institutions—AAU universities, as per our [annual guidance](#)—with a recommendation from at least one leading university internationally for full professor candidates. Letter-writers must be explicitly asked “to comment on the suitability of the candidate for a tenured appointment at the level of [Associate Professor/Professor, as appropriate] at an institution whose goal is to be recognized as a top five U.S. public research university.” Additional language that must be used in the instructions to letter-writers is as [previously described](#), and as a reminder, all prospective letter-writers’ credentials as leading scholars must be clearly and factually summarized.
4. Bearing in mind the goal always of obtaining arms-length objective assessments from demonstrably leading scholars, deans will explicitly review and sign off on all letter-writers in advance of letters being solicited. In the rare cases where any exceptions to the guidelines in (3) above may be warranted, heads can petition deans, who will make the Provost’s Office aware in advance of any exceptions being granted, along with a detailed justification.

This memo continues the guidance from AY23-24, unchanged.

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