

STATEMENT of DEANS' / PROVOST'S EXPECTATIONS OF TENURE APPLICANTS

Foreword: *The Council of Deans and Provost are committed to the goal of transparency in our expectations of tenure applicants and share with others throughout the University a genuine appreciation as well as strong desire for clarity in this important arena. We share in the statement below what we believe are appropriate and reasonable appreciations for not only certain inherent limitations in the degree of specificity attainable in such statements, but also for the potential negative consequences of excessive specificity. It is thus within a context of dual appreciations for increased clarity in these matters at Tarleton on the one hand, and explicit reservations regarding the degree of specificity sought, that we offer the following statement of our expectations.*

Statement:

Teaching:

Reflecting the primacy of teaching in regional comprehensive universities, our first consideration and expectation of tenure applicants is that they have demonstrated clear talent, professional enjoyment and enthusiasm for classroom teaching. We consequently expect there to be both, a relative absence of significant questions, concerns or criticisms of the applicant's teaching from peers, supervisors and students and a relative presence of positive comments, observations, perceptions, ratings and commendations. We are also inclined to view evidence of specific efforts to grow and further develop as a teacher not as a specific expectation but as particularly commendable in a tenure applicant. The terms "*relatively absent/present*" reflect the inherent degrees of available, credible evidence in such matters and the corresponding need for careful professional assessment and judgment of this critically important area.

We make our assessments of the above expectation on the basis of multiple data points such as but not restricted to: the applicant's self-assessment; department head annual evaluations; evaluative comments or reports from tenured faculty in the member's department; evaluative comments or reports from the College Review Committee; the recommendations of the Department Head; the quality of materials submitted by the applicant as evidence of teaching aptitude or achievements; student ratings of teaching; course loads, enrollment and grading patterns; and when present, due consideration of any recognitions or awards for teaching the applicant may have received. The provost adds to these considerations, the results of the Administrative Review Committee's review of the applicant's teaching performance to date in forming the provost's recommendation to the President.

To underscore the primacy of this expectation of tenure applicants, Tarleton's deans and provost share the view that absent satisfying the above expectations in teaching, meeting or exceeding expectations in the categories that follow; research/scholarship/ creative activity and service is likely insufficient to gain dean or provost support for tenure at Tarleton.

Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity (RSCA):

We believe recent changes in Chapter 4 in the *Faculty Handbook* have clarified for tenure applicants that nominal evidence of successful performance in RSCA negates support for tenure at the department, college and university levels. We also believe that differences in academic disciplines result in a certain reality that acceptable evidence of adequate RSCA performance may vary within a given college as well as between colleges. We also appreciate certain expansions of traditional definitions of acceptable RSCA activity, the most prominent of which, arguably, are found in the late Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered*, a widely acclaimed 1990 publication of the Carnegie Foundation. We nonetheless agree as deans and provost, that notwithstanding these variations and expansions, we share common expectations of tenure applicants as follows.

First, we expect the applicant's record of RSCA activity will include a record of identifiable products, whether those products be written or material in nature. These products include such things as grant proposals submitted/funded and attendant reports, descriptions of goals/outcomes achieved; published book reviews; manuscripts submitted for publication and currently under review; manuscripts submitted and accepted for publication; books, chapters in books or credited portions of books in print; invited papers presented to professional audiences; descriptive reports describing professional consulting projects, activities or contracts; pieces of fine art such as sculpture, paintings, musical scores, dramatic scripts, stage designs, etc.; and newly developed software or technology programs with important contributions to the applicant's discipline, - and doubtless numerous other examples specific to different disciplines. These variations notwithstanding, we expect the evidence to reveal specifically identified and described products.

The plural form of the word product is intentional and relates to an important question in academe, the question of requiring a specific number of products for tenure consideration. At Tarleton, we discourage the use of a specific number, though we understand its attraction as a means for achieving clarity. Thoughtful reflections on the kinds of RSCA evidence examined in tenure applications such as those listed above quickly reveal significant inevitable differences in either perceived or real value of a given "product". Moreover, the production of a specific

number of products in order to be considered for tenure carries inordinate potential to define, numerically, both the university's and the individual's RSCA goals and future agenda as a faculty member. Moreover, it is both our belief and our concern that universities who employ specific "counting" requirements in tenure reviews are less numerous than those who do not, which we suspect reflects a wider appreciation for our own reservations, - and perhaps most importantly, are no less vulnerable to differing assessments, opinions and judgments of tenure applicants than those who do not, which takes us to our quality expectations of RSCA products.

Our quality expectations can be summarized in two contexts; quality and outcomes of **peer review**, and quality and outcome of the **product(s)' dissemination**. To the extent a given RSCA product has been peer reviewed by one's peers, particularly peers external to the university in the applicant's academic discipline, and to the extent those reviews have yielded approval, endorsement or other levels of peer commendation of the product, we are favorably inclined to attach value to the product. Inversely, non peer reviewed products, or products reviewed solely by internal peers or non-objective peers are less favorably viewed. Beyond peer review, we look for level and quality of the product's **dissemination** among and within the broader academic community. To the extent the product was disseminated to, demonstrated to, presented to or otherwise seen by a significant number of relevant persons, our appreciation for the product grows. Again inversely, non-disseminated products, or products otherwise not likely seen by an important number of relevant others, are less favorably viewed.

In addition to products that are peer reviewed and disseminated, the deans' and provost's expectations include the expectation of **sustained** RSCA activity vs. episodic or as is often the case, a rush to produce something presumed acceptable in order to meet a calendar deadline for promotion, tenure or post-tenure review. The University's purposes in expecting RSCA productivity among faculty are not episodic or one-time purposes; they are purposes of an enduring, sustained nature requiring active faculty engagement of an enduring, sustained kind.

Taken in sum, it is the deans' and provost's shared expectation that successful tenure applicants, in addition to having passed the bar of clearly satisfactory or above teaching performance, will provide clear and convincing evidence of RSCA productivity of a **continuing, sustained** kind that, notwithstanding the expected variance in the nature and kind of **product(s)** described, will include products that have been **peer reviewed**, well received by peers and **disseminated** to a wider professional audience relevant to the applicant's academic discipline.

We would also encourage all tenure applicants and interested campus parties who have not previously done so, to read the formal statement of the provost on the Academic Affairs web site regarding the rationale for the university's expectations of RSCA. This is a particularly important statement at this time in Tarleton's history in that it describes the rationale for

expecting RSCA productivity of faculty in a non-research, non-doctoral, regional comprehensive university such as ours.

Service:

As arguable as measures or degrees of performance achieved in teaching and research/ scholarship and creative activity are among reasonable people, even more arguable are measures or degrees of achievement in service and their relative importance in tenure decisions. That being said, we believe the category often gets too little consideration in the review of tenure applications, and for institutions like ours, is a category that ought to receive greater consideration, not as a substitution for meeting expectations in teaching and research, but as a complement to them. While we agree that performance in teaching and RSCA enjoy a long history throughout higher education of greater consideration in these matters than service, we as deans and provost have service expectations of applicants that we wish to make as clear as possible.

First and foremost, we expect successful tenure applicants will enjoy a perception among their department and college peers as persons willing to serve, whether that service be to the program, the department, the college or the university. We of course expect those perceptions are shared by the applicant's immediate supervisor, the academic department head. Because opportunity to serve is at best uneven throughout the University, we attach particular importance to the perceived willingness of the applicant to be of service when the opportunity or need presents.

Second, whatever the number the applicant's service opportunities have been, a deeper look at the quality of service provided has been taken. We are therefore interested in such things beyond membership on a given committee or task force, as the applicant's attendance pattern and perceived contribution to the committee if that kind of data can be obtained.

Third, we expect that applicants for tenure have shown personal initiative in the service category, either through volunteering to be of service, inquiring of relevant others regarding the availability of service opportunities or bringing forth specific proposals to the applicant's peers or supervisors of projects or initiatives the applicant would like to pursue strictly as a service to the program, department or college.

Fourth, regarding service to the larger community beyond the university, we particularly value community service relevant to the applicant's academic discipline and are inclined to attribute

less value to community service appearing to bear little or no relationship to the member's discipline. While we of course value all community service as citizens, as persons assessing fitness for tenure, we look first and foremost at the issue of academic relevance.

Respectfully submitted,

Tarleton State University Council of Deans and Office of Provost and Vice President for
Academic Affairs

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