Sample solicitation of External Evaluators for Promotion Candidates (2017)

Date
Name and Address

Dear Dr. X,

The program in __________ at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) is considering Dr. __________ for promotion to Professor. We would appreciate your candid assessment of Dr. X’s scholarly contributions to assist our decision-making process. For your information, UTEP’s program in __________ offers a Masters/Doctoral degree and has _____ faculty members. UTEP is classified as a Doctoral/Research – Intensive” university with the Carnegie classification system, and is located on the United States-Mexico Border. With $90 million in total annual research expenditures, UTEP ranks third among University of Texas System academic institutions in federal research spending. With an 80% Hispanic student population— and an additional 5% from Mexico—UTEP proudly reflects the demographic composition of the binational region from which it draws 90% of its students. While excellent teaching and university service contributions are important criteria for promotion, our evaluation of those contributions are being conducted separately. We are only asking you for your evaluation of her/his scholarly distinction.

I am including their CV with this email to assist you regarding your ability to help with this review. If you are willing to assist us with this important evaluation, then we will make available to you electronically Dr. X’s recent publications and related scholarship. We would like your assessment of these works. In your assessment, your response to the following questions would be very helpful to us:

1. Do you know Dr. X and, if so, for how long and under what circumstances have you known him or her.
2. How would you assess the contributions to the literature made by Dr. X’s publications, scholarship, or creative activities? Which of his/her publications and scholarship would you judge to be the most significant and why?
3. What is your evaluation of the journals and other outlets in which Dr. X has published?
4. Are you aware of Dr. X’s contributions to professional meetings, societies, and organizations? If so, we would welcome your comments on these contributions.
5. How would you assess Dr. X’s development as a scholar and a researcher compared with other scholars in the field who are at a similar stage of development?
6. How do you assess Dr. X’s future potential? When addressing the latter issue, it is not necessary to indicate whether you believe that Dr. X would likely earn tenure or promotion in your own department.

We would be grateful for any additional comments that you might have.

For your comments to be maximally useful in our consideration of Dr. X’s candidacy, I would appreciate receiving a letter from you no later than August 15, 2017. Although letters are normally not disclosed to candidates, federal law permits employees under certain circumstances to gain access to their personnel files through Freedom of Information requests. I also included the text from our Handbook of Operating procedures (http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=30381) outlining our criteria for evaluation of their scholarship. Thank you very much for your assistance with this important professional task.
If you agree, a follow-up email will be sent with instructions on how to access their information electronically. Please provide a copy of your own curriculum vita, which we will append to your letter of evaluation. If you have questions, please call me at 915-747-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Chair, Department of XXXXXXX
4.4.6 Criteria for Tenure and Promotion at The University of Texas at El Paso

4.4.6.1.6 A faculty member will not be granted tenure without a clear history of significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge in his or her discipline. The faculty member must also be judged to be likely to continue making such contributions for the rest of the career. Therefore, the following criteria are offered as guidelines in evaluating scholarly activity of a faculty member:

a. A history of publication in refereed academic journals or other refereed outlets at a rate appropriate for the discipline. The quality of the published work, as well as the quality of the outlet, is to be judged. There should be no attempt to impose any particular number of contributions necessary for recommendation for tenure and promotion or to balance quantity of contributions against quality.

b. The importance of the work to the discipline should be judged not only by the departmental faculty, but also by the outside evaluators. For example, no fewer than three (3) letters of evaluation are used to assess the merit of the candidate’s research and scholarship.

c. In order for a scholarly effort to have made a demonstrable contribution to a discipline, it should have been brought into a public forum by a process that includes peer review and an evaluation of the importance of the work by nationally-known scholars or practitioners. Usually, this means that works must appear in recognized outlets appropriate for the discipline (e.g., publications, competitive external funding, national performances or exhibits.). Experiments completed but not published, books or articles in draft form, classified documents, and undisplayed works of art, for example, are considered to be private works and not yet in the public domain. They may, of course, be considered along with an individual’s other accomplishments, but they may not be used to satisfy this criterion.

d. Routine applications of already accepted knowledge or of theory are not normally considered to be contributions to the advancement of knowledge in the discipline. The distinction between what is and is not a contribution to the advancement of knowledge may, at times, be subtle, but the burden of proof falls on the candidate.

4.4.6.1.7 Since participation in Department, College or School, and University activities is expected of all faculty members, such involvement is not adequate justification for awarding tenure.

For promotion to Professor,
Be judged to be a mature scholar in his or her discipline. Research accomplishments should be evidenced by continued publication of significant scholarly works in prestigious academic journals, or by continued appropriate artistic expression; by national and international fellowships and awards won; and by national and international positions held in professional organizations. Quality and frequency of published works, exhibitions, or performance should be comparable to those in the discipline holding professorial rank at high-quality academic institutions.