

Best Practices for Identifying UAB HSOM Promotion Candidate Reviewers

Identifying appropriate reviewers to write letters on behalf of promotion candidates can be a time-consuming activity, and their letters can substantially influence how a candidate's application is judged during review. Recognizing that these letters are an important part of the peer-review process, the following checklist was developed to assist you and your promotion candidates in this process.

We suggest that you provide to each of your letter writers the UAB Heersink School of Medicine Criteria for Promotion and/or Award of Tenure guidelines, the promotion candidate's CV, and a summary of the candidate's list of achievements to help them focus their letter of support on the candidate's important contributions. Our guiding principle should be to ensure external reviewers provide fair and objective evaluations of our candidates, so that our own P&T evaluators can rely on their expressed opinions. To achieve our goal of collecting fair and objective external reviews, external reviewers should be required to disclose their relationship to the candidate so that our P&T reviewers have full knowledge of these relationships. Importantly, external reviewers should be asked to include in their letter an attestation that they meet the criteria of an 'arm's length' reviewer. This attestation should clearly state the following:

- the reviewer is not a close friend, relative, or spouse of the candidate,
- the reviewer has not been a supervisor, student, or mentor of the candidate in the last five years (for promotion to Associate Professor) or the last ten years (for promotion to Professor),
- the reviewer does not have a financial relationship with the candidate, and
- the reviewer has not been a co-author, close collaborator, or co-investigator of the candidate in the last three years (unless the reviewer and candidate collaborate on very large projects or are authors on publications with numerous authors or where the reviewer and the candidate have only a distant relationship, such as with multi-site research projects).

As a best practice, at least a majority of external reviewers should be free of any of the above relationships with the candidate being reviewed. External letters should be returned to the Department APT Chair, a Department APT Representative, or the Department Chair. External letters should not be returned to the candidate. Upon receipt of the letters, the Department should promptly review them to ensure each letter meets all the criteria outlined below. The department should submit a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of five (5) external letters and a minimum of three (3) and maximum of five (5) internal letters in the promotion packet.

Checklist for Requesting Reviewer Letters

1. Request at least five (5) internal and five (5) external reviewers to make certain that a minimum number of properly formatted letters can be included in the candidate's packet.
2. External reviewers must not be currently affiliated with UAB nor affiliated with UAB in the last five years.

3. Internal reviewers must be currently appointed at UAB or an affiliated institution (TCH, UAHSF, SRI and/or VA).
4. Reviewers must have an academic rank equal to or higher than that being sought by the candidate.
5. Reviewers should have recognized achievements within the candidate's declared area(s) of expertise, or closely aligned with such area(s).
6. External reviewers must be at "arm's length" and therefore may not be:
 - a close friend, relative, or spouse
 - a supervisor, advisor, student, or mentor of the candidate (e.g., within the last five years for promotion to Associate Professor and within the last ten years for promotion to Professor)
 - in a financial relationship with the candidate
 - a recent co-author, collaborator, or co-investigator of the candidate (e.g., within the last three years)
7. All letters should be on official letterhead and signed.
8. Reviewers must state the candidate's current and proposed academic rank/tenure status.
9. Reviewers should state in the letter what they are evaluating (promotion, award of tenure or both).
10. Reviewers should state and review the areas of excellence (one for Non-tenure earning and two for Tenure-earning and Tenure).

Email Template for Communication with Potential Reviewers

Dear Dr. *****,

The UAB Department of ***** plans to propose Dr. ***** for promotion to [insert rank and tenure status] from [his/her] current rank of [insert current rank and current tenure status]. Excellence in [insert appropriate number-one for NTE and two for TE and Tenure] of our three core missions (research, teaching, service) [is/are] the standard for promotion in the Department of *****. Our proposal will be supported primarily on the basis of Dr. ***** excellence in [insert areas of excellence]. A copy of the Heersink School of Medicine guidelines for promotion and award of tenure are attached.

Institutional policy requires that extramural evaluations of proposed candidates be obtained from persons who are considered to have an "arm's length" relationship with the candidate or who are authorities in their field. Accordingly, I ask that you provide an evaluation of Dr. ***** focusing on, but not limited to, the areas mentioned above. We ask that external reviewers include an attestation in your letter demonstrating that you meet the criteria as an arm's length reviewer including:

- You are not a close friend, relative, or spouse of the candidate,
- You have not been a supervisor, student, or mentor of the candidate in the last five years for promotion to Associate Professor and ten years for promotion to Professor,
- You do not have a financial relationship with the candidate, and
- You have not been a co-author, close collaborator, or co-investigator of the candidate in the last three years (unless the reviewer and candidate collaborate on very large projects or are authors on publications with numerous authors or where the reviewer

and the candidate have only a distant relationship, such as with multi-site research projects).

In your letter, please state that you are evaluating Dr. ***** for promotion from *[insert current rank and tenure status]*, to *[insert proposed rank and tenure status]*, on the basis of *[his/her] [insert areas of excellence] (research, teaching, service)] activities*. It would also be helpful to reviewers to know whether Dr. ***** would be promoted and awarded tenure at your institution. To aid with your evaluation, I have attached a copy of Dr. ***** curriculum vitae and a list of significant achievements.

I recognize how much of your time and effort is needed to respond to this request, but I assure you that your evaluation is of great importance. In order to meet the various deadlines associated with this process, I am requesting your letter of evaluation by ***[insert deadline to respond]***. You may either scan and email a copy of your letter to me at *****@uabmc.edu or fax *[insert area code and number]*.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns. If you cannot meet the deadline or do not feel you are in a position to evaluate Dr. *****, I need to know this information as soon as possible.

Many thanks for your input and assistance.

Sincerely,