

Guidance for Writing Colleague Evaluation Letters

The Tenure and Reappointment Committee considers input from faculty colleagues an important source of information for candidates who are undergoing mid-probationary and tenure reviews. Here are tips on what the Committee finds useful.

Teaching

Candid, first-hand observations of the faculty member's teaching are helpful (e.g., examples from and/or a summary of a class visit you made to the faculty member's class). Feel free to directly or indirectly quote from your class visit report.

You may provide impressions about the faculty member's desire to improve, risks they have taken, successes and failures in pedagogical techniques. Concrete examples that substantiate your points are most helpful.

It may also be helpful to provide contextual factors – has this faculty member taught a particularly heavy course-load? taken on new preparations? taught a course in a new way? – that help us to see the larger picture.

Scholarship

Your insight in this category is especially helpful, as the candidate's field of scholarship may be far outside those of the members of the Tenure Committee. Helpful comments include examples of a positive trajectory since the faculty member's appointment, productivity during the last couple of years, noteworthy achievements, recognition by other scholars in their field, and evidence of sustainable and achievable scholarly goals. Your input regarding the faculty member's effectiveness in collaborating with students, if applicable, is also useful.

Service

Here your comments can be helpful to go beyond the committees and service activities listed on the faculty member's CV. If you are in the same program as the faculty member, are they a valuable member of the program, willing to volunteer for mundane tasks and an active participant in program meetings? Is your program colleague willing to tackle time-consuming programmatic service assignments that demonstrate a readiness for program chair duties?

Beyond interactions within a program, do you have examples of the faculty member's impact on committees, willingness to serve as an advisor for student organizations or as an athletic liaison, and/or participate in a study abroad program? Does the faculty member have unofficial service in the program that might not otherwise be accounted for, such as mentoring underrepresented students?

Additional comments

Beyond these three major areas of evaluation, additional comments on the community-mindedness of the candidate are also helpful. Does the faculty member actively promote diversity and inclusion in and beyond the classroom? We don't have to be best friends with our colleagues, but we value collegiality in the sense of being able to share and listen to opinions respectfully, even if in disagreement.

Note that the Committee does not expect your letter to address all of these areas! Your insights provide information that will contribute to a holistic view of the candidate.

Finally, the Committee finds your overall recommendation helpful in our evaluation of the candidate's file.