Process of Developing Letters and Guidelines for Letters of Evaluation

The letters were submitted by deans and faculty members. The letters were edited and reviewed by a second small group of faculty and the associate provost. After working on the letters and discussing the challenges, the key findings were these:

- Evaluation letters provide guidance for the future actions of the faculty member

- Letters must be clear and without assumptions

- The writer states the relationship with the faculty member, length of time known, and what the faculty member is seeking in terms of promotion, third year review, or tenure review right at the start of the letter.

- The writer must clarify expectations and be future oriented.

- Letter writers should consider the letter an evaluation, not just a set of comments about the faculty member.

- Writers are encouraged to take the 'Take-Aways' from the workshop (below) under consideration.

Takeaways from the Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation Case study 4. 1

- Departments should use early evaluations to provide feedback so that tenure decisions are not a surprise.

- Candidates should receive candid periodic evaluations of their progress in meeting the requirements for tenure.

- Evaluations should offer practical guidance for future efforts to meet the requirements.

- Evaluations should be written in plain English.

- Evaluations should offer constructive criticism outlining any potential areas for improvement.

Suggested outline for a faculty evaluation letter

- Describe where the faculty member is in the process. Is it a first annual evaluation? Is it a first review at year three? What type of faculty track is the faculty member on and where is he/she in the process?

- Introduce yourself, your qualifications to write and evaluation, how long you have known the faculty member, and describe your connection to the faculty member.

- Open with your recommendation and be very clear. Describe the university expectations and describe actions the faculty member can take to meet or exceed them.