Administering the APT Process

John Bertot
Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs
Agenda

1. General Considerations
2. Expectations of APT Committees
3. What the University Committee looks for in an APT package
4. Discussion
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3. What the University Committee looks for in an APT package
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Tenure is...

- ...earned, and is intended to protect academic freedom
- ...granted to those who demonstrate a capacity for a lifetime of scholarship, teaching, and service by an academic institution...
- ...a commitment by the University and State of Maryland to continuously support faculty for the next few decades
Tenure is not...

• ...just about the candidate
  • Department, College, University, USM, and State of Maryland

• ...protection against demonstrated incompetence, moral turpitude, professional or scholarly misconduct, willful neglect of duty
Playing by Uniform APT Rules

• ... doesn’t have to mean being uniform in all counts
  • Departments are the experts in their areas
  • Departments should establish the criteria for excellence in their areas
In a Nutshell...

• Though we all use the same rules, one size does not fit all

• Excellence is the cornerstone of tenure:
  • We should all seek excellence in the pursuit of truth for the common good
  • We should all seek excellence in our research, teaching, and service
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From the USM Policy

“The criteria for tenure and promotion in the University of Maryland System are:

(1) teaching effectiveness, including student advising;
(2) research, scholarship, and, in appropriate areas, creative activities; and
(3) relevant service to the community, profession, and institution.”

ALL THREE, and especially the TOP TWO, are taken very seriously
From the UMCP policy

• “The University of Maryland is dedicated to the discovery and the transmission of knowledge and to the achievement of excellence in its academic disciplines” (l. 28).

• Hiring and tenure practices are critical to implementing this policy.
The APT Committee

- Seeks to understand the candidate and his/her work in your unit
- The most important thing a dossier does is tell a story, in particular the candidate’s story
- It is a narrative with several layers
  - Told by 3 different committees (Department, College, Campus) and 3 different university officers (Chair, Dean, Provost)
- The goal and hope is that the conglomerate does justice to the case
The APT Process
Committees

• Lower level committees emphasize surface/operational aspects of case

• Higher level committees (College, University) focus on a professional evaluation of quality and impact indicators

• Administrators should ensure a clear, precise and concise presentation in the dossier
Common Sense

• Familiarizing oneself with the standard dossier is a good idea
• Asking questions from Faculty Affairs when doubts arise
• Producing searchable documents is a must
  • Even if this means having to go the extra mile to prepare them
Things To Think About

• Double check the dossier for **accuracy**
• Use your best **academic instincts** in advising the candidate and the unit
• Don’t procrastinate: the best way to get an early answer is to **process the dossier early**
• Be proactive: **ask questions** when in doubt
• **Gather data** if available (and when in doubt about their relevance, ask!)
Things That Should Be Avoided

• Ignoring the guidelines
• Length of personal statements (5 pages max)
• Not using recommended external evaluator letter request
• Using collaborators as external evaluators

• Cutting corners (higher committees will notice)
Things That Should Be Avoided

• Assuming that others understand your research/field

• Ignoring/downplaying the negative reactions from evaluators or faculty at your level
  • Peer judgment is critical to the process
  • Don’t dismiss the evaluators you have chosen
  • Don’t dismiss the faculty at your level who disagree with promoting your candidate

• Bottom line: take the matter with academic rigor, arguing points as needed
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4. Some Observations
Indicators

• Every field is generally unique
  • That being said, **what are the indicators of excellence** in that field?
  • How do they apply to the present case?
  • The best strategy is to clearly determine these indicators, and then to **show how your candidate follows them**
Key Questions To Ask (and Answer)

• What counts as **peer review** in your field? Are these standards applied in peer institutions?

• What are considered **metrics of impact** in your field? Are these taken seriously in peer institutions?
  
  • (What will external reviewers use to assess the candidate’s record)?

• How does your field define **regional, national** or even **international**?
Key Questions To Ask (and Answer)

• How do you delineate the differences between research/creativity, teaching/mentoring and service?

• What is considered entrepreneurial and innovative in your field?
The University is Changing

• An emergent culture of cooperation and interdisciplinarity is growing
  • Great societal issues (climate change, renewable energies, social justice, international cooperation) are more and more central

• The University is beginning to value innovation and entrepreneurship

• If the candidate’s creativity falls into these dimensions...
  • You need to make a special effort to spell-out what this means in the case
    • So that your colleagues understand and appreciate the approach
• Broader definition of scholarship as the discovery, integration, engagement and transmission of knowledge

• Recognition of entrepreneurial activities that enhance one or more of the three categories of teaching, service, and scholarship

• Mandatory teaching portfolio: TLTC/OFA workshops for guidance
  • https://tltc.umd.edu/portfolios

• Mandatory peer reviews of teaching: should be up and running routinely now
  • https://umd.app.box.com/v/tltc-peer-obs-guide
APT Policy Changes (2015)

- Faculty may request modified criteria for tenure or promotion (e.g., if engaged in scholarship in multiple fields or that crosses boundaries of traditional disciplines)
- Assignment of a mentor for Associate Professors if desired by faculty member
In A Nutshell

• Help prepare an informative dossier
• Help identify substantive external letter writers
  • Be sure to follow rules regarding collaborators in seeking external letters
  • Learn how to interpret letters—particularly if they are negative
• Keep the process as clean and transparent as policies allow
• Participate in the process of updating the APT mechanisms
In A Nutshell

• Ensure you are following the tenure policy as revised in 2015
  • Initial e-mails to potential letter writers
  • Updated letter seeking external review
    • No longer asking about tenure at their institution
    • If appropriate, include tenure delay language
  • Candidate verification/sign off
    https://faculty.umd.edu/policies/documents/verification.docx
    • If there are modified tenure criteria, be sure you are using them for the review
• Review updated guidelines
In A Nutshell

• Communicate with...
  • Faculty Affairs
  • Unit staff preparing dossiers for transmission
  • Others as necessary
    ...to ensure that all runs smoothly

• When in doubt, ask OFA
<table>
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<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Bertot (Associate Provost, Faculty Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:jbertot@umd.edu">jbertot@umd.edu</a> 5-4252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Rosenthal (Director, Faculty Leadership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:lrosent1@umd.edu">lrosent1@umd.edu</a> 5-7589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Arnold (Director, Faculty Initiatives; PTK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mdarnold@umd.edu">mdarnold@umd.edu</a> 5-7604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Foster Goltz (Coordinator, Faculty Leadership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:afgoltz@umd.edu">afgoltz@umd.edu</a> 5-0658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Follman (Senior Web Developer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:rfollman@umd.edu">rfollman@umd.edu</a> 5-0665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binsy George (Administrative Assistant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:bgeorge9@umd.edu">bgeorge9@umd.edu</a> 5-6803</td>
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