

Successfully Navigating toward the land called “Tenure”

Issues and Advice

D.P. Wells

VPAA

15 August, 2019

The single most important
thing is often ...

... your response to criticism.

What kind of criticism?

- Student teaching reviews,
- Tenure Committee performance reviews,
- Chair/Administration performance reviews,
- Agency reviews of research proposals,
- Journal reviews of research papers,
- Etc.

Key Source Material(s):

Our policy on tenure and promotion is here:

https://www.nmt.edu/academicaffairs/docs/policies/appt_pro_tenure.pdf

More generally, policies of Academic Affairs are here:

<https://www.nmt.edu/academicaffairs/policies.php>

And all NMT policies are here:

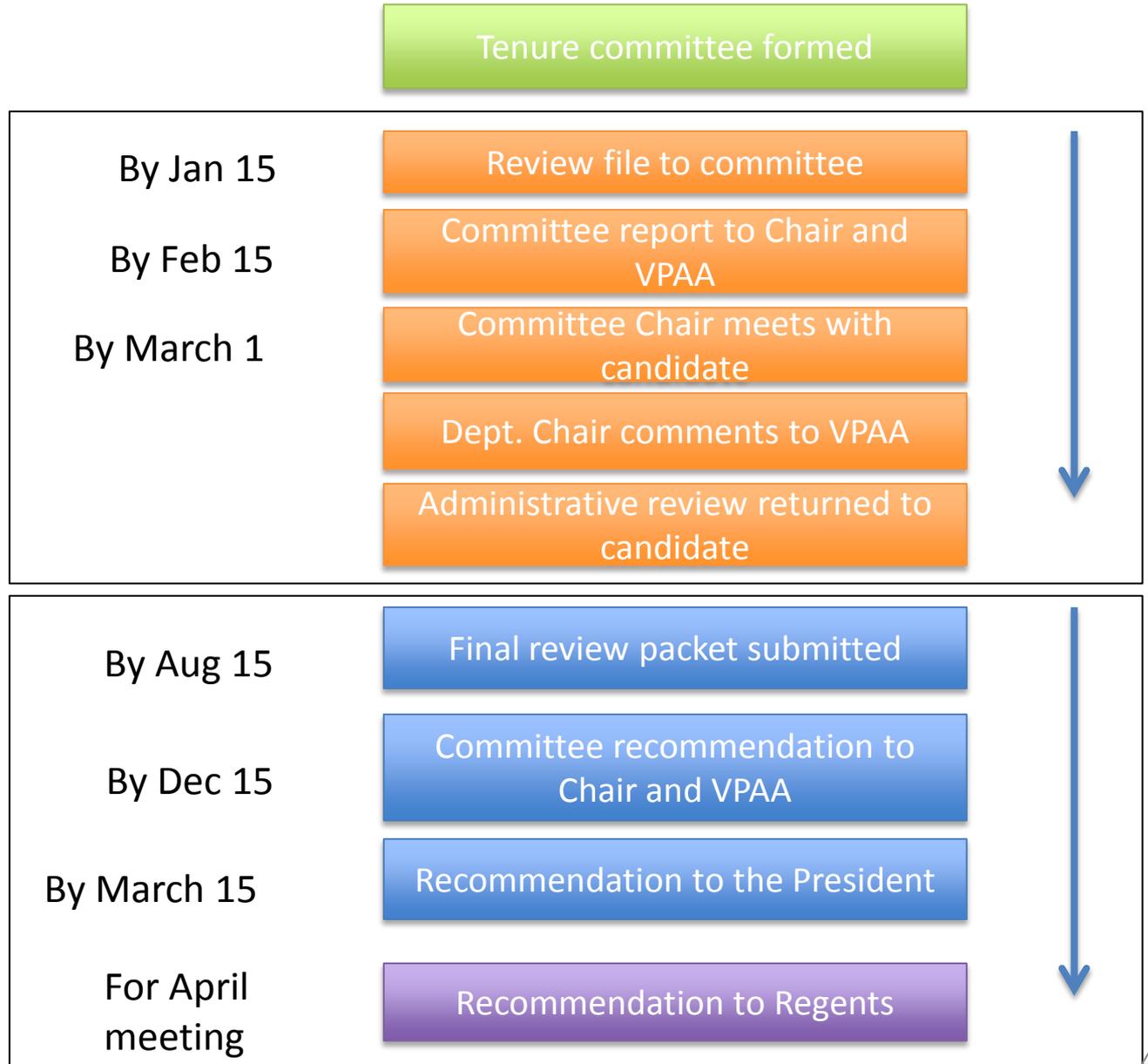
<http://www.nmt.edu/nmt-policies-and-procedures>

What does the current tenure process & timeline look like?

Within 3 months
of initial TT appt.

Annual Reviews:
Years 1 - 4

Final Review:
Year 5



Changes Expected in the upcoming year:

NMT is currently considering some potential changes in the current T&P policy (and related procedures). These can be distilled down to:

- 1) More transparency: candidates will have more opportunities to respond,
- 2) Advanced schedule: committees and administrators will provide feedback earlier,
- 3) Standards of performance: departments, with the approval of Deans and Academic Affairs, will publish more specific guidance as to their T&P expectations.

Tenure Tips

(Borrowed very liberally from Dr. Fred Phillips,
of NMT's Earth and Environmental Sciences)

- The clock is ticking: start working on it sooner rather than later
- Pay attention to what your committee, the dept. chair, and the administration says
- Focus initially on proposals
- Take advantage of opportunities to collaborate
- Diversify, but don't lose focus
- Remember the 'tyranny of the urgent'
- Treat people right
- Be careful in communications
- Be organized in teaching

The clock is ticking: start working on it sooner, rather than later

You have less time than you think you have. Five years for the tenure process seems like a lot of time.

It's not.

The final tenure package is due at the beginning of the 5th year, unless a deferral has been approved. That means that you have 4 years to make your case.

Yet it typically takes at least 2+ years of grant-writing to attract a significant grant.

It typically takes 2+ years to complete a project and get a manuscript out the door, plus another year or more before it is published.

And it typically takes 2+ years to establish high-quality teaching skills.

And yet, at the end of year 4, you are asked to convincingly demonstrate a record of excellence in teaching and research.

Pay attention to what your committee, the dept. chair, and the administration says:

- All of these entities (tenure committee, Chair, Dean, VPAA, etc.) are on your side. They, and the institution, want and need you to succeed.
- Yet, often when candidates run into trouble, it is because they either (i) ignore the advice of one or more of these persons, or (ii) they don't take it seriously, or (iii) they are defiant.
- **In my experience, this phenomena is the single largest source of decisions against tenure and promotion.**

Research priorities:

- Focus initially on proposals, because there is a substantive lag between first proposals and first funding (usually requiring revising and resubmitting rejected proposals). This requires a **THICK SKIN**.
- Seek every (reasonable) opportunity to collaborate (with internal and external partners) on research and publications. More partners means more ideas, more contacts with opportunities, and more expertise in your immediate circle.
- Diversify, within reason, your research interests. Highly specialized species go extinct.

Teaching priorities:

- Be organized in your preparation, and be clear in your expectations of students.
- Pay attention, and take seriously, student critiques of your teaching.
- Put yourselves in your student's shoes.

Other priorities:

- Be careful with your communications, especially e-mail. Far too often, e-mails are misinterpreted because none of the nuances of non-verbal communication are present.
- Treat others well. Decision makers, in all decisions, consciously or subconsciously include “collegiality” in their assessments.
- Avoid letting “urgent” deadlines that have little or no impact on tenure and promotion control your priorities. That is, short-term priorities should not trump long-term priorities.

The single most important
thing is often ...

... your response to criticism.

What kind of criticism?

- Student teaching reviews,
- Tenure Committee performance reviews,
- Chair/Administration performance reviews,
- Agency reviews of research proposals,
- Journal reviews of research papers,
- Etc.

Questions?