

## Changes in promotion process

### ***Narrative by Vice Chancellor and Provost Eric F. Spina***

*This narrative is provided in the spirit of summarizing the timeline and the actions leading to the final result described in my memorandum of 8 September 2014.*

### **Background Information on the Board of Trustees' Decision to Change the Promotion Process**

Through the 2010-11 and 2011-12 academic years—and motivated by communication with some faculty and deans—several members of the Academic Affairs Committee of the University's Board of Trustees inquired of the then-Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor about Syracuse University's tenure processes and promotion processes, whether and how they differed from each other, and how they compared to the same processes at peer and aspirational peer research universities. The Vice Chancellor & Provost provided detailed briefings about the Syracuse processes and those at peer institutions<sup>1</sup> at Board of Trustee Academic Affairs Committee Meetings in November 2011 and May 2012, and considerable conversation occurred among the trustees. That May 2012 meeting ended with a request from the Committee that the full Board ask the University to review and develop recommendations to change the University's promotion policies to make them more consistent with peers.

Separately from that Academic Affairs Committee discussion and decision, in late Spring 2012, a dispute arose between the Senate Appointments & Promotion Committee and the College of Law Promotion & Tenure Committee about the promotion process used for eight Law faculty members recommended for promotion. Ultimately, the College of Law faculty appealed to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees which, after reading materials and hearing arguments from representatives of the Senate and the College of Law, chose to promote the Law faculty members over the objections of the Senate. It is noteworthy that the Board discussion about promotion process predated the Law promotion matter by almost a full year, and the Board's Academic Affairs Committee asked for University action on promotion separately from any discussion of, or involvement in, the Law case.

In August 2012, Board Chair Richard Thompson requested the then-Chancellor Nancy Cantor to begin a campus-wide initiative to review the University's promotion policies and develop recommendations to provide a promotions structure that would make SU consistent with our research university peers in the alignment of promotion processes with tenure processes. Chancellor Cantor asked the University Senate Agenda Committee to constitute a broad-based committee to study this issue and make recommendations. The *Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion Processes* came forward with a set of recommendations in November 2013. The Senate Agenda Committee led a series of town-hall meetings during the winter at which these recommendations were discussed and debated. Afterwards, the Senate Academic Affairs Committee and the Senate Appointment & Promotions Committee worked together to develop a different set of recommendations, which were passed nearly unanimously by the full University Senate in April 2014. In the sections below labeled A.), B.), C.), and D.), summaries are provided of the previous Syracuse promotion process, the recommendations of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion Processes, the full Senate's final recommendation on promotion, and the Board of Trustees' decision on the central issue in question.

---

<sup>1</sup> Information on tenure and promotion processes was provided to the Trustees for the following universities: Boston College, Boston University, Brandeis, George Washington, Lehigh, Miami, Northeastern, Notre Dame, Southern Methodist, Tufts, Tulane, and Wake Forest.

A.) Former SU Process (through the 2013-14 academic year)

- The Syracuse tenure and promotion processes followed fundamentally different paths:
  - The tenure analysis, vote, and recommendation from the school/college committee and a separate recommendation from the dean were forwarded to the provost, who made a decision in the form of a recommendation to the chancellor and the Board of Trustees.
  - The promotion analysis and vote from the school/college committee was forwarded to the Senate Committee on Appointment & Promotion, where the decision was ratified or returned to the school/college if the proper process was not followed. The Senate decision was forwarded to the Board of Trustees for approval.
- There was no role in promotion for the dean or the provost/chancellor.
- Promotion to associate professor was completely uncoupled from tenure, such that one could be granted and the other not, or one could be applied for and the other not.

B.) Recommendations from the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Promotion Processes (November 2013)

- The Senate ad hoc committee was comprised of senators and non-senators (all faculty members) and was constituted by the Senate Agenda Committee.
- There were several “secondary” recommendations, including one suggesting a path for expedited promotion when an outside offer is pending, for example, and another asking the vice chancellor to begin maintaining statistics on promotion.
- The major recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee, presented preliminarily to the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee in November 2013, were:
  - Formally link promotion to associate professor with tenure (except when faculty are hired at the rank of associate professor).
  - Create a vehicle for university-level review of promotion and provide deans the same role as in tenure, namely, the delivery of a separate recommendation. The majority of the committee recommended that the promotion process (for both promotion to associate professor and promotion to full professor) follow the same pathway as for tenure review: that school/college recommendations be forwarded to the Provost for a final decision. Others suggested variations including provost review of close cases, or the establishment of a university-wide faculty committee that would review all promotions.

C.) Recommendation from the full University Senate (April 2014)

- The Academic Affairs Committee and the Appointments & Promotion Committee of the Senate rejected the recommendations of the Senate’s Ad Hoc Committee, insisting that faculty should retain the sole responsibility for making the decision on promotion.
- The Senate recognized that from time to time the dean and/or the provost may disagree with the school/college decision on promotion, and they suggested establishing a University Senate Committee on Faculty Status Resolution (FSR) that would have heard “appeals” by the dean or the provost if they did not agree with any negative decision of a school/college committee. The decision of the Senate FSR Committee would have been final in matters of promotion.

- The Senate also suggested that the Senate FSR Committee be utilized as the body to which the dean and/or provost would need to explain a reversal of a school/college committee's recommendation on tenure, understanding that decision remains with the provost and chancellor.
- The full Senate passed the joint recommendation of the two Senate committees 76-1.

D.) Board of Trustees Decision (May 2014) (the full decision, previously released to the campus community on May 12, 2014, can be found here <http://syr.edu/news/5-12-14-PromotionDocument.pdf>).

- The Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee heard a presentation from, and asked questions of, the Chair of the Senate Academic Affairs Committee, Prof. Ian MacInnes, about the Senate resolution, its rationale, and the overwhelming support it received in the Senate.
- The Board Committee considered the recommendations from the Senate, those of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee, and information that they had previously received on practices from approximately one dozen private research universities, and developed a set of recommendations for the full Board of Trustees to consider. The recommendations were intended to be aligned with those of the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations, with the major recommendations being:
  - Formally link promotion to associate professor with tenure (except when faculty were hired as associate professors), and restrict applications for promotion to associate professor except when part of an application for tenure. This implies that the tenure process (including the role of the dean and the decision by the provost) will also govern the process for promotion to associate professor.
  - Use the same process as for tenure in promotions to full professor so that the dean makes a separate recommendation and the provost makes the decision on promotion to full professor as a recommendation to the chancellor and the Board.
- As part of an overall directional change and encouraged by Chancellor Syverud, the Board recommended that the voice of the faculty in tenure and promotion decisions be strengthened by moving toward a model that would establish a University-level faculty review and advisory committee. This committee would meet with the provost on all tenure and promotion cases and make recommendations, while maintaining the current role and responsibility of the vice chancellor and provost, the chancellor, and the Board of Trustees.
- The full Board of Trustees (with Chancellor Syverud abstaining) unanimously adopted the recommendation of their Academic Affairs Committee.

### **Implementation Steps since the Board of Trustees Decision**

After the May Board of Trustees meeting, leaders from the Office of Academic Affairs (Vice Chancellor & Provost Eric Spina and Senior Vice President Kal Alston) worked with the chairs of the Senate Academic Affairs Committee and the Senate Appointment & Promotions Committee to improve and refine drafts of the documents referenced in the memo of 8 September 2014—namely the *Promotion Policy and Process Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*, the *Principles and General Guidelines for Promotion Decisions*, and *revised Faculty Manual Sections 2.2-2.38*—to be consistent with the decision of the Board

of Trustees. These documents, which can be found at <http://provost.syr.edu/>, have already been shared with the deans, associate deans, and tenure & promotion committees in the schools and colleges and the change to the new process was effective as of the start of the 2014-15 academic year.

It is understood that school/college bylaws and promotion guidelines remain to be modified, and that the Senate must decide what steps it will take in several key areas, including relative to the role of the Appointments and Promotion Committee and the newly identified Committee on Faculty Status Resolution. The initial Agenda Committee meeting of the year included a conversation about this complex situation. Consensus was quickly formed around a plan to dedicate time to this subject at the first substantive meeting of the Senate in October, so that the senators can discuss the process and the outcomes.

Another effort that must be initiated is a discussion between the Office of Academic Affairs and a representative group of faculty (both non-senators and senators) regarding how to strengthen the voice of the faculty in promotion \*and\* tenure decisions through establishment of a University-level faculty review and advisory committee. The notion is that such a committee would actively meet with the provost on all tenure and promotion cases and make recommendations to him/her, while the current role and responsibility of the vice chancellor and provost, the chancellor, and the Board of Trustees would be maintained. As Chancellor Syverud has expressed several times, it is in the discussion with the provost on tenure that the influence of the faculty should be most valued, and such a process will enable the voice of the faculty to be heard.

#### **Timeline**

- **Fall 2011:** Initial Board of Trustee inquiry about Syracuse promotion processes.
  - **November 2011, May 2012:** Discussion of Syracuse promotion processes in Board of Trustee meetings.
  - **August 2012:** Letter from Board chair to then-Chancellor Cantor requesting review and modification of promotion processes to be consistent with research university peers.
  - **Fall 2012:** Senate Ad Hoc Committee constituted by Agenda Committee and begins meeting.
  - **November 2013:** Preliminary report by the Senate Ad Hoc Committee to the full Senate that strengthens dean and provost role in promotion.
  - **April 2014:** Full Senate overwhelmingly passes alternate recommendations that preserves faculty role in promotion.
  - **May 2014:** Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee reviews all relevant materials and recommendations, including practices at other research universities, and recommends to the full Board of Trustees that tenure and promotion processes at Syracuse be made consistent. Full Board unanimously approves.
  - **August/September 2014:** The Vice Chancellor & Provost communicates with deans, associate deans, tenure & promotion committees, and ultimately the full tenure-line faculty about the processes and procedures in place for promotion during 2014-15.
- *Prospectively* —
- **2014-15:** The Office of Academic Affairs and a group or representative faculty will meet to discuss and recommend how a University-level faculty review committee for tenure and promotion can be established to strengthen the faculty voice in these decisions while maintaining the current roles of the provost, the chancellor, and the Board of Trustees.