



# Merit Review Process & Red Binder Policy

Comprehensive Overview for Department Chairs

May 28, 2025



# Department Notifications and Deadlines

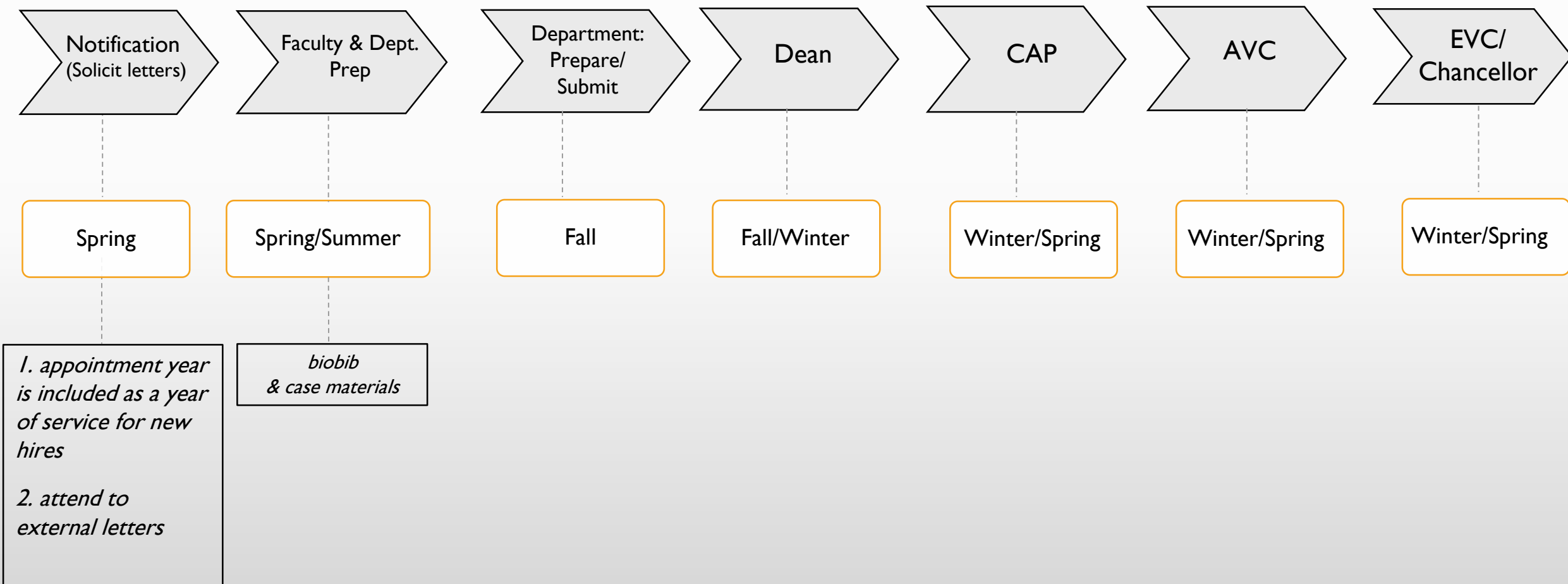
## (Red Binder I-2)

- Notification of Eligibility for Merit & Promotion (RB I-4)
  - Early April
- Assistant Professor Deferral Requests: Tuesday, September 30
- Dean's Authority Cases: 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in November
  - This year: November 10, 2025
    - One-step advances at Assistant, Associate, & Full levels with up to ½ step in additional off-scale (including to the overlapping steps)
- Expanded Review Cases: 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in December
  - This year: December 8, 2025
    - Everything else: Formal appraisal, promotions, advancement to P-VI & Above Scale, accelerations (except as noted in RB I-30), reductions in off-scale, terminal appt

**NOTE: Campus-wide cutoff date: August 31**



# The Review Process: In Brief





# The Many Roles of a Department Chair

- Serve as the liaison between faculty members and the dean (and other reviewing agencies)
- Provide mentoring for faculty, especially junior faculty
  - Consult with faculty who are eligible for review; think proactively about the trajectory of case. For example:
    - will this be an acceleration that will require letters that otherwise would not be needed?
    - will the recommendation situate the candidate appropriately on the ladder?
- Ensure personnel process is fair, consistent, and efficient
- Ensure that department and university policies are followed
  - Work with faculty to confirm that all materials, including biobib, are accurate and updated
    - Online biobib should be used in all cases
- Enforce deadlines



# Foundation for Success

- Understand and adhere to the advancement criteria in the personnel review process. There have been notable changes this year.
  - *See Red Binder I-75: Appointment and Advancement*
- Understand options and appropriate justifications for advancements and accelerations
  - *See Red Binder I-36: Merit Advancements*
- Follow the steps in the review process.
  - *See Red Binder I-22: Departmental Checklists for Academic Advancement*
- Follow guidelines for external reviewers and associated materials, when relevant
  - *See Red Binder I-46, I-48, I-49, I-50, and I-51*
  - Note: Although external letters not required for advancement to Professor VI, faculty should submit CVs with cases to P-VI

# Chair Responsibilities (Red Binder I-22)

## ➤ *Stay informed on your Department's bylaws, current RB policy, UC policy*

- Ensure Department bylaws and merit review documents are up-to-date for Professor Series & Teaching Professor Series
- Notify candidate
- Explain criteria for advancement
  - departmental, campus, and system-wide
- Explain campus review process and UC policy on personnel records
  - Explain materials used by the department, campus, & UC in the review process (e.g., biobib, outside letters, etc.)
- Provide Safeguard statement (RB I-26) and Advancement Checklist (RB I-22)
- Notify candidate of due-date for all materials
  - Inform them of consequences for late submission of materials or submission of inaccurate/incomplete materials
- Address any issues relevant to their particular case
  - Answer questions they may have

# Types of Cases to Consider

- Mandatory reviews
  - Faculty must undergo review a minimum of every 5 years
  - Formal appraisal at Year 4 for Assist Prof/Assist Teaching Prof
  - Tenure review no later than Year 7
- Career reviews
  - Promotion to Associate or Full; Advancement to Prof VI/Teaching Prof VI; Above Scale
    - Career reviews require additional time and consideration; anticipate the potential for accelerations to push case into a career review
    - All but Step VI advancement require external letters
      - Please Note: Faculty member's CV covering full career accomplishments should be submitted in all Step VI cases
- Deferrals (Asst Prof/Asst Teaching Prof requires request for approval)
- Normative advancement
- Accelerations
- Within-Step advancement (deceleration)

# Merit Advancements (RB I-36)

(p. 1 of 3)

- Standardized range of advancement options (including Above Scale):
  - only full or ½ steps
- Advancements awarded in step (i.e., on the ladder), except when the recommendation includes a ½ step increase
  - Increases awarded only in full steps or half steps
  - In rare circumstances, accelerations in off-scale may be granted, based on appropriate circumstances
- Helpful resources:
  - *Half-step Increase Chart* available on the AP Website under Compensation & Benefits



Half-step Increase Charts  
(General Scale & B/E/E Scale)

See: AP Website under Compensation & Benefits

General Scale (Table 1)			
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Step</u>	<u>10/1/2024 Annual</u>	<u>half-step increment</u>
Assistant Professor / Assistant Teaching Professor	II	\$82,200	\$2,200
	III	\$86,600	\$2,400
	IV	\$91,400	\$2,600
	V	\$96,400	\$2,600
	VI	\$101,400	\$2,700
Associate Professor / Associate Teaching Professor			
	I	\$96,500	\$2,500
	II	\$101,500	\$2,700
	III	\$106,800	\$3,100
	IV	\$112,800	\$4,500
	V	\$121,600	\$4,800
Professor / Teaching Professor			
	I	\$112,900	\$4,400
	II	\$121,700	\$4,700
	III	\$131,100	\$5,000
	IV	\$141,000	\$5,300
	V	\$151,600	\$5,700
	VI/ V+	\$163,000	\$6,200
	VII	\$175,400	\$7,100
	VIII	\$189,500	\$8,000
	IX	\$205,400	\$10,300
	IX+	\$225,900	\$10,300
IX+ is equivalent to step IX plus one above scale increment			
VI+/IX+ in UCPath = V/IX on-scale plus o/s+ . o/s+ does not carry forward at next review			

# Advancements, continued (RB I-36)

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- Normative (1-step) Advancement
  - Departments are expected to articulate expectations for achievement, calibrated to rank/step, in all three areas of review
    - Concisely explain how/whether the candidate met these expectations
  - Reasonable flexibility can/should be used when appropriate (see Red Binder I-36 & I-75)
- Within-step advancement
  - 1/2 step may be granted when justified
  - maximum 2 within steps, at the same rank/step

# Advancements, continued (RB I-36)

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- Important considerations for accelerations:
  - Increasing expectations as ascend ranks/steps; significantly higher performance expectations at Above Scale level
  - Larger accelerations require increasingly meritorious achievements
    - EG: a 1-step acceleration = the quantity/quality of achievement would constitute a full, additional review period (e.g., 6 years worth of excellent or better performance in 3 years for a Full professor)
  - Cases for acceleration may not contain deficiencies in any area
- Only under rare circumstances will accelerations deviate from the following:
  - Professor Series: Particularly noteworthy achievement and/or impact well above department/disciplinary norms, in research/creative activities
  - Teaching Professor Series: Particularly noteworthy achievement well above high campus standards in teaching/mentoring
  - Extraordinary achievements in two areas of review
  - Prestigious new awards or other such evidence of peer recognition
  - Extraordinary achievements and activities advancing inclusive excellence, exceeding normative expectations
  - Extraordinary accomplishments in administrative service roles (non-career administrators) after the completion of a normative term (see also RB I-67)

# Formal Appraisals (RB I-38)

- Review during 4th year of service at the rank of Assistant Professor/ Assistant Teaching Professor to assess “the prospects of candidates for eventual promotion to tenure”
- May not occur if appointed at the higher steps of the Assistant/Assistant Teaching Professor rank
  - i.e. promoted to tenure by year 4 or earlier
- Recommendations include:
  - Continued Candidacy
  - Continued Candidacy with Reservations
  - Termination



# Overlapping Steps (Red Binder I-37)

- What are the Overlapping Steps?
  - Lateral with corresponding step at the next rank
    - Assistant V and VI, which are lateral to Associate I and Associate II
    - Associate IV & V, which are lateral to Professor I and Professor II
    - Professor V+, which is lateral to Professor VI
    - Professor IX+, which is lateral to Professor Above Scale
- How are they used?
  - counts in lieu of service at the lateral, next rank/step in calculating eligibility & advancement
- Important considerations:
  - Does not change normative advancement
    - e.g., Asst IV to Assoc I
  - Expectation is to remain for normative time
  - Departments should consider trajectory & advancement options
  - Departments should consider placement upon promotion

# The Step System

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR/ ASSISTANT TEACHING PROFESSOR		ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR/ ASSOCIATE TEACHING PROFESSOR		PROFESSOR/ TEACHING PROFESSOR	
(8 year limit, non-tenured)		(6 years normal, tenured)		(indefinite, tenured)	
Step	Normal period of service	Step	Normal period of service	Step	Normal period of service

I	2 (not used at UCSB)
II	2
III	2
IV	2



V	2 (overlapping step)	I	2
VI	2 (overlapping step)	II	2



	IV	3 (overlapping step)	I	3	
	V	3 (overlapping step)	II	3	

III	3	
IV	3	
V	3	
VI	3	V+ (3yrs, overlapping step)
VII	3	
VIII	3	
IX	4	
Above Scale	4	IX+ (4 yrs, overlapping step)

Helpful resources:

*Overlapping Step Advancement Matrix*

See: AP Website under Compensation & Benefits

Rank and Step	Year	On-time Advancement	
Asst Prof V	1	Lateral to Assoc Prof I	Only \$100 ladder increase in salary. Next review for merit would be after one year
Asst Prof V	2	Promotion to Assoc Prof II	
Asst Prof V	2	Merit to Asst Prof VI	
Asst Prof VI	1	Lateral to Assoc Prof II	Only \$100 ladder increase in salary. Next review for merit would be after one year
Asst Prof VI	2	Promotion to Assoc Prof III	
Assoc Prof IV	1	Lateral to Prof I	Only \$100 ladder increase in salary. Next review for merit would be after two years
Assoc Prof IV	2	Lateral to Prof I	Only \$100 ladder increase in salary. Next review for merit would be after one year
Assoc Prof IV	3	Promotion to Prof II	
Assoc Prof IV	3	Merit to Assoc Prof V	
Assoc Prof V	1	Lateral to Prof II	Only \$100 ladder increase in salary. Next review for merit would be after two years
Assoc Prof V	2	Lateral to Prof II	Only \$100 ladder increase in salary. Next review for merit would be after one year
Assoc Prof V	3	Promotion to Prof III	
Prof V+	1	Lateral to Prof VI	No change in salary. Next review for merit would be after two years
Prof V+	2	Lateral to Prof VI	No change in salary. Next review for merit would be after one years
Prof V+	3	Advancement to Prof VII	
Prof IX+	1	Lateral to Above Scale	No change in salary. Next review for merit would be after three years
Prof IX+	2	Lateral to Above Scale	No change in salary. Next review for merit would be after two years
Prof IX+	3	Lateral to Above Scale	No change in salary. Next review for merit would be after one year
Prof IX+	4	Advancement to Above Scale with merit	

## Helpful Resources:

### *Step V+ and IX+ Examples*

Available on the AP Website under  
Compensation & Benefits

#### **Example: normative advancement using V+**

		base			
	eff date	(on-scale)	off-scale	o/s+	total
Current status: Prof V	7/1/2022	\$145,400	\$10,000		\$155,400
<i>Action: merit to Prof V+</i>					
New status: Prof V	7/1/2025	\$145,400	\$10,000	\$10,800	\$166,200
<i>Action: merit from V+ to VII</i>					
New status: Prof VII	7/1/2028	\$168,200	\$10,000		\$178,200

#### **Example: normative advancement using IX+**

		base			
	eff date	(on-scale)	off-scale	o/s+	total
Current status: Prof IX	7/1/2021	\$197,100	\$10,000		\$207,100
<i>Action: merit to Prof IX+</i>					
New status: Prof IX	7/1/2025	\$197,100	\$10,000	\$19,700	\$226,800
<i>Action: merit to Above Scale</i>					
New status: Prof Above	7/1/2029	\$246,500			\$246,500



# External Letters

(Red Binder I-46, I-48, I-49, I-50, and I-51)

- For career reviews, familiarize yourself with the *process & expectations* for external letters
  - Make note of the requirements in Red Binder I-46: *Guidelines for Letters of Evaluation* including:
    - up to 3 letters submitted as part of the application (i.e., UC Recruit) are acceptable
    - be aware of necessary qualifications for external reviewers & provide this in coded list
    - understand what constitutes a conflicted vs non-conflicted letter writer
    - understand permissible variations for letter writers for Teaching Professors and Teaching Professors with a focus on professional practice
      - e.g., experts in professional roles that are not full profs
    - provide justifications for deviations in coded list
      - avoid repeat letter writers
    - be aware that even those who decline or do not respond must be listed, *with explanation if provided*

# External Letters, continued

(Red Binder I-46, I-48, I-49, I-50, and I-51)

- For career reviews, explain process for external letters to your faculty
  - Compile list of outside reviewers
    - Carefully adhere to Red Binder I-46: Guidelines for Letters of Evaluation
    - 6 letters minimum
    - Balance between department and candidate letters
      - Candidate and department derive list of names *independently*
    - Tenured faculty at distinguished institutions, preferably full professors, non-conflicted
      - No close collaborators or previous letter writers
  - Understand and advise the candidate on the materials to be sent to external reviewers (RB I-51 & Department Bylaws).
    - For Professor Series and Teaching Professor Series
  - Solicit letters using appropriate RB template (RB I-49; RB I-50)
    - Include solicitation letter with case materials
  - Redact appropriately & provide candidate opportunity to request/review letters from external reviewers – if candidate requested letters

# Even More on External Letters

(Red Binder I-46, I-48, I-49, I-50, and I-51)

- Submit an accurate and complete Coded List of External Reviewers (RB I-48)
  - This is carefully scrutinized by reviewing agencies and can lead to requests for additional reviewers, or even failure to recommend promotion, if not properly documented
    - Description and other relevant info about reviewers belongs on the Coded List
    - *Justifications for deviations from external reviewer standards also must be provided on the Coded List*
- Do not provide potentially-identifying information about letter writers in the department letter
  - This can result in these letters being excluded from the case and the need to solicit additional letters. Instead, use the Coded List.
    - Please note examples & expectations on reporting in RB I-48

# Chair Responsibilities: Department Meetings

- Running Department meetings:
  - follow Department bylaws, UCSB policy, and UC policy
    - verify and adhere to voting procedures
    - report any anomalies
  - ensure eligible faculty have access to all pertinent information/materials
    - e.g., publications, teaching evaluations, self-assessments, external letters (if relevant)
  - thoughtfully consider self-assessments, when provided
  - plan ahead to ensure cases submitted on time
  - help the department come to a realistic recommendation

# The Department Letter: *Do's & Don'ts*

(RB I-35, see also RB I-75)

- Disciplinary expertise is the strength of the department's recommendation
  - A concise, analytical, balanced department letter lends weight to the department's assessment
- *Dos & Don'ts* of a Department letter (See Red Binder I-35: *How to Write a Departmental Letter*)
- ✓ • DOs:
  - Include the vote and explain supporting and opposing views if 'no' votes are present
  - Define the standards, weights, and expectations of activities/accomplishments **specific to the candidates rank/step**, and apply consistently
    - address all 3 areas of review (see RB I-75)
  - Explain how the requirements for a normative advancement have been met before addressing any recommendation for acceleration
    - provide brief analysis/contextualization of accomplishments, with appropriate evidence
  - Provide specific, compelling evidence in support of recommendations for acceleration
    - address influence, impact, prestige, importance, innovation, role, etc.
    - *Remember:* a one step acceleration is equivalent to two review periods so explain how this was accomplished:
      - EG: Asst II to IV = 4 years of work in 2 years; Prof III to V = 6 years of work in 3 years; Above Scale 2 increments = 8 years of work in 4 years.
    - Explain any deviations from expectations and accurately reflect the overall recommendation of the department
  - Ensure all information in the letter is listed on the biobib

# *Dos & Don'ts of a Department letter, cont.*



## • DOs

- Provide an accurate accounting of the teaching load and how it was met
  - Use the language provided in RB I-35
- The normal department teaching load is [ ] courses per academic year. During the current review period, Professor [ ] taught [ ] (explain if partial credits) at the undergraduate level and [ ] (explain if partial credits) at the graduate level. This fulfilled the teaching requirement for the review period.

## If applicable, incorporate the following:

- As part of their expected teaching load, Professor [ ] additionally taught [course] during Summer [ ], which constitutes a core component of the curriculum of the department (only in cases when summer teaching is a required component of teaching load).
- During the review period, Professor [ ] had [ ] releases for [ ] (sabbatical, grant, overload previous cycle, etc.).
- [OR] This was an overload of [ ] that will/will not affect course load expectations in future cycles (explain if course reduction will occur in future cycle).
- [OR] This was [ ] course/s short of normative teaching expectations that will/will not be made up in the next review cycle.

# *Dos & Don'ts* of a Department letter, cont.



## • DON'T:

- Don't rely solely on quantitative assessments and numerical counts
- Don't address accomplishments from outside of the review period (except in career reviews, then only in career assessment)
  - Don't address previously in-press or already credited items
- Don't simply duplicate content from self-assessments
- Don't conflate traditional research accomplishments (e.g., peer reviewed journal article) with scholarly professional accomplishments (e.g., invited talks, conference presentations)
  - Be sure not to dilute expectations for and importance of traditional research accomplishments
  - Use care not to devalue professional scholarly achievements
- Don't use jargon or technical terms
- Don't redefine the review period in first reviews after appointment
  - It is still a normative review period albeit with less teaching, fewer service opportunities, etc.

# Common Mistakes in Department Letters/Cases

- Letter fails to clarify Department expectations and/or disciplinary norms at the candidate's rank/step
  - e.g., quantity/quality, selectivity of journal, norms of authorship order, contribution to multi-authored work
- Letter simply summarizes items on the biobib, rather than providing a professional evaluation of the significance, impact, importance, etc.
- Letter merely repeats language and/or details from other case materials such as self-statements, rather than providing original, contextual assessment and analysis
- Accelerations not adequately or appropriately justified & explained
- Mismatch between bio-bib and other case materials
  - e.g. self-assessment or department letter references items not present on bio-bib; materials sent to outside reviewers contain items beyond the department cut-off date
- Not enough context provided for activities/achievements, e.g.:
  - role/workload associated with service or professional activities
  - significance of awards/prizes, publication venues, etc.



# Common Mistakes in Department Letters/Cases, cont.

- Reframing the period of review in a faculty member's first review since hire as an abbreviated period and evaluating accomplishments based on a "shortened" period
  - this is not how the accomplishments for the case will be evaluated by the Dean, CAP and beyond
- Lack of clarity on teaching load and how the candidate met this load during the review period
- "No" votes not explained (especially problematic if vote is split)
- Over-disclosure in letter about external reviewers, potentially revealing identity
- External Reviewers do not meet RB criteria and/or deviations from policy not justified in coded list



# The Bio-bib

- Use of online biobib expected in all case cycles
- Biobib serves as the official document of record for accomplishments during the review period
  - materials must be consistent; items mentioned in the department letter or self assessments must also be listed on the bio-bib
- “Statement of Teaching Load” Section should specify Department Teaching Load
  - clarify normative department load and explain how candidate met this load (RB I-35)
- Remember: faculty are responsible for maintaining accurate and up-to-date content
  - including responding to staff requests for corrections/updates

# Optional Self-Assessments

- If provided, consider information provided in optional self-assessments:
  - These can offer additional context and insights on candidates accomplishments, including:
    - Research Statements
      - provide additional context on contributions, impact, and implications of research accomplishments
      - address substantial contributions to advance inclusive excellence, if applicable
      - address significant impacts of suspended or terminated federal grants, if applicable
    - Teaching Statements
      - describe teaching efforts, innovative approaches, addressing criticism in student evaluations
      - address substantial contributions to advance inclusive excellence, if applicable
      - address significant impacts of suspended or terminated federal grants, if applicable
    - Service
      - provide context on roles and scope of responsibilities for these activities
      - address substantial contributions to advance inclusive excellence, if applicable
  - Self-statements may not exceed 2 pages per area of review (single space, 12pt font, 1-inch margins)



# Final Steps

- Make department letter available to eligible department members, for inspection
  - ‘minority opinion’ letter may be submitted at this time (these are not anonymous)
    - Unresolved issues must be addressed in a Chair’s confidential letter (see: RB I-35)
- Inform candidate of department recommendation, vote, and substance of evaluations in all areas (verbally or in writing)
  - Provide candidate opportunity to review all non-confidential documents
  - Inform candidate of right to provide a written response within 5 days to Dept or Dean, to be included in the file
    - Give sufficient time so that response can be considered in dept. letter
    - Unresolved issues should be addressed in a Chair’s confidential letter (RB I-35)
- Encourage faculty to request and read Reviewing Agency Reports upon case conclusion



# Final Steps, continued

- Forwarding the completed case:
  - Ensure the candidate completes safeguard statement in AP Folio
  - Ensure the letter contains all necessary material, is complete, and properly formatted
    - See Red Binder I-31 for checklist on Dean's Authority Cases
    - See Red Binder I-34 for checklist on Expanded Reviews
  - Confirm that faculty have reported outside professional activities (OATS)
  - Forward case to your Dean's office
- After the case has been completed, pay attention to Reviewer Concerns; these call attention to specific deficits in the content or presentation of cases
  - Addressed to either department or candidate (or both)
  - Chairs receive copies of *all* Reviewer Concerns
  - Pay attention to these and implement corrections for next cycle

# Questions?

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