

**PROGRAM IN CREATIVE WRITING
PROMOTION AND TENURE GUIDELINES**

Revised and Approved by Creative Writing Faculty November 2005

I. OVERVIEW

Promotion to a tenured position in the Program in Creative Writing at the University of Oregon depends on excellence in research and publication, national recognition, outstanding teaching (with emphasis on the graduate level), and strong service, some of it administrative, within the program and at the national level. Excellence in one dimension alone may strengthen a case, but by itself will not be sufficient to guarantee tenure and/or promotion. Tenure-track faculty are hired with the confidence that they have the potential to achieve high standards and with the expectation and hope that they will become permanent colleagues. The purpose of this document is to make explicit departmental tenure policies and expectations with the intention of promoting achievement among untenured faculty. This report divides its discussion between (a) criteria for achievement in research and publication, teaching, and service and (b) procedures for preparing a tenure case.

II. CRITERIA FOR TENURE

The *University of Oregon Faculty Guide to Tenure and Promotion* lists four areas of competence upon which the institution judges faculty: (1) quality of teaching, (2) professional growth and scholarly activities, (3) leadership in academic and administrative service, and (4) service and activities on behalf of the larger community. The *Guide* notes that these four elements may not carry equal weight. The following represent relative levels of importance attached to each element by the Program in Creative Writing when considering candidates for tenure and promotion.

1. Research and Publication/Professional Activity

The most important evidence to support the case for achievement in research is (a) a book or books published since hire with a nationally recognized press or presses, including fine small presses or (b) a series of coherent and/or related quality publications since hire in nationally recognized literary or commercial magazines judged to be significant by peers at the University and experts at other institutions. A secondary criterion is evidence of a continuing commitment to research as evidenced by a body of work that is in progress and significant work being planned.

Overall, although publications may be in different genres, there must be a coherent plan of research and a focused plan of publication. It is the responsibility of the candidate to demonstrate coherence and focus. Quality counts more than quantity here--publications should be on a developing arc, moving from regionally significant periodicals to nationally known ones. Additionally, the record and the candidate's own statement should indicate a program, schedule, and objectives of future work.

Except in highly exceptional circumstances, for promotion from assistant to associate professor and the granting of tenure, the Program expects the candidate to have a book published or finally accepted by a nationally recognized press since hire. “Finally accepted” means that the revisions for the book are complete and accepted by the press and that the book is in production.

For promotion from associate to full professor, the department expects the candidate to have accepted for publication a second book or the equivalent in periodical publications since hire.

Translations, particularly book-length ones, are evaluated favorably. However, they cannot substitute for an authored book (or a substantial number of related periodical publications), which is essential.

Anthologies and textbooks matter as well, though they are peripheral. These are to be considered as falling within the category of national service (such as magazine editing) rather than research and publication.

Work outside the initial genre of hire can also matter, though more appropriately *after* tenure has been conferred. If a candidate hired initially as a poet chooses to write criticism or non-fiction, for example, he or she would be wise to wait until after tenure to make that choice. Likewise with the novelist who wishes to write drama or screenplays. For it is work within the genre of hire that matters most when tenure is concerned. However, any associate professor coming up for promotion to full professor may present a case with publications in many genres, including criticism and non-fiction. Quality and coherence remain important.

Professional activity for the creative writer also includes participation on literature and writing panels at major national conferences (MLA, AWP, Bread Loaf), lectures and readings at colleges and universities, and non-promotional television and radio appearances. These things count as secondary indications of national standing.

Honors and awards like fellowships from the Guggenheim, NEA, and Whiting weigh considerably in evaluations for tenure and promotion, particularly for promotion to full professor. National prizes are evaluated favorably, as are regional prizes, though they carry less weight.

Suggestions for untenured faculty:

Publications resulting from work carried out while a member of the University of Oregon faculty will be given more weight in the tenure and/or promotion decision than those resulting from work carried out prior to hire. It is important that there be a perceivable arc of development regarding the relative prestige and national importance of the periodical publications. A candidate for tenure might begin by publishing in regional quarterlies, move to university quarterlies of note, then culminate with appearances in elite periodicals of highest merit.

A steady publication record is evidence of research progress. Except in unusual circumstances, a several-year gap in one's publication record, followed by a spate of publications just prior to review, will not inspire confidence that a candidate has a long-term commitment to research. Opportunities to have your work known or considered seriously by important editors should not be ignored, especially when afforded by senior colleagues and visiting writers of prominence.

2. Teaching

The Program in Creative Writing values excellence in teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. However, for the purposes of tenure and promotion, it is graduate teaching that is weighted most heavily since the reputation of the Program rests with its MFA.

For graduate teaching, there are several areas of responsibility (listed in order of importance): (1) excellence in the workshop and seminars, (2) good participation in conferencing and thesis hours, (3) strong performance on the MFA exams and advising for those exams, and (4) a teaching plan that fits into the overall curricular scheme of the Program. Each of these categories is significant, though they are not equally weighted.

Furthermore, teaching should communicate high expectations. This will involve maintaining high standards of creative excellence (evidenced, for instance, in student publications or writing prizes) and academic knowledge. Workshops and seminars should be informed by not only the contemporary genre practices but by knowledge of canonical and even international literary approaches.

In assessing teaching quality, the Program relies on a variety of sources, including course syllabi, numerical data compiled from student course evaluations, signed comments on student evaluations, letters from successful former students, and regular classroom visits by colleagues before and during the tenure or promotion consideration process. Documentation of activities is important: keep a copy of every syllabus you use.

Suggestions to untenured faculty:

Take the opportunity to attend courses taught by other faculty members, and make use of other occasions to learn from them regarding the supervision of graduate student research and reading. This is particularly important regarding your role in the MFA exams and directing Writing and Conference and thesis units. Pay attention to how your teaching program might balance the needs of the department both with courses regularly offered by the Program and specialty courses of your own devising.

3. Leadership in Academic and Administrative Service

The *Faculty Guide to Tenure and Promotion* lists as a criterion for promotion and tenure institutional service, including department, college, and university committees on

curriculum, personnel, and policies. The faculty play an important role in the governance and policies of this University, and the University in fact expects participation of its faculty members.

The Program similarly expects a demonstration of excellence in the area of service at the level of independent MFA programs elsewhere in the country--a commitment we have sometimes referred to as "program development." Because of the relatively small size of the faculty, it is understood that program development duties and obligations will outweigh college- or university-wide obligations and that each member of our faculty, tenured or untenured, will normally undertake the administration of a significant area of our Program: for example, advising for undergraduate enrollments, directing the Kidd Tutorials, directing the MFA Fiction or Poetry program, etc. Each tenure-track faculty shall regularly serve on the MFA admissions and financial aids committee. Untenured faculty, however, will normally have lighter service responsibilities than tenured faculty.

In the case of promotion from associate to full professor, service is weighed heavily, and the candidate normally should have made an important contribution to the Program (for example, a successful appointment as Director of Fiction or Poetry or Director of the Program) and also demonstrated service to the profession at the national level (e.g., book reviews, manuscript and prize evaluations, foundation panel reviews, national committee memberships) as indications of high reputation and administrative competence. Service to the college and university is also expected for promotion to full professor.

Suggestions to faculty:

Untenured faculty are encouraged to exercise both collegiality inside of the Program and good judgment in their allocation of time outside of it. While untenured faculty may wish to contribute to University governance and policy-making decisions through service outside the Program, this should be deferred until after tenure is achieved.

Invited lectures and readings at other universities or at national conference provide substantial evidence of a writer's reputation and are important to a tenure or promotion case. However, for both tenured and untenured faculty, unauthorized non-academic travel, other extensive absences from campus, and any ad hoc interruptions of normal duties are deleterious.

4. Service and activities on behalf of the larger community.

The final criterion listed by the *Faculty Guide* is community service. This includes academic contributions to community activities and public bodies, as well as to local, national, or international professional organizations. Examples in the local community might include developing writing programs for local school children, activism in local arts organizations that relate to one's professional expertise, or giving readings in local schools or bookstores. Service activities for professional organizations might include presenting papers or serving on panels at national conferences, reviewing manuscripts for

journals and presses, editorial responsibilities at a literary journal, evaluating grant and fellowship applications, and adjudicating national prizes.

The main point to consider with respect to community service is that it serves largely as an embellishment to one's list of creative and professional activities. Community service activities have a transient impact on one's professional writerly reputation and in no way substitute for direct involvement in program development and administration or an individual candidate's ongoing activities in research and publication.

Suggestions for untenured faculty:

Untenured faculty should be cautious in taking on larger responsibilities such as membership on editorial boards or grant-review panels. While such activities carry a certain amount of prestige, they do not contribute directly to the case for tenure and would be better left deferred until after tenure.

III. DEPARTMENTAL PROCEDURES

1. *Annual reviews* of untenured faculty are to be conducted by the senior faculty each Spring term. The candidate should submit a current CV, sample syllabi of courses recently taught, and a narrative describing research, publication, service, and teaching accomplishments for the past year and goals for the coming year. The Program Director and/or senior faculty members will make classroom visits, review the materials, and write a formal statement on performance.

2. *Third-year reviews* of the tenure-related faculty will evaluate performance in the categories noted above. The review should be candid and include, if necessary, specific suggestions for improvement. This review should be signed by the Director and by the person reviewed. A copy will be placed in the latter's personnel file.

3. The candidate is normally reviewed for *promotion and tenure* in the sixth year of service except in unusually meritorious cases or when prior university service has led to an agreement (made at the time of appointment) shortening the time to review.

A. During the spring term before a case comes up for consideration, the Director will appoint an ad hoc committee of associate and/or full professors (from inside and/or outside the Program) to review the candidate and make at least two classroom visits to evaluate teaching. The committee then makes a preliminary report to the tenure-related members of the Program outlining the strengths and/or weaknesses of the case. During the late spring and summer, the Director begins to compile a dossier. We normally seek outside evaluations of the candidate's research and publications from six well-regarded writers in the candidate's field, at least four of these on regular tenured appointments at reputable academic institutions. Some of these referees will be chosen from a list of names provided by the candidate (excluding graduate instructors, co-authors, or editors as referees, for this may raise questions about the integrity of their

evaluations), and the Director and senior faculty will select others. On-campus evaluations from those familiar with teaching and service may also be sought, but not regarding publications. The candidates may or may not waive the right to see the referees' letters. Even if the candidate has waived the right of access, he or she retains the right to request a summary of the substantive comments of the letters.

B. The promotion file will ultimately contain the following:

1. The candidate's statement of accomplishments and objectives in research and publication, teaching, and service
2. The candidate's current CV, formatted to conform to University requirements about citation form
3. Letters from outside referees
4. Brief vitae of the outside referees
5. Committee Report
6. Director's Evaluation
7. Teaching data and signed evaluations
8. Letters from former students or other faculty, if requested
9. Unsolicited letters, if received
10. A description of the candidate's position
11. The candidate's appointment papers
12. Any other appropriate materials.

C. After all the outside letters have been received, the committee will prepare its report and recommendations (early to mid-October). The report of the committee shall then be circulated to the voting members of the department. The voting members are tenure-related faculty; the promotion file will distinguish between tenured and untenured voters. Should the committee have "outside" members, they may be present for and participate in the discussion and the vote. At the end of the discussion a vote will be taken by signed, secret ballot. When all votes have been received, the Director shall inform those voting of the numerical count but preserve the anonymity of the individual ballots. If there is a major discrepancy between the discussion and the vote count, the Director must reopen the discussion. The ballots themselves will be placed in an envelope and sealed and signed by the Director. Program members who have read the dossier but cannot be present at the meeting because of other University business may write a letter to the Director, stating their views on the candidate and recording their vote. This letter may be read at the discussion, but its vote must be kept secret. The Director does not normally cast a vote, except in case of a tie. The envelope with the ballots will be retained in the Program unless, at a later stage, they are requested by the Dean's Advisory Committee or the Provost's office.

D. The Director writes his or her own statement, which may or may not agree with the Program's vote. The completed file is then sent to the College of Arts

and Sciences (CAS) by November 15 for tenure cases or November 30 for promotion cases.

IV. COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES

The University's tenure consideration procedures are described in the *Faculty Guide to Promotion and Tenure*: <http://academicaffairs.uoregon.edu/tenureguide/tenureguide.html>. What follows is a summary of the process, but it is the responsibility of the candidate to know the current regulations.

1. The Dean's Advisory Committee, elected by the CAS faculty, evaluates tenure cases in the fall and early winter. The committee may request the Dean or Associate Dean to collect more information (e.g., additional outside evaluations), or it may itself interview Program members or others about a case. Its report and vote are advisory to the Dean. The Dean or the Associate Dean meets with all candidates in the College to discuss their cases after the College has completed its report. The objective of this meeting is to give the candidate a full account, within the limits of confidentiality, of the contents of the dossier and an opportunity to add new material or comments, if that is desired.
2. The case then goes to the Faculty Personnel Committee, a university-wide body elected by the faculty. It normally deliberates in the later winter and spring. The report of this committee is advisory to the Provost. The Provost's decision, made with the advice of the Faculty Personnel Committee and with the Program and College level reports, is the final one. There are appeal procedures in those cases where the Provost denies tenure or promotion.

A final word: the tenure process, as the description indicates, is long, complicated, and sometimes stressful. However, it contains many procedural safeguards for the well-being of the candidate. The Program in Creative Writing's Policy is to hire people who we predict will be strong candidates for tenure and promotion.