

**SIMPSON COLLEGE FACULTY HANDBOOK  
PART VII: APPENDIX B**

**GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORT LETTERS FROM OFF-CAMPUS COLLEAGUES, ON-  
CAMPUS COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS**

**SUPPORT LETTERS FROM OFF-CAMPUS COLLEAGUES**

Faculty up for tenure or promotion may request up to two letters of support from off-campus colleagues.

**A. Purpose**

The purpose of inviting letters of support from off-campus colleagues is to provide the FPC with context and understanding regarding the professional acumen of the candidate which may be unavailable from on campus colleagues. The candidate's achievement against the established criteria, especially with regard to teaching and professional development is not always easily measured by the FPC. In several of our departments, faculty members are in sub-disciplines that may be relatively unfamiliar to the members of the FPC, and in some cases even other faculty within the department.

Having letters from an off-campus writer with expertise shared by the person under review provides an important context for the evidence provided by the candidate, especially in regard to the content areas of the candidate's teaching and what might be considered appropriate professional development.

**B. Selection of Off-Campus Colleague**

The candidate will identify up to two colleagues who are in a position to provide the FPC with letters of support for their tenure and/or promotion. The candidate will provide the names of the two individuals to the chair of the FPC. The prospective writers should be knowledgeable in the field of the candidate and will normally come from a similar institution. The writer of the support letter should be in a position to comment on the achievement of the candidate using one or more of the criteria established for tenure and/or promotion as described in the Faculty Handbook. The off-campus writer should be someone well informed about the specific discipline of the candidate under review and as such may be uniquely positioned to comment on things like the content of the courses taught by the candidate, the candidate's scholarship/creative or other professional work, etc.

The writer should understand the challenges of being a faculty member at a place like Simpson College. The writer should not have a significant personal relationship with the candidate. It is important that the candidate under review disclose the depth and nature of any such previous relationship when presenting the chair of the FPC with names of their off-campus colleagues who have been invited to write for the file.

The invitation to write a letter of support should come from the person under review and include the college's expectations for the review process, including a copy of the criteria for reappointment and tenure.

### **C. Contents of the Letter**

It is suggested that the candidate furnish the writer with a copy of the candidate's self-evaluation, vitae, and any other materials (course syllabi, publications, photos of creative work, etc.) she or he believes might be helpful to the writer.

The letter of support for the candidate should address all of the criteria for tenure or promotion with which the author is familiar. For example, if the writer previously taught with the candidate, she or he should feel free to comment on the candidate's teaching. If the writer has reviewed syllabi and assignments submitted by the candidate, she or he should comment on the appropriateness of the material covered, etc. If the writer has co-authored journals, or worked in another professional context, it would be appropriate for the writer to help put the candidate's participation into context. At the same time, the writer should not feel compelled to write to all of the criteria. As suggested earlier, the purpose of the letter is not to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate, but rather to help put the evidence submitted by the candidate into context from the perspective of a colleague in the field. Is the content in the candidate's courses appropriate and up-to-date? Are the assignments and learning objectives appropriate? Is there evidence that the candidate's research, scholarship, and/or creative work is respected by others within the discipline? These are the types of questions that should be addressed in the support letter.

The support letters submitted by the invited writers will be included in the file and as such will be available to the candidate.

## **LETTERS FROM ON-CAMPUS COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS**

### **A. Purpose**

With the exception of the up to two letters from off-campus colleagues and the two out of department colleague letters requested at the time of promotion and tenure review, candidates are strongly discouraged from soliciting letters from colleagues and students. Rather, it is the intent of the committee in notifying the community about the review to regularize how evidence of the candidate's effectiveness is gathered from those not directly involved in the review process.

### **B. Contents of the Letter**

Each semester the chair of FPC will, in an advertisement in the *Simpsonian*, announce the review schedule to the campus for all faculty members undergoing review for reappointment, tenure or promotion. Signed letters will be accepted for the candidates file in the Academic Dean's office. These letters should focus on the criteria for reappointment, tenure and promotion as outlined in Simpson College Faculty Handbook Part II: Personnel Policies, Section 7.

**C. The Role of the Letters**

It should be clear to all involved in the review process that the raw number of letters received by a review committee on behalf of a candidate is not itself a significant measure of how well the candidate meets the established criteria. Nor does the absence of such letters indicate failure to meet the criteria. The letters received on behalf of a candidate will be only a small part of the evidence upon which the decision of the committee is made.