March 2015

Professor (name of department chair)
Department

Dear (name of department chair),

In the very early fall, your department will submit a tenure recommendation to the Committee of Six for Professor (name of candidate). I remind you that only tenured members of the department(s) participate in departmental tenure deliberations. Tenure cases for fall 2015 should be prepared under the guidelines in the *Faculty Handbook*, which are online at https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/fph/fachandbook/facstatus/fulltimetenure .

Please note that we require electronic copies (in OCR format) of all of the materials (with the exception of published books, which must be submitted in hard copy), in addition to hard copies of some of the materials, specified below. The dean's office will meet with each department's chair and academic department coordinator to discuss specifics surrounding submission of this information. Let me remind you of the materials the Committee of Six must receive by October 1, 2015 (quotations from the *Faculty Handbook*, Section III E, are in italics):

1. *A departmental letter of recommendation containing a judgment about: (a) teaching effectiveness; (b) scholarship, creative work and growth; (c) contribution to the general life of the college community and to the profession; (d) any considerations of departmental structure*.

This letter should make clear the bases of the department's judgment on the candidate's teaching, scholarship, or creative work, and contribution to general college life, including how the department weighed the evidence that was accumulated. This letter is most useful to the Committee of Six when it is balanced and engages fully with any concerns that have emerged in the review of the candidate. The departmental evaluation of scholarly or creative growth should take into account any or all of the following: published work, publicly presented work, projects currently under way, plans for future projects. I remind you of the following faculty vote: *The departmental evaluation of teaching effectiveness should draw upon a representative range of teaching activities in addition to evidence described in (5) below [student letters]. Evaluation should derive from, but need not be limited to, conversations about courses with some members of the department; attendance by some members of the department at a number of class meetings at mutually agreed upon times; and assessment, by the candidate with at least one senior member of the department, of the accomplishments of at least one of the candidate's courses at the end of a semester. Evaluations of teaching effectiveness should also be informed by the discussions of the tenured members of the department, the substance of which is conveyed during annual conversations.* Please see additional information that is relevant to the departmental letter at the end of item 6.

Note that "some members" refers to more than one but not necessarily all tenured members of your department. "A representative range" of teaching activities refers to more than one type of class—a seminar and a lecture class, for example.

By October 1, you must provide the candidate with a copy of the department's letter of recommendation that has been edited to protect confidentiality, and discuss that letter with the candidate. You should also notify this office, no later than October 1, that you have provided the candidate with the requisite information.

2. *A separately submitted, confidential letter from each tenured member of the department(s), including those on leave, assessing the candidate's qualifications. The substance of reservations expressed in individual letters should be reflected in the department's letter*.

To be useful to the Committee of Six in its deliberations, each member's letter should include the full argument used by that individual in reaching his or her recommendation. It is important that both scholarly or creative work and teaching effectiveness be addressed in this letter. Note that the substance of reservations expressed in individual letters should be reflected in the department's letter. However, each colleague's letter is confidential, but must be signed.

3. Practice has been that departments inform other untenured members (tenure-track faculty only) of the department(s) that they may, but need not, submit a confidential letter assessing the candidate's qualifications. Such letters are confidential and should be sent directly to the dean of the faculty. Note that you may solicit letters from lecturers and visiting faculty as described in item 8. below.

4. *A current curriculum vitae*. At times, it may be difficult for members of the Committee of Six, as non-experts, to interpret a candidate's CV. The document should therefore be as complete and informative as possible. It must include a list of all courses taught at Amherst College by year and in chronological order, and the pages of the CV must be numbered. It must also include a list of senior theses and special topics supervised. In addition, full citations must be made for all scholarly and creative work that the candidate wishes to be considered. The following information is also requested; it may be included on the CV or as an addendum. Notations about whether work was peer-reviewed or invited should be indicated, as should the candidate's contributions to, and role in, collaborative work. Conference presentations and invited seminars should be included when appropriate. The candidate should explain the status of unpublished work that is included on the CV (e.g., forthcoming, in revision prior to resubmission, or published online and scheduled for print publication, etc.). The department should review the candidate's CV for conformity with these requirements.

5. *Copies of the candidate's scholarly and creative work with, when applicable, a characterization of the journals in which, or the press by which, the work was published*. Please include discussion of the standards for publication within the candidate's field and as full a characterization as possible of journals, presses, and other modes of publication, as applicable. We ask that the department, and not the candidate, prepare this information. We ask that unpublished manuscripts, if accepted or under contract, be accompanied by the acceptance letter or contract.

Please make available to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, by Tuesday, June 30, an electronic copy of the candidate's scholarly and creative work, with the exception of published books. Please provide ten hard copies of unpublished manuscripts. In the case of published books, the department is responsible for ordering ten copies for the Committee of Six and for

providing them to the dean's office. (Books must also be sent to the outside reviewers and ordering should be done accordingly. The dean's office will pay for the Committee of Six's ten copies and for the cost of providing books to the outside reviewers. Departments are responsible for the cost of providing books to department members.) Having this work by June 30 will enable the Committee of Six to read the bulk of the candidate's scholarly and creative work over the summer. When preparing the candidate's tenure dossier, please make hard copies of all scholarly and creative work that was evaluated by the outside reviewers and include this work in the dossier, which must be submitted by October 1. Academic department coordinators will be given specific instructions about the number of binders with this material that are needed. Please also include in the dossier a master list of all scholarly and creative work. Please have the necessary photocopying done and then forward the charges incurred to my office for reimbursement. Only ten copies of books need to be provided. They do not need to be included in the dossier in October.

6. *All written evidence used to evaluate teaching effectiveness, including the semester-end evaluations solicited from students in all courses, the retrospective letters solicited at the time of reappointment review and the retrospective letters solicited at the time of tenure review from all current and former students taught since the time of reappointment. The department letters soliciting letters from students should be included with their responses. Solicitation of retrospective letters must include all students from every course, including every honors and special topics course taught by the candidate. At the time of tenure review, retrospective letters should be solicited only from students taught since the time of reappointment. Each person asked to write such a letter should be informed that his or her response will be treated as confidential by the college. (Reviews from Scrutiny or other anonymous materials are inadmissible as evidence.)* Detailed letters from honors and special topics students have proven to be particularly helpful.

Both retrospective letters and end-of-semester evaluations are to be submitted to the Committee of Six, which would appreciate your doing anything you can to increase the overall return of student retrospective letters. Please include a copy of departmental letters soliciting retrospective student opinion both during the reappointment and the tenure process. The letter written to students should be in neutral terms, clear of any tendency to lead students. It should communicate the importance of the task at hand and should give students sufficient instruction as to the nature of response desired. Each person asked to write an assessment should be informed that his or her communication will be treated as confidential. Student retrospective letters and end-of-semester evaluations sent via email will be acceptable provided the student's name is clearly shown. Academic department coordinators will receive specific instructions regarding procedures for letters, and evaluations sent by email. All other semester-end evaluations and letters from students must bear the students' signatures. You cannot accept unsolicited letters from students.

It is important that retrospective letters indicate which course(s) students are evaluating and in which years they were taken. If a student has taken multiple courses with a professor, please do not make multiple copies of the letter for each course but situate the letter in the first course the student has taken and make a note of that in the other class documents.

It is often helpful to the Committee of Six in reading the student evaluations in a broader context to have in the department letter a paragraph or two based on collegial observation of teaching, formal and informal pedagogical collaboration, and annual conversations. If, during annual conversations or at the time of reappointment, the department shared any concerns with the candidate about teaching and/or scholarly progress, please comment on how the candidate responded to this feedback. Please describe, for example, new approaches and/or adjustments that he or she may have implemented. In the case of co-taught courses, please describe the balance of responsibilities of the candidate and his or her co-teacher(s), including, when relevant, the candidate's and co-teacher's (s') relative contributions to the genesis of the course.

7. *Letters from no fewer than six (6) and normally no more than eight (8), or in the case of joint appointments ten (10), external reviewers who are leading scholars or practitioners in the candidate's field to be chosen equally from lists compiled by the candidate and the department(s); the department's letter of solicitation to them; and a description of the process by which these persons were chosen as external reviewers, their qualifications, and their relationship, if any, to the candidate.*

The department should solicit the judgments of leading scholars or practitioners in the candidate's field; these letters are a crucial element in any tenure case. (I have enclosed with this letter for your convenience a sample letter of solicitation to reviewers. The Committee of Six has drafted this document, and asked that I share it with departments for their possible use.) The candidate should provide the department with a single ranked list of suggested outside professional reviewers (normally no more than eight) from which the department makes a selection of several names. In addition to those names, the department should ask an equal number of other outside professional reviewers not named by the candidate for review of the scholarship. The committee has the greatest confidence in these letters when the outside authorities include experts who are independently chosen by the department as well as experts chosen by the candidate. Therefore, half of the reviewers should be chosen by the department and half by the candidate. The outside reviewers should be actively engaged in or near the candidate's field of research though not all confined to the candidate's specialty. The Committee of Six has often found it particularly valuable to have at least one letter from a reviewer at a liberal arts college. When appropriate, the department may ask for a letter from the candidate's dissertation and/or postdoctoral advisor. However, at least six reviewers should not have a close personal or professional relationship with the candidate. At least half of the reviewers should not have a close personal or professional relationship with any member of the department(s). If a close professional or personal relationship exists between a department member and an outside reviewer, that relationship should be disclosed. The Committee of Six may ask that additional external reviews be solicited to give candidates' cases the fullest possible consideration and to address any concerns raised by any member(s) of the Committee of Six.

Reviewers should be informed that we are interested in knowing what they think of the quality of the candidate's work; does the work address important questions in the field, and has the candidate made significant contributions toward answering, refining, or extending these questions? In writing the evaluation, it would be helpful if reviewers would compare the candidate's work to that of others at the same stage in their careers, keeping in mind that we expect our faculty's scholarship and creative work to be of the highest quality, while also expecting the highest quality teaching. We would like to know the reviewer's opinion (and the

criteria and metrics by which he or she will make his/her judgment) of the candidate's scholarly contribution thus far, and his/her potential for future growth. It would also be useful for the reviewer to comment on (relative to the standards of the field) expectations for the rate of progress by the time of tenure, typical patterns of scholarly productivity, stages/formats of publication (the role and weight of working papers and/or co- and lead authorship, for example), and the role of peer review. We ask that the department also comment on these issues. The committee would also like to know of anything reviewers might like to share with us about service that Professor (name of candidate) may have provided the profession.

It may also help the reviewers to be informed of the function and composition of the Committee of Six, and particularly of the fact that they are addressing two sets of readers: colleagues in the candidate's department who have some expertise in the candidate's field, and members of the committee who in the context of tenure discussions may constitute a lay audience. The quality and depth of these letters is obviously critical. Outside scholars should engage the candidate's work in some detail. A letter of generalized praise lacking in specificity is likely to be discounted no matter how distinguished the outside reviewer. Letters from the outside authorities will be most helpful and persuasive if they can point to strengths and weaknesses in the work and relate these in nontechnical language that may be understood by scholars not expert in their particular field. Letters from expert colleagues from the Five Colleges may be included in this group if the Five-College colleague is an authority in the candidate's field.

The material you forward to the Committee of Six should explain the process of selection of outside reviewers and their associations (if any) with the candidate. Each person asked to write an assessment should be informed that his or her communication will be treated as confidential. It is also essential for the committee to have a characterization (i.e., a short biographical sketch) of each reviewer. Finally, all evaluators—department members, outside reviewers, and Committee of Six members—should be reviewing exactly the same scholarly or creative material. The Committee of Six has voted to compensate reviewers at a rate of $250.00 per review.

8. Letters from colleagues in other departments, including those who have served on committees or taught with the candidate, as well as departmental lecturers, visiting faculty and visiting lecturers. When appropriate, Five-College colleagues may also be solicited. Whether such a letter offers evidence chiefly on the candidate's contribution to the general life of the college and Five-College communities, teaching effectiveness, or scholarly promise, or some combination thereof, will of course depend on the relationship of the writer to the candidate (as fellow committee member, teaching collaborator, fellow member of a Five-College seminar, etc.). It is appropriate to ask the candidate for potential sources of such letters, though others may also be solicited. It is important that the department, in its solicitation of outside letters as well as in its compilation of the dossier, make every effort to ensure a totally unbiased collection of data. The process is aided when the departmental letter reflects, insofar as possible, the range of voices and views of individual department members. Polyphony is generally preferable to a forced homogeneity, however well intentioned. Given the importance of the decision both for the individual and for the college, the preparation of a tenure case must be made with equal care whether the recommendation is positive or negative. Remember unsolicited letters cannot be accepted or considered in tenure deliberations.

We ask that you get in touch with me as soon as possible should any of these procedures present difficulties of any kind. Professor (name of candidate) will receive a copy of this letter. I also enclose for you a copy of a letter I have sent to (him/her).

Many thanks for undertaking a process that is so central to all that we do at Amherst.

Sincerely,

Catherine Epstein
Dean of the Faculty

cc: candidate
ADC

Enclosures