Professor XXXX  
Department of XXXX  

Dear XXXX,

I write to encourage your department to begin to prepare for the recommendation it must make on the reappointment of XXX by noon on February 4, 2022. Colleagues in my office will be in touch this spring to schedule a Zoom meeting with chairs and academic department coordinators to discuss the reappointment process. Reappointment guidelines can be found in the \textit{Faculty Handbook}, which is online. I remind you that only tenured members of the department participate in departmental reappointment deliberations. Please note that we require electronic copies in optical character recognition format (OCR) of all of the materials specified below. You have received via email a copy of the letter sent to candidates describing the steps that they must take to prepare for this process.

In preparation for its recommendation concerning reappointment, the department will gather evidence and conduct a full and rigorous review of the candidate’s teaching effectiveness, scholarly or creative growth, and other contributions to the life of the college. The results of the department’s review are conveyed to the Committee of Six in the form of a detailed and considered letter, which all tenured members of the department should review before it is sent to the Committee of Six. Although individual letters from tenured members of the department are not required in this process, it is imperative that all views, especially dissenting views, be represented in the department’s letter. We ask that one hard copy and an electronic copy of this letter be submitted as part of the reappointment dossier to my office by February 4, 2022. Those tenured members of the department who are on leave should participate in this review process. The departmental letter may be signed by the chair on behalf of the tenured members of the department. It has been the practice for many years that, at the time of the tenure review, the Committee of Six has access to the department’s letter of recommendation from the time of reappointment. In keeping with the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Structures During COVID-19, please address if and how the pandemic had an impact on the candidate’s research and teaching, and on the field, if the department has knowledge of this. Please continue to discuss these issues in annual conversations going forward.

The departmental letter will be informed by a letter submitted by the candidate for reappointment to the department by December 1, 2021. In this letter, candidates are asked to describe their teaching experience at the college, the present state of their scholarship or creative work, their aims and plans for the future, and their engagement in college life. Please note that candidates have been asked to describe the impact of the pandemic on their research and teaching, where relevant.

Recognizing that Committee of Six members are usually not experts in candidates’ fields, candidates for reappointment may choose to write a modified version of this letter for the Committee of Six, in which they describe their work and its significance in a less specialized idiom. If two letters are written, the candidate must share both letters with the department. Both letters are also included in the reappointment dossier and forwarded to the Committee of Six.

The candidate’s letter(s) to the department will serve as the basis for a conversation between the candidate and all tenured members of the department before the department finalizes the reappointment recommendation. Please submit to my office as part of the dossier one paper copy, as well as an electronic version, of the candidate’s letter(s).

Since scholarship is not reviewed by outside experts at the time of reappointment, it is essential that the promise and progress of the candidate’s scholarship or creative work be evaluated fully by tenured colleagues. The Committee of Six does not undertake an independent review of candidates’ scholarship
or creative work at the time of reappointment, so copies of scholarship or evidence of creative work should not be included in the reappointment dossier. That said, the departmental evaluation of scholarly or creative growth takes on great importance in guiding the Committee of Six’s review of the reappointment case and provision of feedback to the candidate. The departmental evaluation should take into account any or all of the following: published work, publicly presented work, projects currently under way, and plans for future projects. The department’s letter should explain norms in the field, including publication or performance venues, conference and workshop participation, and co-authorship on articles or presented papers.

Also included in the reappointment dossier is the candidate’s up-to-date curriculum vitae (CV). The CV should be as complete and informative as possible. It must present in two formats the courses that the candidate has taught at Amherst during their tenure-track appointment. The first format is a list of all courses taught at Amherst, organized by year, listed in chronological order. The second format is a list of the courses, in numerical order that indicates the semester in which each course was taught. It must also include a list of special topics courses and senior honors theses supervised. In addition, it should provide full citations for all scholarly and creative work that the candidate wishes to be considered. References to published and forthcoming work must include the span of page numbers. For forthcoming work, a word count is requested. Pages of the CV must be numbered. The following information must be included within the CV or as an addendum: notations about whether the work was peer-reviewed or invited; the candidate’s contributions to, and role in, collaborative work; and the status of unpublished work (e.g., published in print or online, forthcoming, revised and resubmitted, or just submitted). It would be helpful to the committee if the candidate explains succinctly any terms that vary by field, including how the discipline conceptualizes “forthcoming.” For example, does “forthcoming” mean that work is under contract, though it might not be complete? Or does this term mean work is actually complete and in press? Conference seminars and invited presentations should be included when appropriate. Candidates should also provide a description of their other contributions to the life of the college. The department should review the candidate’s CV for conformity with these requirements. Please submit to my office as part of the dossier one paper copy, as well as an electronic version, of the candidate’s CV.

I turn now to the procedures governing student evaluations of teaching. All student evaluations of teaching collected for purposes of reappointment are to be submitted to the Committee of Six as part of the reappointment dossier; both retrospective letters and end-of-semester evaluations must be submitted. Please submit one hard copy of all evaluations. If there are handwritten end-of-semester evaluations, they must be typed. The handwritten originals should be submitted along with the typed copies, and we ask that end-of-semester evaluations and retrospective letters be submitted electronically as well. Student retrospective letters and end-of-semester evaluations sent via email will be acceptable provided the student’s name is clearly shown. All other semester-end evaluations and letters from students must bear the students’ signatures. Academic department coordinators will receive specific instructions regarding procedures for letters and evaluations sent by email, as well as guidelines for organizing letters and evaluations in the candidate’s dossier. Note that unsolicited letters from students cannot be accepted.

The faculty has voted that evaluations of teaching are to be requested of all students from every course, including every honors and special topics course taught by an untenured faculty member. End-of-semester evaluations are normally solicited in all classes in the final week of each semester on the common evaluation form approved by the faculty. After the submission of grades, they are made available to the instructor without the names of the respondents. In addition, all departments are required to solicit from all students in the instructor’s courses retrospective letters to inform the reappointment review. Retrospective letters must be solicited from students in courses from the semester immediately preceding the semester in which the candidate is considered for reappointment.

The exception to the above relates to courses taught in the spring 2020 semester. For that semester, tenure-track faculty have been given the option of having teaching evaluations solicited from the students whom they taught. If candidates chose to have evaluations solicited, they need to decide in the early fall
whether they want to share the evaluations with their tenured departmental colleagues, and whether they want these evaluations included in their reappointment dossiers. Please check with your candidate about this matter. If the evaluations are included in the reappointment dossier, they will also be reviewed at the time of tenure, along with all other pre-reappointment evaluations. Candidates for reappointment and tenure will not be judged on whether or not they choose to include spring 2020 evaluations in their dossiers. If evaluations are included in the dossier, students whom the candidate taught in 2020 spring will be asked to write a retrospective letter about their experience at the time of reappointment. If the student took a course with the faculty member during another semester, that student will be asked to write a retrospective letter about that course only.

The Committee of Six requests that departments do all that they can to increase the overall return of end-of-semester evaluations and student retrospective letters. The committee urges departments to employ strategies that ensure that virtually all students submit an evaluation in each of the candidate’s classes. Such strategies include requiring students to fill out and submit evaluations during class time and/or withholding grades until a student’s evaluation is submitted. One copy of each iteration of the department’s solicitation of retrospective letters must be included in the dossier and must include the date when each solicitation was sent. This will require that several solicitations be sent to the students. The letters written to students should be in neutral terms, clear of any tendency to lead students. They should communicate the importance of the task at hand and should give students sufficient instruction as to the nature of response desired. Persons asked to write an assessment should be informed that their communication will be treated as confidential. It is important that retrospective letters indicate which course(s) students are evaluating and in which years they were taken.

I remind you that the departmental evaluation of teaching effectiveness at the time of reappointment should draw upon a representative range of teaching activities in addition to student evaluations. 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 each semester. Note that “some members” refers to more than one but not necessarily all tenured members of the candidate’s department. 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.

It is helpful to the Committee of Six to have in the department letter a substantive assessment based on collegial observation of teaching, formal and informal pedagogical collaboration, and annual conversations with the candidate about teaching. If, during annual conversations, 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 the candidate may have implemented. In the case of co-taught courses, describe the balance of responsibilities of the candidate and the co-teacher(s), including, when relevant, the candidate’s and co-teacher’s (s’) relative contributions to the genesis of the course.

Reappointment is a time for serious reassessment of teaching and scholarship in preparation for the tenure decision. Whether the recommendation is positive or negative, this is an occasion for candid advice and review. It falls to you, as chair of the department, to discuss with a candidate for reappointment the frank assessment of both strengths and weaknesses of the individual’s teaching, as evidenced by student retrospective letters and end-of-semester evaluations, and scholarship, as judged by tenured colleagues. You should take the opportunity to discuss with the candidate departmental expectations between the time of reappointment and tenure review. The faculty has voted that the chair of the department will provide the candidate with the text of the department’s letter, which has been edited to protect confidentiality, and will discuss that letter with the candidate. I ask you to send to my office written confirmation that this discussion has taken place, signed by both the chair and the candidate, when you forward the
departmental recommendation (one hard copy and an electronic copy). If candidates wish to comment on the departmental recommendation, they may send written commentary, in confidence, to the Committee of Six by noon on February 18, 2022.

Finally, let me remind you of the following statement in the *Faculty Handbook* on the meaning of reappointment:

> The decision to reappoint is important, but should not be confused with the decision on tenure. A decision to reappoint is an expression of satisfaction with past performance and of confidence in the faculty member’s potential for continuing development. At the time of the department’s recommendation concerning reappointment, the chair of the department will discuss the department’s recommendation (whether positive or negative) with the particular faculty member; if the decision is made to reappoint for a second term, the chair will discuss considerations which may enter into a subsequent tenure decision.

Following the reappointment decision, the president will send a letter about reappointment to the individual under review, with a copy to the department chair, indicating the recommendation that the president intends to make to the board of trustees. Formal notification of reappointment will follow confirmation by the board of trustees. I will invite each candidate to meet with me soon after the reappointment process is completed to discuss the Committee of Six’s reading of the candidate's case and to provide the candidate with the committee’s minutes. I will also discuss the committee’s view with the department chair and provide the chair with the minutes.

Sincerely,

Catherine Epstein  
Provost and Dean of the Faculty  
Winkley Professor of History

CE/pk

c: candidate
ADC