

Some Thoughts on Annual Review

Annual Reviews are an important tool for tenure-track faculty in measuring professional growth and accomplishment.

The performance of Assistant Professors at SIUC is reviewed annually during the probationary period. These annual reviews serve multiple purposes: they are a formal record of progress that is included in the Promotion and Tenure Dossier; but, importantly, they serve as frank appraisals intended to identify strengths, note particular accomplishments, identify areas of weakness that might need attention, and generally provide guidance toward a successful bid for promotion with tenure. They complement other activities, such as P&T Workshops, and are intended to facilitate and guide professional development. As progress reports, they serve to allay anxieties and -- when necessary -- to alert the candidate to deficiencies. In CoLA, faculty have the benefit of several perspectives on their work. The Director (often with input from a faculty committee) writes a review and the Dean responds -- reflecting School and College perspectives. (Technically, the Director writes to the Dean, and the Dean responds to the Chair, and the faculty member gets copies of these letters.)

Typically, these letters state when a faculty member was hired and his or her stage in the probationary period. They address performance in teaching, service, and research or creative activity in the previous calendar year. Reviews of *teaching* generally identify the courses taught, note thesis, dissertation, and indirect teaching activities, present summaries of course evaluation data, abstract any peer reviews of teaching, identify special contributions to the teaching mission, and synthesize progress toward establishment of a clear record of quality teaching. Reviews of *service* generally address the individual's engagement with the School: is he or she involved in the life of the unit and becoming a good School citizen? On what committees has she or he served? Has he or she engaged in recruitment or retention activity? Involvement in service activities beyond the School are noted -- at the College- or University- level, in the academic community of the discipline, and so forth. Some Assistant Professors engage in extensive service activity, and this may be valued. But only moderate levels of service are expected, and doing more will often result in cautions to carefully consider balancing service with teaching and research demands. Reviews of research and creative activity will generally address the development of an agenda, the vigor with which this is being pursued, and -- critically, as time passes -- whether it is yielding a body of peer-reviewed work that is published in quality outlets or, in the arts, exhibitions or performances at selective venues. Of course there are disciplinary variations on the theme (articles, chapters, books, recitals, exhibitions, performances, etc.), but the theme is stable: a record of an independent body of research or creative activity yielding published/performed/exhibited work through selective and peer-review outlets and venues.

Annual reviews should be taken seriously. They complement P&T workshops and, from a different angle, address questions like "what do I need to do?", "should I do this or that?", "how much do I need to do?", and so forth. Of course, seek counsel from peers, consult your Chair, ask questions, and most importantly of all talk to your Director or Dean if you are unsure of something communicated in the annual review letter.

We have high standards for Promotion and Tenure. You would not have been hired if your colleagues did not think you could be successful. Annual Reviews are just another means to help you succeed.