

Department of History  
University of Kentucky  
Lexington KY 40506-0027  
June 1, 1990

Robert Hemenway  
Chancellor, Lexington campus  
University of Kentucky

Dear Chancellor Hemenway,

On behalf of the Humanities and Arts Area Committee, I would like to transmit some remarks concerning the preparation of promotion dossiers that reflect our experiences during the past year.

In order to evaluate promotion candidates fairly, committee members need to have careful and substantive letters of evaluation, both from colleagues on campus and from outside referees. Outside referees should be carefully chosen, and dossiers should indicate (a) how referees were chosen (i.e. which names were submitted by the candidates and which by the promoting department) and (b) the qualifications of the referees. Department chairs and deans should be aware that when referees' credentials are not made clear, committee members tend to feel they have no choice but to rely on such considerations as the general reputation of the referees' institutions, which may do a disservice to qualified candidates.

In some cases, candidates' dossiers did not make clear which publications were already published, which were accepted but "in press", and which listings on c.v.'s merely reflected "work in progress." Speaking for myself (since the issue was never discussed in the committee), I would also recommend that promotion candidates be encouraged to submit a brief statement of not more than two or three pages explaining in their own words the nature of their accomplishments, the relationship of the various areas of their work to each other, and their plans for the future. Such a statement, of course, should cover teaching and service as well as research and performance.

The committee is aware that different programs define excellence in the various areas evaluated for promotion according to different criteria appropriate to their disciplines and educational missions. We were nevertheless sometimes uneasy in evaluating dossiers from units whose standards differ from those of the "standard" humanities disciplines when the units themselves did not appear to have well-defined standards of their own. Cover letters from department chairs and deans might well include a clear statement of the promoting

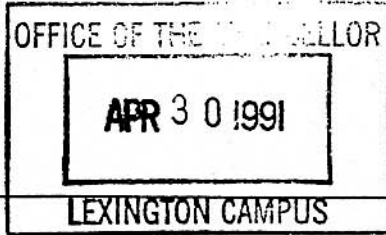
unit's own standards. A related concern arose from discrepancies between merit-evaluation track records in some dossiers and the letters of evaluation solicited for the promotion application. In at least one case, we felt that a college had systematically misled a candidate about her chances for promotion by providing unrealistic evaluations over a period of years.

We hope that these recommendations will ensure better-prepared promotion dossiers in the future. Such dossiers assure the maximum of fairness to the candidates and promise the best results for the university in its efforts to maintain a first-rate faculty.

On behalf of the Humanities and  
Arts Area Committee,

Jeremy D. Popkin  
Chair, 1990-1991

Letter retyped because the original would not copy well.



Department of History  
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April 23, 1991

Chancellor Robert Hemenway  
University of Kentucky

Dear Bob,

In an earlier letter, I mentioned several points concerning the review of promotion dossiers that emerged from the Humanities and Arts Area Committee's work this year, and committee members have mentioned a couple of other things to me. To reiterate points I made in my earlier letter, I'd like to suggest some review of the guidelines for allocation of dossiers to the different area committees. Our experience this year suggested the desirability of greater flexibility in this age of "blurred genres." We had one dossier in which the promoting department had failed to distinguish clearly between publications used to justify an earlier promotion and those that were relevant to this year's review. I mentioned in our meeting the issue of making studio-course student evaluations more easily interpretable. Some limitation of the amount of material to be considered in each case would certainly be desirable (the new dossier from is an example of a file that would be totally indigestible if it had to be completely reviewed). When faculty members are being recruited at the tenure level from outside the university (cases of ), committee members would like to see the advertisement for the position. The question of a suitable workroom for the review committees has already been brought up enough times, so I don't need to repeat what I said earlier.

Professors Breazeale, Hersh, Jones, and Tuska have been eminently diligent and cooperative in working with me this year. I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve on the committee for the past two years, and hope that our work has been satisfactory.

Sincerely,

Jeremy D. Popkin  
Professor of History

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