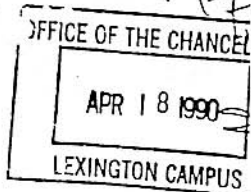


UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
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Lexington, KY 40506-0055 USA
Tel. (606) 257-3344

April 16, 1990



Dr. Robert Hemenway
Chancellor, Lexington Campus
111 Administration Bldg.
CAMPUS 0032

Dear Dr. Hemenway:

I can speak for the members of the Area Advisory Committee for Physical and Engineering Sciences in saying that we were very pleased that you met with us to discuss this year's Area Committee work and ask our advice about improvements. After you left the meeting our discussion continued, and several points were raised that I would like to pass on.

The most interesting point we discussed was the interaction between outside letter and letters of tenured departmental faculty. Apparently the practices are not uniform across departments as to whether faculty do consult or may consult the outside letters. Opinion was expressed that we should form our own opinions without leaning on outside experts and parroting their judgements. One member related that an outside referee even commented once that if we couldn't tell from up close whether a candidate was worthy of tenure or promotion then he could not be expected to do so from a distance. Others pointed out that with our widely dispersed and highly specialized research it is not reasonable to expect a substantive or penetrating analysis of the research of each one of our colleagues without some outside interpretation. It was suggested that our attempt to validate the scholarly accomplishments of U.K. faculty in a national arena is an important element in our striving to raise U.K.'s standing among the best research universities. However, one member asserted that at the very top echelon of universities hardly any of this broad-based consultation and judgement happens at all. If true, our heavy reliance on outside experts becomes an admission of our inferiority and bewilderment. It is often true that an undeserved negative comment or misinterpretation in an outside letter can be rebutted internally to limit wanton damage to a candidate's case. This line of discussion reached no final recommendation except to caution Chairs to see that their faculty members did not abdicate their independent judgement in supplying letters for the dossier. In some departments, both large and small, a surprising number of the inside letters contain only a proxy or a simple "yes" vote and thus serve only to show that their writers have no time to spare for the considered development of their units.

The Committee frequently wished to know how many M.S. or Ph.D. students had been guided in their research by the candidate and whether that record was considered normal, weak or exemplary in that department.

It is of the greatest importance that the outside letters be requested from people of high standing in the candidate's field and that they comment on the substance and the significance of the scholarly work. Adulatory letters from former students, even when the writers have reached some professional status of their own, have little worth. Letters from coauthors or from former U.K. faculty colleagues now transplanted elsewhere are likewise useless.

The referees should be provided with copies of at least the most significant publications. It was suggested that the candidate might be asked to designate a selection of his or her scholarly output as representing the core or the most important contribution

In many cases the complete dossiers with copies of all publications, research notes, newly developed curricula, etc. assume prodigious mass and volume without corresponding worth. Note that the NSF in its proposal guidelines now asks p.i.'s to list only the N best papers or papers from only the most recent M years rather than the full record.

It was quite controversial whether candidates or referees should be asked to indicate the degree or nature of an individual's contribution to coauthored work. Such data might have bizarre results, such as judging coauthorship in a 50-author paper on particle physics at only 2% the merit of a single-author paper. Allegedly mathematicians will refuse on principle to elucidate the relative contributions of joint work, insisting that work shared by a medal winner and a junior associate cannot and must not be divided.

I personally have found it a great help in preparing my own faculty letter for a colleague's dossier to have a statement by the candidate (e.g. in the vita) or by a more senior member of that group that gives a synopsis of the research themes, accomplishments and partnerships and the papers to which they correspond.

A dossier should not be submitted "early" unless the case is very strong and enthusiastically supported throughout the unit. Too often departments seem willing to extrapolate optimistically when the proof of scholarly accomplishment and standing is just not there. All up the line the dossier is passed on to avoid the awkwardness or insult of turning it back and the imposition on the outside referees. It is a pleasure and gratification to see a truly outstanding candidacy two or more years early, but we should insist on viewing the real fruits of accomplishment before giving the University's hand in marriage. To do otherwise sends a deceptive message to future candidates and undermines our need to build a solid scholarly base for the future.

Excuse my wordiness. I hope these thoughts are useful.

Sincerely,

Keith B. MacAdam

Keith B. MacAdam
Professor of Physics
Committee Chairman

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Ronald Gariepy, Professor
775 Patterson Office Tower
Lexington, Kentucky 40506-00275



May 10, 1991

Dr. Robert Hemenway
Chancellor, Lexington Campus
111 Administration Bldg.
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Dear Dr. Hemenway:

I am writing in response to your request for suggestions from Area Committees of ways in which promotion dossiers could be improved.

The Physical and Engineering Sciences committee recommends, as a basic principle, that the candidate and his department chairman be encouraged to include any information, in whatever form is appropriate, that would aid in identifying and understanding the candidate's academic accomplishments. For example, the candidate could include a statement describing his major contributions, as he sees them, in the areas of research, teaching, and service.

The following are more specific comments and suggestions.

Teaching

- Other than student teaching evaluations we have little information regarding the effectiveness of the candidate as a teacher. Information allowing comparison of student evaluations across the department and the college is often included. This information should always be included.
- Although this is done to some extent now, it would be useful if a more systematic effort were made to obtain evaluations of the candidate's teaching from former students, particularly in undergraduate courses.
- Information on the supervision of graduate students should be included.
- Publications with graduate students should be indicated.

Research

- Occasionally a dossier is accompanied by what seems to be an excessively large sample of the candidate's publications. It would seem more realistic to have the candidate indicate what he considers to be his five "best" publications, as is done in proposals to the National Science Foundation. These could be sent to the reviewers and included in the dossier.
- In some cases it is especially important to have a reasonable idea of the extent of a candidate's contribution to joint work. This may be difficult to determine but, at least, the candidate could include a statement indicating who contributed which ideas to the work.

I hope these comments and suggestions will prove useful.

Sincerely,

Ronald Gariepy
Committee Chair