

Early Tenure Consideration (Fall, 2013)

The grant of early tenure is reserved for exceptional cases, namely, where there is a “substantial” or “extraordinary” reason that the college would “be well served by such an early grant of tenure”, and where someone has met the very high standard applicable to all tenure cases on an accelerated basis. That is to say, the candidate has demonstrated all the accomplishments required for the grant of tenure at an accelerated rate and also demonstrates the requisite trajectory and long-term productivity. See: *Statement of the Board of Higher Education on Academic Personnel Practice in the City University of New York*: http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/academicaffairs/upload/Statement_of_the_Board_on_Academic_Personnel_Practice.pdf; and *By-Laws of the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York, Section 6.2(c)(2)*. See also, Chancellor’s guidance January 1, 2005 at: <http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/chancellor/2005/01/01/more-on-the-tenure-clock/> (Other limited circumstances where the grant of early tenure may be appropriate are where service is interrupted by a fellowship deemed to be valuable to the college, or where the person has had tenure at another accredited institution of higher learning.)

CUNY’s move to a 7-year tenure clock was welcome. The shorter 5-year clock in place prior to that too often put us in the difficult position of having to make tenure decisions before some candidates really had the opportunity to establish solid track records and trajectories as scholars and teachers. Shortening the tenure clock with agreements to consider candidates for early tenure risks creating the same problem.

Any indication (or promise) to *consider* a faculty member for early tenure (either orally or in writing) should, therefore, be the exception – not the rule, and must be properly vetted. No one can promise tenure. Hence, care must be taken to be clear that we are agreeing to *consider* one for, not to assure, tenure. Indeed, because we cannot promise any particular result, we run the risk of disappointing, rather than rewarding those we think have the potential to achieve early tenure.

If an offer of early tenure consideration is being contemplated at the offer letter stage, a supplementary letter offering early consideration for tenure should be written, after written approval from the dean and provost.¹ It is important that the letter take care to commit to *CONSIDER* the candidate for early tenure, not assure tenure. Also the letter should specify that while consideration for early tenure is being contemplated because of the body of work already created by the faculty member, the commitment to early tenure consideration is dependent on continued productivity. Exceptional circumstances that may warrant an offer of *consideration* for early tenure at this stage may include extensive productivity in a tenure track position at another institution that evidences a significant trajectory in terms of grants or prestigious publications.²

If an offer of early tenure consideration is being contemplated at some other point in one’s

¹A model letter can be found on the QC provost’s website.

²Note that, although not technically subject to the rules requiring waivers, we are asked by the CUNY OAA to submit waiver requests for early tenure, concurrent with section 6.2.c of the *By-Laws of the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York*, which covers the reappointment with early tenure for faculty who have held a CUNY appointment after not less than one nor more than seven years of continuous satisfactory service. See: www.cuny.edu/academics/programs/resources/instructions.pdf

service, a letter should be written outlining the commitment to *CONSIDER* the candidate for early tenure, after securing written approval from the dean and provost.³ Exceptional circumstances that may warrant an offer of *consideration* for early tenure during employment include the risk of losing extraordinarily productive faculty members being recruited by other institutions.⁴

Where shortening the tenure clock has been vetted and is deemed appropriate, when considering candidates for early tenure, in addition to adhering to the high standard articulated above, attention should be paid to any representations made to the individual in connection with their appointment or service. Those deliberating the award of tenure must, consistent with the standards for tenure, look at the entire body of the candidate's work including work at Queens College in order to evaluate the candidate's continued productivity along the previously established career trajectory.

We should, of course, keep in mind that these are not "up or out" cases. In those cases in which tenure at this time does not appear warranted, the committee should express its appreciation for the work and dedication accomplished by the candidate, give guidance and encouragement for what may be lacking, and consider the candidate for tenure at a future date.

³ See fn 1 above.

⁴ See fn 2 above.