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Departmental Recommendations for Tenure and Promotion: The Chair's Letter

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A Proposal for the 32nd Academic Chairperson's Conference

1) Primary Presenter information and curriculum vitae of short biographical sketch:

Denis M Medeiros, PhD, RD
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies
The University of Missouri-Kansas City
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Short Biographical Sketch: Dr. Medeiros oversees the Promotion and Tenure process at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He has 10 years of experience as a department head, as well as that of a Dean in which he made Tenure and Promotion recommendations. As Vice Provost he holds workshops for faculty and administrators on the best practices for tenure and promotion cases.

Dr. Medeiros earned his BS from Central Connecticut State University (Biology), MS from Illinois State University (Physiology), and PhD from Clemson University (Human Nutrition). Medeiros has been on numerous editorial boards and Grant Review panels. He has over 120 peer refereed journals and has taught human nutrition for non-majors through PhD level students. In his career he has observed a number of Tenure and Promotion processes by serving on the faculty at Mississippi State University, The University of Wyoming, The Ohio State University, Kansas State University, and currently the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

2) Additional Presenter information:

Rebecca Edmundson
Faculty Affairs Specialist
The University of Missouri-Kansas City
Email: EdmundsonR@umkc.edu

Short Biographical Sketch: Beci Edmundson coordinates the campus Promotion and Tenure process in her role as the Provost' Office Faculty Affairs Specialist at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Celebrating her 21st year with UMKC, Ms. Edmundson has worked closely with the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs to standardize the P&T process across 11 UMKC academic units, develop informational web resources and training workshops designed to guide faculty through the P&T process, convert P&T portfolios from hard-copy notebooks to interactive Adobe electronic portfolios, and create a Promotion and Tenure Coordinators group consisting of representatives from every academic unit who meet monthly to discuss P&T policy, procedures, and practices to increase P&T efficiency and effectiveness. Ms. Edmundson works one-on-one with 15-45 faculty annually to create their electronic P&T portfolio, and assists Chairs and Deans throughout campus in interpreting and executing P&T policies and procedures. Prior to joining the Provost Office she served as

the Human Resources Facilitator for the UMKC School of Computing and Engineering following a decade-long career in live theatrical administration.

3) Title of presentation:

Departmental Recommendations for Tenure and Promotion: *The Chair's Letter*

4) Abstract:

The department chair's letter is likely the most important recommendation of a faculty for or against promotion and/or tenure. Elements to include in a letter and best practices will be provided. Sample letters of poor and excellent recommendations will be used interactively with the audience.

5) Keywords:

Promotion and tenure, department chair, letter of recommendation, best practices, criteria

6) Presentation topic themes:

Faculty Development

7) Target audience:

All Department Chairs as well as other University administrators.

8) Type of Presentation:

Best practice presentation

9) Objective(s) of the presentation:

The objective of the session is to provide Department Chairs with a toolkit and set of practices in which to compose an effective letter regarding promotion and/or tenure of a faculty member.

10) Description of the session (300-500 words):

Promotion and tenure of a faculty member is likely the most important task of a University or College. The Department Chair is in a unique situation to objectively assess the faculty member's accomplishments. In most models of promotion and tenure, the Chair's recommendation is the connection between the faculty committee and the higher levels of

administration. The chair can speak to 1) the aspirations of the unit and how it compares with similar units across the nation or region, 2) the culture of both the department and the discipline, 3) the expectations of the faculty member in terms of teaching, research, and service, 4) the metrics used to assess teaching, research, and service, 5) departmental climate, 6) the needs of the department, 7) the trajectory of the candidate, and 8) gaps that were filled by the candidate to move the department forward. Simply stated, the chair may provide the context of the faculty member's environment as well as to analyze the departmental committee's recommendation as well as their own. This presentation will provide best practices of composing an effective Chair recommendation letter. Prior to composing the letter, the Chair should consider the candidate's previous annual, mid-tenure, and post tenure reviews, and measure the candidate's performance and qualifications against the department's criteria for promotion and tenure. Effective letters should analyze the candidate's record of achievement with the established criteria in an objective manner. Negative reviews from external evaluators and split recommendations from the faculty committee must be addressed and not ignored or minimized, as credibility could be questioned. The letter from the Chair must clearly state whether they are for or against the recommended action in the final analysis. Both poorly- and well-constructed sample letters will be used as points of discussion and learning.