University Libraries Tenure and Promotion Guidelines and Procedures

I. INTRODUCTION

Librarians at The University of Southern Mississippi hold faculty rank and status. The tenure and promotion policies herein drafted are based upon similar guidelines in force at other universities and reflect the concepts established in the "Statement of Faculty Status of College and University Librarians," which was drafted by a committee of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the Association of American Colleges (AAC), and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The statement has been endorsed by the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Association of American Library Schools, and various state library organizations, including the Mississippi Library Association (1). This document also reflects another ACRL policy statement, the "Model Statement of Criteria and Procedures for Appointment, Promotion in Academic Rank, and Tenure for College and University Librarians."

It is the purpose of this document to establish guidelines recognizing the contributions made by librarians in the dissemination of knowledge and the advancement of learning, reflecting that the work of professional librarians is essentially educational in character, and that The University benefits substantially when library activities are integrated with teaching, learning, research, and service. "The function of the librarian as a participant in the process of teaching and research is the essential criterion of faculty status." (2) Without the librarian, the quality of teaching, learning, research, and service in colleges and universities would deteriorate seriously and programs in many disciplines could no longer be continued. The librarian's contribution is intellectual in nature and is the product of formal education, including professional training at the graduate level. The establishment of clear criteria for tenure and promotion of librarians is intended to foster a library faculty of the highest quality which supports the intellectual and service missions of The University.

Librarianship is first and foremost a service profession, and it is the primary duty of librarians to provide academic support for teaching, learning, and research for the university community. This is accomplished through dedicated and professional performance of the specific tasks entailed in their job appointments.

The policies enunciated herein supersede all previous tenure and promotion policies and augment the policies outlined in the current University of Southern Mississippi Faculty Handbook. In any case of conflict between this document and the Faculty Handbook, the Faculty Handbook will prevail. For this reason, all tenure-track librarians should be thoroughly familiar with both documents.

The awarding of tenure to professional librarians offers mutual benefits to The University and the librarian by providing:

1. Criteria which seek to develop excellent library services;

2. A degree of job and economic stability which helps to attract and retain well-qualified librarians;

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3. Policies in agreement with those of other universities and national professional library associations;

4. A mutual commitment based on recognition not only of the librarian's proven contributions to the library, but also of their continued value to The University;

5. Protection of intellectual freedom by shielding the librarian from censorship.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION

Tenure and promotion are two separate processes. The fundamental criterion by which librarians are to be evaluated are:

A. Librarianship;
B. Professional Growth and Development;
C. Service Activity.

Successful candidates for tenure and promotion must exhibit sustained quality performance in these three areas, with the expectation that the candidate will achieve a high level of performance in two of the categories, one of which must be Librarianship. In addition, the USM Faculty Handbook indicates that effectiveness in interpersonal relationships, including professional ethics, cooperativeness, resourcefulness and responsibility are standards of evaluation for faculty.

A. LIBRARIANSHIP

In the evaluation of library faculty, librarianship is equivalent to the teaching component for academic faculty. Sustained high-level performance in this area should be the most important criterion in the evaluation of library faculty appointments, reappointments, promotion and tenure. Each librarian has a job description which should be consulted for specific expectations. Examples of high-level performance depend on the librarian's assigned responsibilities and may include, but are not limited to:

- Demonstrates professional knowledge and leadership in application of new strategies and/or technologies to improve the Libraries' services or processes.
- Demonstrates leadership in the achievement of goals and objectives in assigned areas of responsibility and/or achievement of departmental goals and objectives.
- Develops effective policies and procedures.
- Improves the economic efficiency of library processes.
- Effectively develops, plans, and/or coordinates resources or services.
- Demonstrates superior communication and interpersonal skills.
- Demonstrates effectiveness as a supervisor.
- Develops and promotes cooperation and collaboration between the Libraries and the University community.
- Demonstrates expertise in the assigned areas of responsibility (see job descriptions)

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B. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

As related to tenure and promotion, a librarian must demonstrate continuing growth in a specific area of librarianship. Professional growth should be documented by evidence of activities which further such development. Since talents and inclinations, demands of positions, and opportunities vary, the individual librarian must decide how to contribute to the profession and in which direction to grow. Such professional pursuits should be considered with the librarian's supervisor in order that the needs of the library and The University, as well as those of the individual, are met.

Librarians support research on the part of the faculty, staff, and students through daily professional activities. These activities result in a library system that meets the needs of graduate and undergraduate students and faculty. Some examples of how librarians may contribute in this category may include but are not limited to:

- Development of management or information systems
- Studies and surveys of library functions, procedures, and services
- Grant proposals and/or awards
- Exhibits
- Preparation of subject bibliographies, pathfinders, and other finding aids based on library and other information resources
- Publications of journal articles, books, chapters, bibliographies, indices, reviews, and newsletters
- Production of print and non-print materials for teaching or training purposes
- Editorships of journals or newsletters
- Conference papers and presentations
- Lectures, workshops, or training sessions given under the auspices of professional organizations
- On-going or occasional contributions such as that of consultant, compiler, or bibliographic analyst
- Creative use of technology such as design of web pages, interactive technology design, and the application of technological solutions to library problems
- Attendance and participation at professional conferences
- Continued course work beyond the Master of Library Science degree
- Other creative activities.

C. SERVICE ACTIVITY

There are three areas of service in which librarians participate: service to The University, service to the library profession, and service to the community. Some examples may include but are not limited to:

- Participation in library committees or special projects
- Participation in campus-wide committees, councils, task forces, etc.
- Membership and service in professional organizations
- Planning of program sessions and activities
- Elective office
- Community service in organizations outside The University
- Unpaid consultation work for business, industry, professional organizations, or other work to aid in the solution of practical problems.

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III. SPECIFIC CRITERIA AND EXPECTATIONS FOR ACADEMIC RANKS

In accordance with the policy of the Association of College and Research Libraries, the appropriate degree for appointment is considered to be a Master of Library Science from an institution accredited by the American Library Association (3). In further accordance with the policy of the Association of College and Research Libraries, the master's degree in library science from a library school accredited by the American Library Association is the appropriate terminal professional degree for academic librarians (4). In some instances, a graduate degree in another professional or scholarly field may be appropriate.

The minimum educational and experience levels expected for each rank are outlined below:

A. INSTRUCTOR

Normally, individuals are not appointed at the level of Instructor; however, there may be exceptions. The Instructor rank is not tenure-track.

B. ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

This is the usual entry level position for those with an ALA-accredited Master of Library Science degree. Individual duties and capabilities of Assistant Professors will vary according to the specific job assignment within the various libraries.

C. ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Librarians at this level have developed specialized knowledge of one or more areas of professional activity. They consistently perform complex professional activity and professional duties exercising mature professional judgment. They have participated in continuing education in the form of academic course work, pertinent workshops, degree programs, institutes, or conferences.

D. PROFESSOR

Individuals at this level have made contributions of recognized merit to the library and/or The University and to the profession. Their professional development has resulted in the attainment of national or regional recognition in the library profession. Regional recognition is defined as recognition beyond the bounds of one state. Duties at this rank require the highest level of professional contribution. This rank is not restricted to library managers.

IV. REVIEWS PRIOR TO THIRD YEAR REVIEW

Since the USM Libraries is not organized departmentally, all reviews prior to the Third Year Review are conducted according to the governance option selected annually by tenure-track librarians. See the Faculty Handbook for further information.

V. THIRD YEAR TENURE REVIEW

All non-tenured librarians in each of the tenure-track positions (Assistant Professor - Professor) will undergo a comprehensive review of progress toward tenure during the third year of full-time service at The University. This review, to be conducted as part of the candidate's annual review, will involve all of the tenured librarians, the Dean of Libraries, and the Provost. A letter

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requesting the submission of dossiers will be sent by the Chair of the Tenure and Promotion Review Committee to all non-tenured librarians in this category. See Departmental Tenure Review Proceedings, Faculty Handbook, 13.4 for description of the process.

VI. PROCEDURES FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION

Initial Appointment: Time counted toward tenure and promotion begins with the fall semester of the calendar year in which the individual begins employment. In rare cases, the terms and conditions of faculty appointments will differ from those stated below. In those circumstances, the precise terms and conditions will be stated in writing and copies given to both the prospective faculty member and the institutional administrative supervisor prior to the signing of the appointment contract. These conditions must be approved by the President of The University, upon recommendation of the Tenure and Promotion Review Committee, the Dean of Libraries, and the Provost, and may include credit for prior professional experience. Such credit will not be awarded routinely and should be recommended only when the candidate can demonstrate performance that is consistent with the tenure requirements of The University. In such cases credit should not exceed two years for those appointed at the level of Assistant Professor, three years for appointment at the rank of Associate Professor, and four years for appointment as Professor. See the USM Faculty Handbook for further information.

Individuals with library experience below the level of Assistant Professor may wish to have this experience considered toward the requirements of tenure and promotion. In calculating the years of experience, one year of experience below the level of Assistant Professor may be considered equal to one-half year of professional experience if recommended by the Tenure and Promotion Committee and specified in the written conditions of appointment at the time of employment.

1. Promotion. Under usual circumstances, candidates must complete at least five years as Assistant Professor before they are eligible for promotion to Associate Professor and a like period as Associate Professor before they are promoted to Professor (that is, promotion may be recommended during the fifth year, to take effect at the beginning of the sixth). Individuals whose qualifications are extraordinary in terms of national standards may receive early consideration for promotion. It should be clearly understood that promotion is not guaranteed upon completion of a given term of service, and is granted by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning.

2. Tenure. Tenure recommendations will normally be made during the candidate's sixth year of full-time contractual service, to take effect at the beginning of the seventh contract year. At the request of the candidate and with the concurrence of the appropriate director and the Dean of Libraries, the recommendation may be deferred to the seventh year. In no case may consideration be deferred beyond the seventh full year of service. Thus, by the end of seven years in a tenure-track position, a librarian will either receive tenure or a terminal contract for the eighth year.

3. The probationary period for tenure must be continuous except that a maximum interruption of two years because of part-time service or leaves of absence for professional enhancement may be counted. Contingent upon prior approval by The University administration, sabbatical leaves may also be counted as part of the probationary period.

4. Each individual librarian shall maintain a dossier containing materials relevant to his/her application for third year review, tenure and promotion arranged according to University guidelines. The dossier shall include the following items:

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a. Promotion/Tenure Recommendation Form;
b. Vita;
c. Evaluation reports and third year review (if applicable);
d. Job description(s);
e. A statement of self-evaluation by the candidate which also indicates whether application is for third year review, tenure and/or promotion;
f. Evidence of professional activity, growth, and service. The evidence should include:

- description of changes in responsibilities
- innovative contributions to the library
- new skills acquired
- special assignments
- cooperation with staff and faculty to promote use of the library
- copies of manuals developed
- copies of research and/or creative activities
- conference papers and lectures
- summary of grants and awards
- indication of service as a moderator or panelist
- indication of courses taught or taken
- indication of conferences attended and memberships held
- record of offices held and committee service
- record of service on library committees
- evidence of participation in campus committees, councils, etc.;

g. Letters of commendation

h. In addition to documented internal evidence of qualifications and service, each candidate for promotion to Professor must undergo an external evaluation consisting of at least three confidential letters from informed, disinterested referees outside the University who are themselves qualified by rank, credentials or experience to evaluate the candidate's accomplishments in the profession. See the Faculty Handbook for further guidelines.

5. In applying for promotion or tenure, the candidate shall submit the completed dossier to the Chair of the Tenure and Promotion Review Committee. The candidate for promotion, tenure, or third year review is responsible for the completeness, quality, and accuracy of his or her dossier.

6. Notification for third year review and tenure will be initiated by the Dean of Libraries. An individual who has served time in rank may request consideration for promotion. Although a candidate may re-apply for promotion at a later date, the candidate can apply for tenure only once. The Faculty Handbook contains guidelines for the eligibility to serve on Tenure and Promotion Committees and the procedures governing the process. Both tenure and promotion recommendations will follow the schedule as outlined by the Faculty Handbook and/or the University Calendar.

Members of the Tenure and Promotion Review Committee will evaluate the materials submitted, cast votes by secret ballot, and notify the candidate in writing of their recommendation, accompanied by an underlying reason, as well as the vote count. Such notification must be made at least ten calendar days prior to the forwarding of the recommendation to the Dean's Advisory

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Committee. A copy of the recommendation will also be placed in the candidate's dossier. Strict confidentiality will be observed by committee members regarding materials submitted to the committee and the discussions held concerning the candidate.

The Dean's Advisory Committee is the next level of review for all applications for tenure and/or promotion. The Dean's Advisory Committee will be composed of three tenured librarians. Only Associate Professors and Professors will be eligible to serve, and the election will be by secret ballot. The main purpose of the Advisory Committee will be to make its recommendations for tenure and/or promotion. Members of the Advisory Committee will not participate in the deliberations of the Tenure and Promotion Review Committee. The Advisory Committee will forward its report, including the vote count, directly to the Dean of Libraries and will notify the candidate of its recommendation within ten days.

After the Dean of Libraries has evaluated the materials developed at the lower levels, he or she will send a written statement to the candidate. The Dean's recommendation will then be submitted to the University Advisory Committee through the Provost's office.

VII. APPEALS

Candidates shall have the right to appeal unfavorable recommendations made at several levels of the review. For further information, please see section XII of the Faculty Handbook.

VIII. AMENDMENTS TO THE POLICY

Any tenure-track librarian may propose amendments to this document by submitting them in writing to the Chair of the Tenure and Promotion Review Committee. If a majority of the tenured librarians approve the amendment, it will be submitted to a vote at an open meeting of the tenure-track librarians. The amendment must be approved by a 2/3 majority of all tenure-track librarians and voting is by secret ballot. All such amendments are subject to the approval of the Dean of Libraries, the Provost, and the President of the University.

NOTES


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This document was approved by the University Librarians on July 17, 2009.

Approved by the Dean: 

Date: 7/17/09.

Approved by the Provost: 

Date: 3/24/10

Approved by the President: 

Date: 

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