New York University
Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee

Report on Demonstration of Teaching Effectiveness in Promotion and Tenure Dockets
March 2005

In considering the question of what items should be included in P&T documents to demonstrate teaching effectiveness, the committee started with two lists—one taken from the Provost’s “core and essence document” on P&T and the other from the report of the Ad Hoc Task Force on the Evaluation of Teaching. One relevant item missing from both lists was information about the mentoring of undergraduate research projects. Discussion of what the entry “student ratings or evaluations” entailed led to general agreement that it was not sufficient to submit merely either a précis of ratings or a mass of raw data; rather, there should be a quantitative summary as well as some interpretation and context (e.g., an individual’s ratings could be put in the context of typical ratings in comparable types of courses in the department). A statement on teaching philosophy seemed an appropriate item for the docket, but an elaborate teaching portfolio that required explaining one’s objectives for each course, and supplying evidence that they had been met, could become excessive. (It was pointed out that in large departments much teaching occurs in departmental courses that do not leave individual instructors much leeway in setting objectives. Moreover, objectives might more properly be discussed at the time a new course was proposed or a new curriculum was developed.) Differing views emerged on the subject of peer observation, not least because the contexts of teaching improvement and of teaching assessment can be quite different. At Gallatin, for instance, peer observation is required and can be valuable for junior faculty, while at Stern reports of observations are kept strictly confidential, shared only with the faculty member. It was suggested that observation might be more beneficial to both the candidate and the department at the third-year-review level and not only at the tenure-decision level.

The committee recommends that the following items—when relevant to the individual’s responsibilities—should be a part of all P&T doockets:

- Candidate’s statement of his/her teaching philosophy
- Course syllabi
- Evaluations of teaching. These should include student evaluations, both quantitative and qualitative. In addition, the department should provide some interpretation of the data and general curricular context. Reports of peer observations, including formal assessments of teaching effectiveness, are useful but optional.
- Record of undergraduate research mentoring, including the supervision of undergraduate honors theses or equivalent creative projects
- List of Ph.D. dissertation directions and of Ph.D. committees
- List of M.S., M.A., M.F.A. thesis directions
- The candidate’s service record and potential contributions toward the work of the department and the intellectual life of the University and the academic community
- List of advisees (graduate and undergraduate)