

Potential Charge to the Senate
Proposed by Senator Eric Allender
October 2008

Consider whether changes made to the 2008-09 Academic Reappointment/Promotion Instructions appropriately serve the University's process of evaluation for promotion with tenure and to senior ranks. Form No. 3-a, "Confidential Letter Cover Sheet," (attached) has been newly revised to add the following requirement:

C. Referee recommended by (check all that apply):

1. *Candidate*
2. *Chair/Program Director*
3. *Colleague*
4. *Dean*

Background:

The Senate is asked to consider this new requirement and whether it effectively reinstates, in part, a "ranking" of external letters. A process for separate "lists"¹ of external reviewers set forth in the Instructions many years ago was eliminated, in part, because the lists were being used in ways that discounted or provided less weight to letters received from reviewers recommended by the candidate. The integrity and weight applied to external letters is best determined by evaluators considering the reputation and expertise of the evaluators themselves, not by who recommended them as experts. External reviewers are explicitly asked in the letter of solicitation to disclose any relationship to the candidate and his/her prior basis of knowledge of the candidate's work. This, coupled with the required "Report on External Confidential Letters" (Form No. 3), provides the information needed by internal evaluators to assess the quality of the external evaluation. A "checkbox" to indicate who recommended what referee will serve no useful purpose in the evaluation process and may, instead, create unwarranted biases and confusion throughout the evaluation process as to how the information should be interpreted.

¹An "A" list was used to indicate that external reviewers were not recommended by the candidate; "B" to indicate that the reviewers were recommended by the candidate; and "C" list was used to identify external reviewers the candidate requested not be solicited.