

College of Science Promotion and Tenure Conflict of Interest

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The Faculty Handbook prescribes how to deal with conflicts of interest.

In order that we maintain objectivity in the promotion and tenure process, it is critical that we declare and manage special relationships between candidates and other faculty/administrators that might create real or apparent bias in the process. This means that evaluators who have a relationship with a candidate should be forthcoming in making that relationship known, consistent with University policies and these Guidelines, and act to ensure that their participation in no way undermines the objectivity of the evaluation process. This includes personal relationships as well as professional relationships such as those with former advisees and collaborators. A faculty member or administrator involved in the promotion and tenure evaluation process must declare any conflict of interest that arises from these circumstances.

If a unit or college level supervisor or P&T committee member involved in the P&T evaluation process has a relationship with a candidate under consideration that may result in a conflict of interest, he or she must declare the nature of the conflict of interest before any discussion takes place. A conflict of interest occurs when the evaluating party could realize personal, financial, professional, or other gain or loss as a result of the outcome of the P&T process, or when the objectivity of the evaluating party could be impaired by virtue of the relationship. The specific nature of the conflict of interest should be noted in a written statement to the unit or college P&T committee chair. If the P&T committee determines that the process would be compromised by the participation of the individual with a conflict of interest, that faculty member must recuse him or herself from any discussion or voting on that particular case.

These procedures described in the Faculty Handbook give the authority to make the decisions to the P&T committee at the level where the potential conflict is declared. The main reason for this procedure is that the faculty members participating at that level do in most cases have the most accurate knowledge of the circumstances. Nevertheless, problems can occur because these faculty members are too close to the case. Therefore the college adds three safeguards.

Potential Conflicts of Interest declared by a unit P&T committee member or by the unit head are treated at the unit P&T committee level, according to the university guidelines. When the status of a conflict of interest has been discussed at the unit level, the outcome of the discussion needs to be reported immediately to the Dean. The Dean has the authority to find a conflict of interest where the unit committee decided there was none.

College P&T committee members, if a signatory of a unit level letter of evaluation, shall recuse themselves from votes on these cases. All other potential conflicts of interest at the college P&T committee level need to be discussed in the committee and the outcome has to be reported to the Dean, who in this case as well can overturn a decision of no conflict of interest.

If the Dean has a conflict of interest, this should be reported to the provost for a resolution.

In all cases, it is a college rule that anybody who was the MS or PhD thesis advisor of the candidate is automatically excluded.