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Subject: An Open Letter to our Tenure Candidates and their Committees as you go through our process

An Open Letter to our Tenure Candidates and their Committees

The tenure process being undertaken at Foothill College is a very important one, but also one that should be formative, as well as summative. When probationary faculty are hired, your search committee was “excited about you” as we would not settle for recommended finalists who could just “do the job.” Thus, you have qualities, characteristics, experiences, and obviously expertise, that you conveyed to your search committee and they were excited to bring you forward for a final interview and our final selection of you. You should be very proud of this accomplishment, as we are proud of you and your desire to join the Foothill community. The academic strength of our college and the success of our students rests on your shoulders and those of your colleagues, and we are excited for you and look forward to your contributions. However, we also selected you, not because of what you can do now, but for your potential. Therefore, “room for improvement” is an important component, as none of us is perfect, and continuous improvement is an indicator of the flexibility and malleability we need in all of our faculty. The immediate shift to remote teaching because of Covid, is a stark but real example of the need for flexibility and malleability. Continuous improvement in the courses you teach or in the services you provide, are a hallmark of what makes Foothill an innovative leader. We do not, and cannot, “rest on our laurels.” This is all to say that the initial phases of the tenure process are intended to be formative, as well as summative. And to this end, we are strengthening our mentoring process.

As per the *Tenure Review Handbook*, (p. 14), “Mentoring by an experienced faculty member in the department or program provides an invaluable learning opportunity for the Candidate. A mentorship may be arranged by the Division Dean or appropriate administrator through the mutual agreement of the faculty member and the Candidate, or a Candidate may choose a faculty mentor who agrees to provide mentorship. A mentor shall not also serve as a member of the Candidate’s Tenure Review Committee during any of its phases.” We want to assure that each tenure candidate has the option to have a mentor, and to this end, we have asked Patricia Gibbs Stayte, our past Tenure Review Coordinator (TRC), to become our “mentor-at-large” whose duties will include assuring that each tenure candidate has a mentor, if desired, and she will provide the training and oversight of the mentors. She will also serve as a mentor herself, should one not be available for any particular candidate. Since Patricia was also the TRC for faculty who are now in Phase 2 or 3, she is already familiar with the entire probationary cohort, and will be working with our current Tenure Review Coordinator, Natalia Menendez.

As faculty progress through Phases 2 and 3, the Introduction in the Tenure Handbook is also worth noting and reiterating:

The period during which prospective members of the permanent Foothill-De Anza faculty are reviewed for tenure is best understood as a continuation of our District's search and selection processes. Indeed, the recommendation we make to the Board of Trustees to grant tenure is, perhaps, a more important

recommendation than the initial decision to hire. When tenure is granted, the Candidate becomes a permanent member of our community.

Thus, the review period for tenure becomes that crucial interval within which we create the future of our colleges, expand our vision of that future, and enhance the quality of the educational opportunity provided to students when they enter our doors.

Foothill-De Anza's approach to this period is based on the premise that the tenure recommendation is best formed by collaboration of faculty and administrative colleagues, and students through the student evaluation process, a collaboration in which the perceptions of each inform the others.

And, the tenure committees should be as excited in recommending candidates to move forward, as the search committees were in selection process. A special thank you goes to all members of the tenure committees. Your service and the tremendous amount of time and thought that is required in this all important - activity to assure the legacy of Foothill is a tremendous contribution to our future.

Job description for Mentor to the Mentors

“The period during which prospective members of the permanent Foothill-De Anza faculty are reviewed for tenure is best understood as a continuation of our District's search and selection processes, (*Tenure Review Handbook*, p. 1). To ensure that this is the case, and to support the candidate's experience of the tenure process as fair and formative, we are instituting the position of a “mentor at large” who will work with both mentors and candidates to:

1. Assist in pairing Candidates and mentors
2. Explain what the role of a mentor is and is not
3. Provide mentorship training to the mentors with a focus on the mentor's role and boundaries, both legal and professional
4. Assist the mentor in strengthening the integrity and confidentiality of the tenure review process
5. In conjunction with the mentor, refer the candidate to the Tenure Review Coordinator for specific tenure review process questions
6. Provide oversight to the mentorship process
7. Act as a mentor to candidates for whom a mentor is not available

Best regards,

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