

BIENNIAL REVIEW PROCEDURE

Provost Position 2007-08

The performance of each staff member is evaluated annually, and every other year a cabinet member has the benefit of a full 360 degree review, with half the cabinet under review in any given year. This is the year for review of the Provost position, and we will use the following procedures.

Timeline: Early in the second semester Mrs. Longwater will begin communicating with faculty and academic staff about the option to participate, the deadlines, and the methodology described below. I normally expect to have the pool of evaluators identified by February 15, with a deadline for evaluations to be in my hands about four weeks later.

Colleague Evaluation Form: The Provost and I have jointly developed a form consisting of 18 items to elicit responses from the evaluator, using a Likert scale or open-ended responses or both. Some colleagues may prefer to submit a letter of evaluation in lieu of or as a supplement to the evaluation form.

THE POOL OF EVALUATORS:

College Council: Normally, I ask the committee most clearly the liaison between faculty and academic administration to serve as a primary pool of evaluators. College Council is in that role here so we will invite (not obligate) each member (individually, not collaboratively) to submit an evaluation.

Provost invitations: The Provost may invite up to eight additional faculty members to submit an evaluation form or letter.

President's invitation: Mindful of the aforementioned pool, I may choose to make specific invitations to eight to ten additional faculty members with the goal to have meaningful representation from different strata of the community, with balance of experience, gender, academic areas, site representation, and other significant characteristics. Furthermore, it is important to have a critical percentage of the faculty participating, for reasons of both validity and confidentiality.

Open faculty invitation: With the aforementioned methods in place to assure a significant pool, the entire faculty is invited to submit the evaluation form or a letter to me.

Administrative staff: Each staff member who reports directly to the Provost is invited to participate.

Cabinet peers: Members of the cabinet are included.

Trustee Committee on Academic Affairs: The Chair of the committee is specifically encouraged to participate, and each member is given the opportunity.

Self-evaluation: The provost will be invited to provide me with her self-evaluation covering the normal range of subjects addressed by the instrument, but specifically responding to her own annual and career goals for the position.

USE OF THE INFORMATION:

The sole document that the Provost will receive is a letter from me, ranging from three to ten pages in length. In addition to the prose of my report, I summarize the evaluations on the 18 points of the scale as an appendix to the evaluative letter.

In crafting the letter I carefully seek themes to guide the Provost in future improvements and to guide me in critical judgments in shepherding the relationship between the Provost and others. I never use language drawn from a letter which might identify the author, and I do not use isolated judgments which do not represent more than one response, unless I deem the judgment to be one I can internalize and present as my own. Sometimes it is useful to present conflicting reports when both reports are supported by meaningful evidence. I have been able to do so in a style to foster improved future performance. Likewise, it sometimes is helpful to report any differences in judgments from faculty, staff, and trustees when they exist. I also compare the Provost's self-evaluation with the judgments of others. Finally, I devote a significant portion of the report to my own appraisal and the meaning of the data to future expectations.

Although Mrs. Longwater will manage the distribution of information and communications, I expect that I, and only I, will see any evaluation material returned to me. I will ask that the responses be sealed and marked confidential for me. Once I have made use of them, I will destroy all documents except my final letter which I will present to the Provost, first in draft form for her comments, then in final form for our continuing work together. It is my expectation that all responses be identified by name for my purposes only. (This description of protocol presumes paper is the medium. If we choose to handle it electronically as some have suggested, equally strong safeguards will be used.)

Summary: While I have found this procedure to be a significant assignment for everyone involved, including and maybe especially me, it has proven to be most useful for the school, the faculty, and the individual under review. I have experienced returns resulting in the whole range of ultimate decisions, but I have never found the process to be unfair to any constituency or individual. It works when there is trust, and when it has worked, trust has been enhanced. Thank you for your willingness to engage in this important activity for the future of Tusculum.

Russell Nichols
Interim President