Letters of Evaluation

Source: *UB Faculty/Staff Handbook*
http://www.business.buffalo.edu/UbbContent/Hrs/facultyhandbook/III.htm

III.A.I.9. Letters of Evaluation

Letters from External Evaluators

The dossier should present a **minimum of four letters from external evaluators**, solicited by the Chair or the Chair’s designee. The evaluators should be disinterested, distinguished scholars or professional practitioners from leading public or private research universities, preferably those institutions holding membership in the Association of American Universities. The evaluators should hold a rank equal to or above the rank to which the candidate would be promoted.

The Chair should make every effort to avoid letters from interested scholars, those having a personal or close professional relationship with the candidate: friends, students, former teachers and colleagues, mentors, co-authors and co-investigators. If the Chair includes such materials, they should be in addition to the four required disinterested letters. In all such instances the Chair must explain the rationale for their inclusion and why the assessments can be presumed disinterested and important to the case, and the evaluators should be asked to describe the nature of their relationship to the candidate.

Generally the evaluators should be selected by an ad hoc faculty committee appointed by the Chair, or by the Chair in consultation with faculty colleagues in the candidate’s field of expertise. The Chair is encouraged to seek the counsel of leading scholars from other peer institutions who work in the candidate’s field as well as those within the candidate’s department or school. The Chair may also consult the candidate for names of evaluators, excluding collaborators and former teachers or students. Such letters should be in addition to the four disinterested letters, not counted among the four, and the names not shared with the candidate.

**Special SMBS Guidelines for Qualified Dossiers**

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<th>External evaluators for qualified (clinical and research) <strong>associate</strong> ranks may be selected from extramural institutions or from another UB unit or department outside the candidate’s specialty or discipline. These evaluators should not have a personal relationship with the candidate nor have an adjunct/volunteer appointment with the candidate’s primary unit. A minimum of four external letters are required, in addition to two internal letters (from the candidate’s department or unit).</th>
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| External evaluators for qualified (clinical and research) **professor** ranks should be evaluated by leaders in their field and external to UB. There should be a minimum of four external letters and two internal letters. |
Letters from Internal Evaluators

At least two letters should be solicited from colleagues at UB, preferably from the candidate’s department or from center and institute directors and affiliated faculty where applicable. The Chair should seek internal evaluators who can best comment on the extent and quality of the candidate’s research or creative activity, on teaching capabilities, e.g., ability to work with graduate students and trainees, on willingness and skill in working with colleagues and serving on committees, and on other public or professional service as appropriate.

External Candidates:
In the case of external candidates who are being appointed from other institutions, the Chair should seek equivalent letters from colleagues in the department where the candidate was most recently employed. For such candidates, the Chair will also solicit a minimum of four letters from disinterested distinguished referees external to the appointee’s institution. The Chair may provide a synopsis of the report of the local search committee as a substitute for internal letters from UB.

The Chair should address the following points:

1. Rather than provide a general recommendation or unsubstantiated opinion, the evaluators should be asked to comment on the candidate’s credentials: the quality of the faculty member’s current research or creative activity; the quality of publications or other evidence of peer review; and the candidate’s potential for future growth and contribution to the discipline. They should also provide specific comparisons between the candidate and others in the field who, relative to the candidate, are at the same stage in their careers. It is particularly useful if the evaluators use non-specialized language and focus on the candidate’s accomplishments and the contribution to the discipline.

2. The evaluators must be asked explicitly whether, in their best judgment, the scholarly accomplishments and recognition achieved by the candidate would warrant the same appointment, promotion, or granting of tenure at the evaluator’s institution, or at other distinguished public research universities.

3. The letter of solicitation to the evaluator should not indicate in any way whether the candidate has or has not received the support of the Chair, the Department, or any other officer or unit of the university.

4. Each letter must indicate that the evaluator’s response will be held in strict confidence unless the evaluator gives written permission for the candidate to see it. A form for this purpose is to be enclosed with each letter of solicitation, with the evaluator indicating which of three options is preferred: that the entire letter be held in confidence; that the letter be available to the candidate with all references to the author deleted; or that the candidate may see the letter in its entirety. This form must be signed and returned with the evaluator’s letter.

All letters received in response to the solicitation should be included in the dossier, as should notations of any calls to outside evaluators. Refusals or disregarded requests should be noted as well.