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April 6, 2015

To: Academic Deans and Department Chairs

From: Thomas DiLorenzo, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

Re: Implementation of Essential Elements for Promotion, Tenure, and Evaluation Guidelines

Purpose of this Memo: Effective immediately, this memo describes the steps that will be taken to implement the Essential Elements, both for all revised or first-time departmental Promotion, Tenure, and Evaluation (PTE) guidelines and for review and approval of existing guidelines.

Background: In 2008, President Robert Kelley and then-Provost Greg Weisenstein, working with a faculty committee established in 2006, approved the “Essential Elements of Departmental Guidelines for Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure.” This document, along with the December 19, 2008 follow-up letter from the President and Provost, is available [here](#) at the VPAA Office website. The Essential Elements are procedural and substantive guidelines for all departmental standards governing faculty promotion, tenure, and evaluation (PTE). As the Kelley/Weisenstein letter notes, the Essential Elements were intended “to help establish a degree of uniformity across academic units in their articulation of (1) criteria calling for a minimum level of excellence in academic performance and (2) procedures that ensure fairness in the promotion and tenure process, while at the same time honoring discipline-specificity.” Ibid.

The Kelley/Weisenstein letter set out a process and timeline by which each department was expected to ensure that its PTE standards incorporated the Essential Elements requirements. For a variety of reasons, it appears that not all departments completed this process. In September 2013, a subcommittee of the Provost’s Academic Cabinet recommended a process and timeline for implementation that subsequently was approved by the full group of Deans. Again, for a variety of reasons, implementation remained incomplete.

In spring 2015, Provost Thomas DiLorenzo initiated discussion among the academic Deans to determine a process for full implementation, focusing both on immediate steps for departments that have revised or adopted first-time guidelines, and on the longer term, for review and approval of existing guidelines as being in compliance with the Essential Elements.

This implementation will be in full effect until such time as a future process may be outlined through the work of the Promotion, Tenure, and Evaluation Working Group in collaboration with the VPAA Office, academic Deans, and the University Senate. The PTE Working Group was

formed in fall 2014 and charged by President Kelley with making recommendations regarding revisions to PTE standards and process to the Provost and University Senate. See [Things To Know](#), “Faculty Working Group Considers Promotion, Tenure, and Evaluation Across the University,” March 5, 2015. The Group’s work in this area will occur throughout Academic Year 2015-2016.

Process to Implement the Essential Elements for Revised or First-Time Departmental PTE

Guidelines: Commencing no later than May 16, 2015, all departments that revise or generate for the first time their own PTE guidelines will demonstrate that these guidelines adhere to the Essential Elements prior to implementation. *Final approval for implementation must be obtained from the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs following departmental, college/school, academic Deans, and VPAA Office review and approval pursuant to these steps:*

1. VPAA Office provides rubric: The Office of the Provost & VPAA will provide to academic Deans and departments a rubric for review of revised or new departmental PTE guidelines that is anchored to the Essential Elements. The rubric will serve as a standardized assessment tool to assist in the evaluation, and as a mechanism to generate recommendations for any revisions of guidelines. See Rubric for Assessing Essential Elements of Departmental PTE Guidelines (4/6/15).
2. Department’s review: All departments that revise or generate for the first time their own PTE guidelines will use the VPAA rubric to ensure these guidelines are consistent with the Essential Elements. The department will consult with the Dean as necessary and appropriate during this process. The department will document that revised or new guidelines were approved by at least a majority vote of departmental faculty members, and consistent with departmental and college/school rules of governance. In addition to substantive discipline-specific norms, all approved guidelines also must be consistent with appropriate rigor generally for promotion and tenure at the University.
3. Dean’s review: Following departmental approval and documentation, the Dean will use the rubric to review revised or first-time departmental PTE guidelines for consistency with the Essential Elements and college/school PTE standards and guidelines. Prior to or during the review process, the Dean will be responsible as necessary for appropriate consultation with the department. The Dean will document final college/school-level approval in accordance with the rubric and Essential Elements. In addition to substantive discipline-specific norms, all approved guidelines also must be consistent with appropriate rigor generally for promotion and tenure at the University.
4. Academic Deans’ review: Following the college/school Dean’s review, s/he will bring the approved guidelines to the academic Deans as a group. The Deans will review the standards to ensure appropriate rigor generally for promotion and tenure at the University. The Deans as a group will discuss standards and offer guidance to the college/school, and will indicate their concurrence or disagreement with the college/school Dean’s approval or disapproval of standards, with appropriate consideration of the Dean’s determinations and substantive, discipline-specific norms. The Provost subsequently initiate a majority vote among the Deans for approval

or disapproval of department and/or college standards. For a majority vote to occur at least two-thirds of the academic Deans should be present. The academic Deans' approval or disapproval of standards will turn on the limited issue of ensuring appropriate rigor generally for promotion and tenure at the University.

5. VPAA Office review: Following approval and documentation by the college/school Dean and review by the academic Deans, the VPAA Office will use the rubric to review all revised or first-time departmental PTE guidelines. The VPAA Office will defer to discipline-specific norms as applied and documented at the department and college/school levels. VPAA Office review and pending approval will turn solely on accordance with the Essential Elements and the appropriate rigor generally for promotion and tenure at the University.
6. VPAA Office approval or remand: The VPAA Office then will take one of two steps: remand the departmental guidelines to the college/school Dean, who will provide appropriate direction to the department to revise and resubmit the guidelines; or issue final approval via a formal memo to the college/school Dean and department.
7. Filing: All approved departmental PTE guidelines will be filed and available in both the VPAA Office and at the college/school.

Process to Implement the Essential Elements for Existing Departmental PTE Guidelines:

Using the implementation process outlined below, by December 31, 2015, and on a 5-year cycle thereafter, each college/school Dean will determine whether departmental and college/school PTE standards meet:

- a. Substantive, discipline-specific norms
 - b. Essential Elements requirements, as described in the “Essential Elements of Departmental Guidelines for Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure” (Dec. 3, 2008)
 - c. University, NDUS, and SBHE standards for PTE
1. Dean's review: All departmental and college standards will be initially reviewed and evaluated by the appropriate college/school Dean. The college/school Deans will notify the academic Deans of the departmental standards that the college/school Dean has approved as conforming to the college/school standards above. The college/school Dean also will notify the academic Deans of any departmental standards that the college/school Dean has determined do not conform to college/school, University and other standards.
 2. Academic Deans' review: Following the college/school Dean's review, s/he will bring the approved guidelines to the academic Deans as a group. The Deans will review the standards to ensure appropriate rigor generally for promotion and tenure at the University. The Deans as a group will discuss standards and offer guidance to the college/school, and will indicate their concurrence or disagreement with the college/school Dean's approval or disapproval of standards, with appropriate consideration of the Dean's determinations and substantive, discipline-specific norms. The Provost subsequently initiate a majority vote among the Deans for approval or disapproval of department and/or college standards. For a majority vote to occur at

least two-thirds of the academic Deans should be present. The academic Deans' approval or disapproval of standards will turn on the limited issue of ensuring appropriate rigor generally for promotion and tenure at the University.

3. Completion dates: For all standards approved by a college/school Dean by December 31, 2015, the academic Deans' discussion and guidance, followed by that group's formal approval or disapproval, as well as that of the VPAA Office, should be completed by April 2016. The goal is to have approved standards in all colleges and departments for the Fall 2016 promotion and tenure cycle. The Provost, in consultation with the academic Deans, has authority to make exceptions to the timeline for the Dean's approval requirement for interim or acting Deans on a case-by-case basis.
4. Ongoing review: For all standards approved by a Dean after April 2016, the review and approval steps should be completed in the academic term following a Dean's approval, in such a manner as to comport with the ongoing PTE cycle.

Additional Guidance for Ongoing Faculty Evaluation: While the above process occurs,

1. Consistency with policy: Departments and colleges/schools should ensure that faculty are evaluated in a manner consistent with existing policies, procedures, and guidelines, including the Essential Elements, departmental and college/school guidelines, the UND Faculty Handbook, and applicable North Dakota University System and State Board of Higher Education policy. Articulated procedures and expectations in SBHE, NDUS, and UND Faculty Handbook policy must be followed, and if pertinent, take precedence over department and college/school policy or procedures.
2. Source documents and criteria: PTE recommendations or actions should be anchored in source documents and articulated criteria. As the Essential Elements indicates,

Importantly, any written reports generated by any individual or committee regarding the evaluation of a faculty member for promotion or the award of tenure must make explicit and specific reference to criteria stated in departmental, school/college (where appropriate) and University guidelines as that faculty member's individual accomplishments are evaluated. See Essential Elements.

Because University guidelines are tethered to NDUS and SBHE policy, these criteria also should be referenced in PTE reports and recommendations.

3. Promotion or tenure timeline: It is expected that departments will adhere to policy and procedure in regard to the timeline for promotion or tenure. The probationary period for tenure-eligible faculty is six years. See NDUS Policy [605.1 Academic Freedom and Tenure; Academic Appointments](#).

As the UND Faculty Handbook states in regard to eligibility for promotion:

A.2. ...eligibility for promotion will be reviewed for instructors in their fourth year in rank, assistant professors in their sixth year in rank and associate professors in their seventh year in rank whenever promotion to the next rank has not been recommended earlier. See UND Faculty Handbook, 5.3 UND SENATE PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTION.

As the UND Faculty Handbook states in regard to early tenure:

E. Early tenure (after four or five years) will be recommended only in exceptional cases.

Implementation at the University of North Dakota:

The probationary period of six years of continuous academic service to the institution may be shortened under those unusual circumstances when the faculty member's qualifications support a grant of early tenure in less time than the ordinary probationary period. In these cases, the faculty member bears the burden of demonstrating that his or her achievements unequivocally meet the stated criteria for tenure as established by the University in I-8.1.1(3)(b). The evaluation for the award of early tenure shall proceed in accordance with the procedures used for ordinary tenure reviews. See UND Faculty Handbook, Section 8.2 UND ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TENURE RECOMMENDATIONS.

As such, the expectation for promotion or tenure is to follow the articulated timelines. Extraordinary circumstances for early promotion or tenure must be fully warranted, demonstrated, and documented.

4. Quality as an expectation: Departments and college/schools should continue to interpret University, North Dakota University System, and State Board of Higher Education policy, as well as University policy, to mean that "Quality" (of effort and outcomes) is an integral part of the expectations for ongoing faculty performance, and therefore for meaningful and successful PTE processes. Evidence of quality should be expected and documented.