



# ***The Promotion Process***

**Paul D. Ronney**

**Aerospace & Mechanical Engineering**

**[ronney@usc.edu](mailto:ronney@usc.edu)**

***Past chair and member of the  
VSoE Appointment, Promotions  
& Tenure Committee***

# What is the APT?

- VSoE **A**ppointments, **P**romotions and **T**enure committee
  - 1 member (full professor) chosen by each department
  - 5 at-large (associate professor) members, elected by whole VSoE faculty
  - 2 Research-track faculty, 2 Teaching-track faculty
- Responsible for making recommendations on appointments, promotions and tenure decisions to Dean of Engineering & Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs
- APT's decisions are advisory not obligatory, but a strong recommendation for or against a candidate is “usually” adopted at higher levels
- APT's role is to provide
  - A uniform standard across VSoE departments
  - A 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion that might offset unusually critical or lenient Department decisions
  - Independent check on accuracy & completeness of Department's information

- For tenure-track faculty, starts in summer at end of 5<sup>th</sup> year of full-time service (or earlier by request, but generally cannot be later)
- Candidate provides information to departmental committee
  - CV
  - Statement of research and teaching accomplishments & plans
  - Mentoring record (e.g. Ph.D. students)
  - Service (Department, School, University, external) – external shows that you are known & respected by your peers
  - Examples of key publications ( $\approx 5$ )
  - Sometimes candidates are invited to recommend names of persons to write letters of recommendation, more often Department selects all referees
- All information goes into a “black box” – no further input from or discussion with candidate
- Suggestion: study UCAPT manual (this is the **rule book** for the promotion evaluation process):

[https://policy.usc.edu/files/2017/04/170420\\_UCAPT-Manual-2017.pdf](https://policy.usc.edu/files/2017/04/170420_UCAPT-Manual-2017.pdf)

- Department chair appoints Departmental committee – 3 members (for Research or Teaching Track promotions, will include such faculty members)
- Departmental committee duties
  - Recommend referees (subject to approval by Dean's Office)
    - » 'Arms length' – no formal relationship – most important
    - » Mentors & collaborators – not arm's length – lesser 'weight'
    - » More 'weight' given to referees from top-10 US universities and NAE members
    - » Referee letters describe the impact of your work and your stature within the field – **most important single set of information**
  - Collect quantitative information
    - » Web of Science and/or Google Scholar (papers, citations, H-index)
    - » Research / teaching funding
    - » Teaching evaluations
  - Identify peer group for quantitative comparison – may include peers mentioned by referees
  - Prepare report and provide recommendation to Department

- Department's tenured faculty (plus research-track or teaching-track faculty, as appropriate) discuss report / recommendation & votes
- Department Chair prepares memo
  - Candidate's fit with the Department
  - Summary of Department's discussion and result of vote
  - Chair's personal recommendation

- APT Chair (elected by APT committee) appoints subcommittee for each candidate – 3 members
- Evaluates dossier prepared by Department
  - Candidate's input
  - Department Subcommittee report & supporting information
  - Department Chair's memo
- APT does not collect additional information, but may ask for clarifications or corrections to data in dossier
- Prepares report and provides recommendation to full APT
- APT discusses report / recommendation & votes - **members of your department will not vote at the APT level because they voted at the Department level**
- APT Chair prepares memo for Dean
  - Summary of discussion
  - Result of vote

- Evaluated by APT “Executive Committee” only
  - APT Chair
  - 1 other tenured APT member
  - 2 Research or Teaching faculty members as appropriate
- Executive Committee discusses dossier prepared by Department & votes on candidate
- APT Chair prepares memo for Dean
  - Summary of discussion
  - Result of vote

# *What's next?*

- Dean prepares recommendation based on outcomes of Department and APT actions + his/her own opinion
- For Research- or Teaching-Track faculty, the VSoE Dean's Office is the last step
- For Tenure-Track faculty, University-level APT committee (UCAPT, within Provost's office) evaluates information and provides yet another recommendation
- Board of Trustees has the last word!



# *Expectations for promotion*

- Be recognized by leaders in your field as a ‘likely future leader’
- Continue your Ph.D. and/or postdoc work, but have at least one identifiable new area of strength started at USC
- Collaborations are fine, but have work that is uniquely yours
- Be at least in the middle of your peer group in terms of quantitative metrics
- More funding is always better, but key factor is, “is the candidate’s funding (past, current and forecasted) sufficient to support his/her agenda?”
- Have at least average teaching evaluations
- Show some ‘presence’ in your community

# ***Associate to full professor promotion***

- Unlike Assistant → Associate promotion, no set timeline but typically 5 – 6 years later
- Process essentially same as Assistant → Associate
- Expectation is that you have established yourself as a leader in your field, rather than just showing that potential
- Also expectation of considerable service record

- Attend as many conferences as possible; present any quality work you have, shake hands, network – **establish yourself as a ‘player’ in the field** (and don’t annoy people...)
- Ask officers in relevant professional society (IEEE, ASME, ASCE ...) to appoint you to conference program and technical subcommittees
- Volunteer to be your department’s seminar coordinator and **invite people who may be good referees for you**
- Ask relevant NSF (or other funding agency) program officers for invitation to be a panel reviewer – **learn how panel review system works and what ‘sells’**
- Come to my workshop on ‘Writing Compelling NSF Proposals’ – Sept. 13, 12:00 noon – 2:00 pm, location TBD