

June 1, 2012

## **Best Practices in Personnel Reviews (Humanities and Social Sciences Division)**

### **Recommended Guidelines:**

1) In all disciplines, *productivity* is key for scholarly advancement. Productivity is evaluated on the basis of steady, engaged and cumulative contributions to an active and well-defined body of scholarship. We view an active and well-defined body of scholarship as addressing a significant researchable problem and having an identifiable pipeline of planned and expected research activities and scholarly communications. Faculty are expected to have a clear statement of how the research contributes to a scholarly (or creative) field(s). We recommend that faculty in text-based disciplines have a clear, brief discussion in their personal statement spelling out short-term and long-term accomplishments for scholarly and creative activity, including defining the final and incremental forms of their scholarship (e.g. research period of xx years, participation in conferences and workshops, plans for articles in various venues to pilot ideas, data, theoretical orientations. In general, we do not view a plan without any evidence of research activity as sufficient for merit advancement. A book is not required for a good body of scholarship, but explaining the likely final form of the project—a book, a series of major essays, etc.—will help make the plan comprehensible to on-campus and outside reviewers).

2) *Peer review* is the basis for evaluating the quality (and quantity) of productivity in scholarship. In text-based disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, peer review takes many forms, including publishing in peer-reviewed outlets (encompassing but not limited to disciplinary and inter-disciplinary journals, books published by university or commercial presses, conference proceedings/poster sessions, and peer-reviewed digital media). For the text-based disciplines in particular, evaluation and peer review standards in evaluating digital scholarship should be explicit considerations in personnel reviews. It is crucial for scholars and departments to identify, contextualize and evaluate the level and forms of peer review being used to measure and assess scholarly productivity.

3) *Scholarly advancement* in research is indexed by scholarly achievements and expected benchmark accomplishments (as defined by the department, peer review expectations, and the candidate's research agenda) of an active and well-defined research trajectory. The shape and quantity of research accomplishments and overall productivity are likely to vary depending on the timing, stage, and placement along the arc of a faculty member's body of scholarship. Productivity in the early, inaugural stages of a research agenda is likely to be different from that in the finishing stages of a project. We emphasize that *normal expectations* will vary from discipline to discipline, in interdisciplinary fields, and within sub-fields of disciplines. It is vital that the department be or become knowledgeable about and clear in explaining normal expectations for faculty members' research fields.

4) *Merit and Promotion*. A) *Merit advancement (including the current GT1, GT2, and Accelerations) should be keyed to normal (and "greater-than-normal") expectations of progress and completing incremental*

*steps of a scholar's active and well-defined research agenda. B) Promotions should be geared toward major or final accomplishments of the research agenda. In the text-based disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, major or final accomplishments of a research agenda should be roughly equivalent to the heft and scholarly significance of a peer-reviewed book. For some scholars, producing and publishing a book may be the sole or principal arc of work that anchors both the incremental stages and the final product of a research agenda. For others, a book project will be one, but perhaps not the principal, focus among different trajectories of a research agenda. And for others, a significant set of articles and essays (but not a sole-authored book), the sum of which is commensurate with the quality and coherence of sustained intellectual engagement that characterizes a peer-reviewed book, define the culmination of a research agenda.*

The above best practices were recommended by a Working Group co-chaired by Dana Takagi and Gail Hershatter, and members Don Brenneis, Maureen Callanan, Sharon Kinoshita, and Pat Zavella.