MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans, Department Heads, and Members of Promotion and Tenure Committees
FROM: Office of the Provost
DATE: April 1, 2026
SUBJECT: Clarifying Guidance Related to Promotion and Tenure Handbook Interpretation

The Office of the Provost is sharing the attached guidance document developed by the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) to assist colleges and departments in the consistent application of the Promotion and Tenure section of the Faculty Handbook. This guidance was thoughtfully developed by CVM leadership and has been vetted by University Legal Counsel.

Although the memorandum was originally addressed to CVM department heads, it provides helpful clarification on issues that arise across colleges. Importantly, the guidance does not represent a new interpretation of the Handbook. Rather, it articulates existing expectations more clearly and is intended to reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding or error in promotion and tenure processes. The Provost's Office believes it may be useful to other units in advising faculty and conducting promotion and tenure reviews. For that reason, we are making the guidance available more broadly for reference.

The Provost's Office anticipates working with the Holland Faculty Senate to incorporate this language, or a version of it, into the Promotion and Tenure section of the Handbook at an appropriate time. In the interim, colleges may wish to consult this guidance when interpreting and applying current policy.

Questions about this guidance or its application may be directed to the Office of Faculty Affairs.

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Andrew Mackin, Dr. John Thomason, Dr. Mihalis Panagiotidis

CC: Dr. Alicia Olivier, Dr. Philip Robinson, General Counsel Joan Lucas

FROM: Dr. Nicholas Frank, Dean

DATE: March 31, 2026

SUBJECT: Guidance on collegiality and P&T process

This memo is sent in response to the department head meeting that we had on February 5, 2026. At this meeting we discussed the appropriate method for addressing collegiality concerns in the promotion and tenure (P&T) process. The following advice is provided after reviewing the MSU Faculty Handbook and consulting with Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Jim Dunne. It has been reviewed, revised, and approved by General Counsel Joan Lucas.

Examples of situations where this advice applies include:

1. The faculty member has an annual evaluation containing a 'not satisfactory' in 'Effectiveness in interpersonal relationships', 'Absence of malfeasance, inefficiency, and contumacious conduct', or 'Effectiveness, accuracy, and integrity in communications.'
2. A documented Human Resources Management issue is recorded in the faculty member's personnel file.

The following steps should be taken:

1. Information from personnel filed must NOT be shared with the Department P&T Committee or external evaluators. On Line 438 of the MSU Faculty Handbook, it states: '*With respect to promotion and/or tenure, personnel files are confidential and are available only to the faculty member and the following individuals: department head (or equivalent), dean/director (or equivalent), university provost and executive vice president, and university president*.'

2. The Department Head may write about their concerns in the P&T letter they prepare for the applicant, and they should transparently state that statements are supported by 'not satisfactory' areas in annual evaluations or HRM documents in the personnel file. Lines 870-873 of the MSU Faculty Handbooks states: '*The department head or director will review the dossier and make a recommendation based on pertinent evidence documented in the faculty member's promotion and tenure dossier and information in the personnel file that is applicable to the candidate's performance in professional activities*.'

3. The department head's letter and relevant items from the personnel file are sent to the applicant so they may provide written comments if they wish to. These written comments

must be submitted by the applicant within 5 days. As stated in Lines 883-890 of the MSU Faculty Handbook:

'The candidate may respond to the department promotion and tenure committee's and/or the department head's or director's letters to correct any factual errors represented therein within 5 working days of the candidate's receipt of each letter. The candidate's letter(s) of factual corrections must be sent to the review level to which the response was made. That level may address the concerns in a new letter to be included in the application within 5 working days of receipt of the candidate's letter of factual correction. All letters shall be included in the dossier as it proceeds through the review process.'

4. As noted in the previously cited lines, following the department head's review of the letter of factual correction, if one is submitted, the department head may issue a new letter within 5 working days of receipt of the candidate's letter of factual correction or may rely on the letter already prepared.

5. The application, additional materials, and applicant's written comments (if submitted) are provided to the College P&T Committee, and all these materials become part of the package that moves through the rest of the P&T process. Relevant documents from the personnel file may be included in the package from this point forward because on Line 442 of the MSU Faculty Handbook it states:

'If any information from a faculty member's personnel file is used to reflect negatively upon a candidate for promotion and/or tenure, the individual providing the negative reflection must transparently state the fact and make the information available to elected promotion and tenure committee(s) and administrator(s) who are part of the continuing review of the candidate's application for promotion and/or tenure, or when the information is needed in a related appeals or grievance case. If material from a personnel file (or other material that is not in the candidate's promotion or tenure application) is provided to a committee or administrator, then the candidate will be provided a copy of the material and an opportunity to submit their written comments regarding the material before the material is considered by the committee or administrator.'

See also Lines 928-933 of the MSU Faculty Handbook.

6. If the Dean writes about the concerns in their P&T letter for the applicant and references any additional documents, they must follow the same process of providing the applicant with the documents. See MSU Faculty Handbook Lines 910-913, and Lines 922-926. These additional documents must be sent to the applicant and put in the dossier. From this point forward, the dossier does not return to the College P&T Committee, and the continuing review includes the Provost and President.

Thank you.