To: The Faculty
From: Elizabeth Garrett, Provost
       Peter Conti, President, Academic Senate
       Leo Braudy, UCAPT Chair
Date: January 28, 2011
Re: Tenure, Promotion and Appointments

Decisions on appointments, promotion and tenure are crucial to USC’s commitment to academic excellence. We congratulate the departments that have already moved forward so vigorously by applying USC’s longstanding principle that every grant of tenure should improve the average quality of the department. We are grateful to the committees who respect the integrity of the tenure process by giving a balanced analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of every candidate. And we thank the senior faculty who mentor junior colleagues. To signal the importance of mentoring, the annual retreat co-sponsored by the Provost and Academic Senate will this year be devoted to the Culture of Mentoring.

The enclosed 2011 edition of the UCAPT manual has several changes.

- Some faculty have raised questions about the procedures. UCAPT felt it would be helpful to create a FAQ that answers some of the most common questions.
- Recommendations by the Senate-Provost Research Committee on how best to evaluate collaborative scholarship are included.
- Important material has been rearranged and expanded in sections of Advice to Candidates, and Advice to Departments and School Committees.
- New or expanded sections deal with promotion to Full Professor, and designation as Clinical Scholar.

The FAQ also make clear some of the features of our promotion process that has served USC so well. UCAPT is a rotating committee. It is diverse by discipline and intellectual approach, and more than a quarter of its members over the last five years have been faculty of color. UCAPT members are outstanding scholars and creative artists, including University, Distinguished and Provost Professors. The President appoints members based on nominations from the Academic Senate leadership and deans, and self-nominations by faculty.
UCAPT welcomes excellent contributions made through all forms of research, solo or collaborative, interdisciplinary or within disciplinary cores, using traditional or avant-garde methods. In our system of checks and balances, if either a department or a dean recommends a case, it goes to UCAPT. If UCAPT and the dean disagree, the dean has the opportunity to comment on UCAPT’s recommendation. Both the notes on UCAPT’s deliberations and vote, and the written analysis by each individual panel member, go to the Provost with the full dossier.

If the decision is negative, the Provost always provides the reasons in writing to the dean to be conveyed to the individual, usually through the department chair; if the individual asks for a more detailed explanation, the Provost provides that to the dean to convey to the individual. Reconsideration of a case is possible if there is new evidence. Politicizing the appointment or promotion process has no place in our procedures, which demand evaluation solely on merit. Thus, lobbying for or against a candidate does not affect decisions.

Cases are decided individually on the evidence, without discrimination. During the last five years the success rate of minority and non-minority candidates for promotion to tenure has shown no statistically significant difference; in fact, the success rate of minority candidates happens to be approximately five percentage points higher.

USC began publishing details about UCAPT procedures a decade ago to demystify the process. The UCAPT manual explains the criteria for tenure, provides details on the procedure, and outlines how to prepare tenure dossiers to give a full picture of the candidate’s work and its impact on the field.

We recommend that the manual be read by all candidates, faculty mentors, promotion and tenure committees, and all other faculty who wish to understand USC’s process for making decisions on senior appointments, promotions, and awards of tenure that are so vital for our university’s academic stature.

Cc: C. L. Max Nikias
    Academic Deans