July 2016

Dear Colleagues,

Having recently completed my fifth RPT (retention–promotion–tenure) cycle, I would like to offer some comments and reflections on the process at Cal Poly.

The RPT process is one of the most important activities on a college campus. It’s a high-stakes process that results in the decision to retain, tenure, and promote individuals. It impacts individual lives and families, and the future success of the university and potentially thousands of students. And, it represents a long-term commitment to, and investment in, individual teacher-scholars.

I want to thank all of the candidates – both new tenure-track faculty and those who have been at Cal Poly for a number of years – who have invested such significant time and energy in the work of educating our students. Thank you for taking the time to thoughtfully document your work—submitting a comprehensive package for review. I recognize that the process can sometimes be tedious as well as stressful. It is meant, among other things, to provide an important opportunity for you to reflect on your accomplishments and identify areas where further investment is required. It also affords the opportunity to thoughtfully map out your future as a teacher-scholar and university community member.
As I reviewed the hundreds of RPT portfolios, I was inspired by the excellent and exciting work documented by so many of the faculty at each stage of development. It is always gratifying to see the significant investments campus colleagues are making in support of our students at all levels, and the intriguing and meaningful research projects carried out across the disciplines. Many faculty members express great joy and a sense of satisfaction in the work they do, and their commitment to their students and colleagues, as well as the university at large, is so evident. The university is the sum of its people, and as Provost at Cal Poly, I am very proud to work with and for you. It is always fascinating to read about your work, and my review of your documents allows me to gain a deeper level of understanding of the challenges and opportunities we face together as a campus.

I know it might sometimes feel like you are alone in this work, but not only do you have the investment and moral support of so many colleagues on campus, you also are in communion with the many others who are making their way through this process during any given RPT cycle. During the 2015–2016 academic year, there were:

- 50 1st-cycle retention cases (faculty members in their first and second probationary years);
- 51 2nd-cycle cases (faculty members in their third, fourth, and fifth probationary years);
- 3 tenure-only cases;
- 14 simultaneous tenure and promotion cases; and
- 39 promotion-only cases;
- for a total of 157 distinct cases for review.
I also want to acknowledge the important role of the faculty and administrators who are invested in this complex process. Thank you for offering support for your colleagues as mentors, writing thoughtful reviews, serving as peer reviewers, carrying out the formal review, and working with candidates in the post-review stage.

Finally, I'd like to thank the staff members who provide support for the process by preparing forms and binders, processing the files and signatures, and managing the process at the department, college, and university levels.

Congratulations to all the candidates who were successful in their work, and thanks to everyone who is invested in this process. The hard work and integrity of the candidates matched with a thoughtful and meaningful review process leads to a campus well-prepared for success into the future.

Kathleen Enz Finken
Office of the Provost

The July video features Provost Kathleen Enz Finken, Professor Philip Barlow, Professor Ed Himelblau, and Professor Emily Taylor.