

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: External Letters of Recommendation

Periodically, the Office of Research Affairs will send out notices, tips, and reminders to GC Academic Personnel Contacts on Academic Personnel Review files and issues under the authority of Associate Vice Chancellor, George R. Tynan. These messages apply to the following: appointments, deferrals, merits, reappointments and promotions of Research Scientists/Scholars, Project Scientists/Scholars, and Specialists, as well as Academic Administrators/Coordinators for ORUs.

We have compiled some tips on Solicitation of External Letters, because this section often causes delays in file processing:

Tips on soliciting external letters of recommendation:

- * Always use the sample wording provided in PPM 230-20 for the Solicitation letter to external referees. If you wish to include other wording, please run the draft by us first. Include wording that describes the level of appointment being proposed and the confidentiality statement.

- * For Assistant appointments proposed at Step I or II, letters of reference from the candidate's mentors and colleagues are acceptable. However additional letters from more independent sources should be obtained if available.

- * For Assistant at Step III or higher, letters should be solicited from external referees who are senior scholars and independent of the candidate (not former colleagues, co-authors or collaborators). If the department selects external referees who are neither senior nor independent, they should explain in the Referee ID list, why they were selected as the best-qualified referees.

- * For appointments to the Research Scientist series, at least two letters must be from tenured professors (i.e., associate and above).

- * A majority of the letters obtained should be from referees selected by the department. The candidate should be given the opportunity to suggest names of referees, but no more than 1 in 3, or 2 in 5 letters should be from referees selected solely by the candidate, unless the candidate's list includes all of the recognized experts in the field. If the latter is the case, then an explanation should be included in the Referee ID list.

- * Include all external referee letters solicited and received by the department in the file, whether or not the final departmental recommendation requires external letters.

- * Minimum number of letters required for appointments: 1 for Visiting appointments, 3 for Assistants, 5 for Associate & Full. Minimum number of letters required for promotions: 5 for Assistant to Associate; 3 for all others.

- * Unsolicited letters of recommendation can only be included in the file if the department sends the confidentiality statement to the letters author and obtains a signed authorization to use the unsolicited letter.

- * Solicitation of letters from within the candidate's department is not recommended.

- * External letters may be solicited and received electronically, but a copy of the e-mail, along with a print out of the attached letter should be included in the file.