

September 4, 2018

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Deans and Chairpersons

**From:** C. B. Wilson  
Associate Provost for Academic Personnel

**Re:** Sample Annual Review Letters

Enclosed are some sample annual review letters that have been previously shared with some of you in the past. The letters include language appropriate to the 2014 Procedures for Faculty Appointment, Annual Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure, and are intended to illustrate the following:

1. The need to both identify the information used to make an evaluative judgment about a faculty member's performance and to use that information to reach a conclusion.
2. The need to provide a balanced review of a faculty member's performance identifying both strengths and areas in need of improvement, as appropriate.

After looking at the sheer length of some of the sample letters that I have seen over recent years it would be easy to feel overwhelmed at the prospect of developing letters like this for faculty members in your unit. Please don't let the length overwhelm you. The letters are intentionally detailed so several different kinds of circumstances may be illustrated. While in some instances such detail may be needed (and, in some departments and colleges, is already being provided), in most cases, a letter as long as those enclosed will not likely be required.

The sample letters continue the saga of Professor S. Smart at West Virginia University, for whom sample appointment letters and sample personnel inventories also exist. Sample letters for Professor Smart's first, second, and third year reviews are among those enclosed. Letters during the probationary years are especially critical in a faculty member's development since it is important that faculty members be advised about areas in need of improvement during these years and that they be provided some guidance as to ways in which improvement might be achieved.

By the third year review, it is not clear if Professor Smart will develop a record meriting the award of tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. Given this, two sample sixth year ("critical year") letters are provided: one in which tenure and promotion are recommended and one in which they are not.

While all of the letters are written by Professor Smart's chairperson, it is important to note that this kind of detail need not be included in letters at all levels of review. For example, the detail could be primarily in the letter from the departmental personnel committee, with shorter letters coming from the chairperson, college personnel committee, and/or the dean. These subsequent letters could simply confirm and/or offer commentary upon the more detailed letters, as needed. Please feel free to share the sample letters with faculty members serving on promotion and tenure committees.

Please contact me if you have any questions about the sample letters or about the kinds of letters provided by your unit.

cc: Joyce E. McConnell  
Louise Veselicky  
Campus Presidents

## Sample Letter: First Annual Review

January 10, 2019

Dr. S. A. Smart  
Department of Social Ecology  
College of Human Ecology  
West Virginia University

Dear Dr. Smart:

The Personnel Committee of the Department of Social Ecology has reviewed your performance during your first semester at West Virginia University and unanimously recommended your retention on the faculty. I concur with their recommendation. This recommendation reflects your performance and potential in the areas of teaching, research, and service as summarized below.

I note, by way of reminder, that in order to be awarded tenure you must make significant contributions in teaching and in research, and at least reasonable contributions in service.

### Teaching

During Fall Semester, 2018 you taught two undergraduate courses on "The Principles of Social Ecology" and a graduate course on "Social Interaction and Space." Your Digital Measures file included copies of course syllabi for each of these courses and student evaluations of instruction. Your file also included a report of two observations of one of your undergraduate courses by Professor Tom Trumble, Chair of the Personnel Committee.

Your course syllabi are well conceived with appropriate expectations for student performance. You may wish to expand the bibliography for the syllabus for the graduate course to reflect some of the more recent publications in this area. I recognize, however, how difficult it is to prepare for two new courses during your first semester and anticipate that future syllabi will be further expanded.

The student evaluations indicate your overall ratings are slightly above average. The evaluations are more positive in your graduate course, which was a smaller section, than the two sections of your undergraduate course. You may want to explore teaching techniques that will better meet your goals and those of students in larger sections. The WVU Teaching and Learning Commons would be a good resource for this purpose.

Dr. Trumble's reports on his observations of your class suggest you have the potential to be a superior instructor. Dr. Trumble made some specific suggestions for changes that might enhance your instruction. I would encourage you to consider those suggestions.

At this time, my rating of your contribution in teaching for 2018 is **satisfactory**.

### Research

It is admittedly difficult during one semester to demonstrate significant productivity in research. Your summary of activities during the semester indicates you are developing portions of your dissertation into manuscripts suitable for submission to a scholarly journal. I would encourage you to continue these efforts. As we have discussed and as your letter of appointment indicates, evidence of scholarly output will be very important for your future retention and promotion and tenure.

In the context of this review, my rating of your contribution in research for 2018 is **satisfactory**.

### Service

Your service activities are somewhat limited, but adequate. Your activity report indicates you are serving on the departmental curriculum committee. With the further development of your instructional abilities and research program, I anticipate that your service activities will be expanded. While service is not one of the two areas in which you are expected to make a significant contribution, you must still make at least reasonable contributions in this area.

At this time, my rating of your contribution in service for 2018 is **satisfactory**.

### Conclusions

You have made a fine start on your career at West Virginia University, and, at this time, you are making progress toward tenure. I look forward to your continued progress in the quality of instruction you provide and in your research program. Please schedule a conference with me in the near future, so that we can discuss both my assessment of your contributions and activities that might further enhance your achievement.

Please note that although I did not reference everything in your evaluation file in this report, my review of those materials was holistic.

Professor Susan A. Smart [Sample Letter, Year 1]

January 10, 2019

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Sincerely,

C. D. McKee, Chair

cc Smart Evaluation File

I. Sotope, Dean, College of Human Ecology (for information)

## Sample Letter: Second Annual Review

January 10, 2020

Dr. S. A. Smart  
Department of Social Ecology  
College of Human Ecology  
West Virginia University

Dear Dr. Smart:

The Department of Social Ecology Personnel Committee has reviewed your performance during the 2018-19 academic year, which was your first full year on our faculty. As the committee letter of January 6 indicates, they believe your overall performance is at a level that supports a recommendation for your retention on the faculty. I concur with their recommendation based on your performance in the areas discussed below.

### Teaching

The annual review letter from me of January 10, 2019 dealt with your instructional activities during Fall Semester, 2018. Thus, this review deals with your performance during Spring Semester, 2019. During that semester you taught one section of the undergraduate course, "Introduction to Social Ecology" and one section of the graduate course, "Social Interaction and Space." The undergraduate course was a new preparation for you.

The course syllabi for both of these courses were well developed. The assignments for the undergraduate course appeared especially well conceived as a means of progressively introducing students to the content in our field. I was pleased to note that you expanded the bibliography for the graduate course as I had suggested in my earlier annual review letter.

Student evaluations of instruction indicate an overall rating of slightly above average. While students perceive you to be knowledgeable in the subject matter you teach, they do report some difficulties in the way you communicate that knowledge. I think it important that you improve your communication skills. Additional experience in the classroom may add to your skills as may participation in some of the college and campus faculty development activities, particularly those of the Teaching and Learning Commons.

My observations of your instruction confirm the student reports. Your evaluation file includes a report of the observations I made of each of your courses. You appeared to

be able to communicate effectively with the graduate students you taught. However, the undergraduate students did appear to have difficulty grasping some of the concepts you described. Since our department has a significant undergraduate enrollment, it is important that you demonstrate your effectiveness with undergraduate students.

I am certain you can achieve the level of effectiveness needed for your continued retention and promotion and tenure. Please feel free to consult with me about activities that may further serve to develop your instructional skills.

At this time, my rating of your contribution in teaching for 2018-19 is **satisfactory**.

### Research

During the past academic year, you developed two scholarly articles based on your dissertation and submitted them to professional journals. Your activity reports that one of the articles has been accepted by The Social Ecology Reporter. You are waiting to learn the status of the second article. You are to be congratulated on this accomplishment! Contributing to the knowledge base of our field is an important activity and one that reflects positively on you and the University.

You also received a grant from the Senate Research Grant program. I know that you hope the research supported by this grant will enable you to submit a request for external funding. Your ability to obtain external funding to support your research program will play an important role in your evaluation for tenure and promotion.

Your progress in the area of research is very important since this is one of the two areas in which significant contributions are expected, and on which your request for promotion and tenure will be judged. You should be pleased with both your effort and your progress during the past academic year. I hope you will experience comparable progress during the current academic year.

In the context of this review, and considering both effort and output, your research contribution for 2018-19 is **good**.

### Service

Service remains your weakest area of performance. As my letter of January 10, 2019 noted, your service during the last academic year was limited to the departmental curriculum committee. Over the next few years, it will be important to expand your service activities. If you wish, I would be glad to work with you to identify appropriate service activities.

In the context of this review, your service contribution is **marginally satisfactory**.

Dr. Susan A. Smart [Sample Letter, Year 2]

January 10, 2020

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### Conclusions

Your first year at West Virginia University was marked by significant progress. Your accomplishments in the area of research were especially strong. Your instruction was satisfactory and I am confident that, with additional classroom experience, it will continue to improve. Over the next few years, your service activities need to be expanded.

In order to make appropriate progress toward tenure, your success as a teacher will have to improve, and your productivity in research, as measured by refereed journal articles, will have to continue to increase. My review of these areas of required significant contribution will become more rigorous in the future.

Please schedule a conference with me in the near future, so that we can discuss any questions you have about this evaluation, and also ways in which your performance can be further strengthened.

I again note that although I did not reference everything in your evaluation file in this report, my review of those materials was holistic.

Sincerely,

C. D. McKee, Chair

cc Smart Evaluation File  
I. Sotopé, Dean, College of Human Ecology (for information)



## Sample Letter: Third Annual Review

January 12, 2021

Dr. S. A. Smart  
Department of Social Ecology  
College of Human Ecology  
West Virginia University

Dear Dr. Smart:

The Department of Human Ecology Personnel Committee has reviewed your performance during the 2019-20 academic year, which was your second year on the faculty. As the Committee's letter of January 6 indicates, they believe your performance to be excellent in research and satisfactory in teaching and service. By a 4 to 1 vote, the Committee recommended your retention on the faculty. I concur with the majority of the committee, based on your performance in the areas discussed below.

### Teaching

During Fall Semester, 2019 you taught two undergraduate sections of "The Principles of Social Ecology" and one graduate section of "Social Interaction and Space." This was the second semester you taught this particular undergraduate course and your third semester of teaching the graduate course.

During Spring Semester, 2020 you taught two undergraduate sections of "Introduction to Social Ecology." This was the second semester you taught this course.

Course syllabi were included in your Digital Measures file for the undergraduate courses you taught but not the most recent version of the syllabus for the graduate course. While your file included a copy of the syllabus for this course for an earlier year, the absence of a more recent syllabus prevents me from reviewing your further development of this course. You are reminded of the departmental policy calling for the submission of all course syllabi each year. I encourage you to submit all syllabi when the present academic year is reviewed.

As was the case during the 2018-19 academic year, the course syllabi for the undergraduate courses were well developed and appropriately organized. The technique of grouping readings, video tapes to be viewed, and classroom topics in the "Introduction to Social Ecology" syllabus appeared to be especially effective.

Student rating of your instruction in Section One of the "Principles" course suggest you are viewed as an above average instructor. On a five point scale rating your teaching

effectiveness (Question 22), your mean rating was 3.9; the mean rating of other instructors in the University was 3.6. Students did report some difficulty with your ability to explain concepts in terms they understood and you may wish to focus on increasing this ability.

Student ratings of your instruction in Section One of the "Introductions" course suggest you are viewed as an average instructor. On the question rating your teaching effectiveness, the mean rating was 3.1. While students perceived you to be very knowledgeable, they expressed concern about your ability to communicate that knowledge in a way that demonstrated that you cared about their learning.

This student concern was observed by me in my two classroom observations during Spring Semester. Your responses to student questions, as my written evaluation indicated, were sometimes flippant and did not appear to further student learning. We have discussed my observations and I recognize you are focusing on this area during the current academic year.

The "Introduction" one can be a difficult one to teach, since the course is open to majors and non-majors. However, the course is an important service course for the University as well as a means of screening potential majors. Thus, it is important to the department that faculty be prepared to teach it.

As the Personnel Committee's letter indicates, it was this mixed response to your instruction that resulted in one negative vote on your retention. Since instruction is one of the two areas in which you must make significant contributions, it is important that you demonstrate more than satisfactory performance in this area. In addition, it is important to our program, given the size of our undergraduate enrollment, that faculty are able to teach both beginning and advanced undergraduate students as well as graduate students. The failure to demonstrate improvement in this area could result in a recommendation from me against retention at the time of your next annual review.

In consideration of your total assignment in teaching, my rating of your contribution in teaching continues as **satisfactory**.

You are very knowledgeable about the areas in which you teach and have the potential to become a gifted teacher. I hope you will realize that potential, and am certain you will strive to do so.

### Research

The 2019-20 academic year was one in which you made significant strides in your research program. An article accepted during the 2018-19 academic year was published. Another article submitted during that year was accepted and published.

Three additional scholarly articles were submitted during the 2019-20 academic year, two of which were accepted for publication. Your materials included a letter to the editor about one of your articles by Dr. P.C. Bees, a leading authority in our field. Dr. Bees' letter indicates that he thinks your article makes a significant contribution to the conceptual development of our field. You should be very proud of the quantity of work you produced during the last academic year, as well as the quality of the work and the responses to your work.

You also submitted an application for NSF funding growing out of your summer Senate Research Grant funding. The NSF application was funded for \$43,200 and will be of great assistance to you in establishing your research program. Your receipt of this funding reflects positively on you and the department.

You are making a significant contribution in the area of research. Continued performance at this level will enhance your reputation as a scholar in our field. I am pleased to be able to characterize your research as **excellent**.

#### Service

I was pleased to learn that you have expanded your service activities during your last review. You continue to serve on a departmental curriculum committee and have been appointed to the College Faculty Welfare Committee. Your materials included a curriculum proposal you submitted to the department, which was well-developed and well-written.

You have also served as an unpaid consultant to the State Department of Health in the area of spatial interactions. A letter from the Assistant Director of the Department expresses appreciation for the contributions you have made.

The increased service activities you have engaged in and the positive response to that service suggests you are meeting the goal of making at least reasonable contributions in service. I rate your service as **satisfactory**.

#### Conclusions

Your performance in the area of research during the 2019-20 academic year was excellent and your service performance was satisfactory. The major concern I have after reviewing your performance during that year deals with the quality of the instruction you provide. You must take the steps necessary to improve in this category, to a level that can be characterized as good or, preferably, excellent. Failure to achieve and maintain ratings at these levels will demonstrate a lack of progress toward an award tenure and promotion to Associate Professor

Professor Susan A. Smart [Sample Letter, Year 3]  
January 12, 2021  
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Please schedule a conference with me in the very near future, so that we can discuss any questions you have about this evaluation, and also ways in which your performance in teaching can be further strengthened.

I again note that although I did not reference everything in your evaluation file in this report, my review of those materials was holistic.

Sincerely,

C. D. McKee, Chair

cc: Smart Evaluation File  
I. Sotope, Dean, College of Human Ecology (for information)

## Sample Letter: Critical Year Review [Positive]

January 15, 2024

Dr. S. A. Smart  
Department of Social Ecology  
College of Human Ecology  
West Virginia University

Dear Professor Smart:

I have completed my review of your evaluation file and the recommendation of the Departmental Personnel Committee forwarded to me. As the Committee's letter of January 9 indicates, they believe your performance merits promotion to the rank of Associate Professor and the award of tenure. I am pleased to advise you that I concur with their assessment, and am recommending that you be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor and awarded tenure.

This decision reflects my holistic evaluation of your record of performance given the University criteria for promotion and tenure. Those criteria indicate that a faculty member is "...expected to demonstrate significant contributions in teaching in the classroom or other settings and in research," and at least "reasonable contributions" in service (West Virginia University Procedures for Faculty Evaluation, Promotion and Tenure, 2014-2015 version, p. 11). College and Departmental criteria also indicate that significant contributions in research and teaching and at least reasonable contributions in service are required to be promoted or tenured.

The results of my review of your teaching, research and service are summarized below. I found evidence significant contributions in your teaching and research which support your request for promotion and tenure.

### Research

University criteria indicate that evidence of scholarly productivity in most disciplines is provided by publications in media of high quality. It is evident in College and Departmental guidelines that the presence of such publications is a requirement for the award of tenure. Departmental guidelines also indicate evidence of funded research is expected of those applying for tenure.

In addition to indicating that significant contributions in research are expected, University guidelines indicate that "The term "significant contributions" in research means performance in research which meets or exceeds that of peers recently achieving similar promotion and/or tenure who are respected for their contributions in

research at peer research universities" (West Virginia University Procedures for Faculty Evaluation, Promotion and Tenure, 2014-15 version, p. 11).

### Research Publications

Since your appointment to the faculty, you have published eight refereed journal articles:

1. An article based on your dissertation which appeared in The Social Ecology Reporter in 2019. Dr. P.C. Bees, a leading authority in our field, wrote the editor of The Reporter in 2018 to comment on the significance of your article to the field.
2. An article based on your dissertation which appeared in The Professional Ecologist in 2019.
3. A brief (one page) article which appeared in Spatial Relationships in 2020.
4. An article based on your dissertation which appeared in The Social Ecology Reporter in 2020.
5. Two articles reporting findings of your NSF research projects which were published in consecutive issues of The Professional Ecologist in 2022.
6. A brief (one page) article which appeared in Spatial Relationships in 2023.
7. An extended article summarizing developments in your field in the last decade which appeared in The Social Ecology Reporter in 2023.

Of the eight refereed articles published three were based on your dissertation. Of the five not reflecting work done for your dissertation, two were brief discussions of an issue in social ecology. The remaining three articles were major contributions to the field. The citations of the 2022 Professional Ecologist articles in Social Sciences Citations and letters to the editor concerning your 2023 article illustrate the importance of these three articles.

You have also published three articles in the West Virginia Social Ecologist, one in 2022 and two in 2023. This is not a refereed journal but a newsletter published by our state association; you are a member of the Board of Directors of this organization. While the articles provide useful information to other association members, consistent with University, College and Departmental guidelines, the same importance is not attached to them as is given to articles published in refereed journals.

You have also had two abstracts published in the Proceedings of the Professional Ecologist. One abstract appeared in 2022 and the other in 2023. While peer review is

involved in the selection of presentations at this meeting and, as a result, in the selection of abstracts to appear in the Proceedings, the review differs somewhat from that given journal articles. Since the presentation abstract which is published in the Proceedings is limited to 500 words, the peer review is based on less information than is usually available to journal reviewers. As a result, the review may be less rigorous than that characterizing the review of journal submissions.

Your research publications, then, included eight published journal articles; three articles in a state newsletter; and two abstracts in conference proceedings.

The Departmental Personnel Committee indicates your research publications meet their expectations, given the emphasis Departmental criteria place on scholarly publication. While some recently promoted faculty members had more extensive publication records than yours, few have matched the critical response to your publications. That response suggests your colleagues see your work as being of high quality and making significant contributions to the field.

#### Funded Research

Your productivity report identifies five funded research projects. On one of these projects, you were one of several junior investigators; Professor Trumble of our faculty was the senior investigator on the project, which was funded for \$123,000 by the National Institute of Mental Health. Two of the projects were funded by the Senate Research Grant Program for less than \$5,000 each. One project on which you were the principal investigator was funded by the National Science Foundation for \$43,200 in 2019. An application for funding submitted to NSF in 2021 was not funded. In 2023, you were funded by NIMH for \$62,000 for each of three years to expand the research thrust begun with the NSF funding.

The Senate Research Grants were described in the application materials as "seed money" awards which would be used to generate external funding. Both of these grants served that role: your NSF grant reflected work developed while supported by a Senate Research Grant as did the recently funded NIMH grant.

While there is some peer review involved in the award of Senate Research Grants, neither that review nor the application process is as extensive or rigorous as that associated with most external funding. Thus, while not discounting this funding, I also do not attach undue weight to it. Other grant funding, which does involve more rigorous review, more than demonstrates your ability to obtain external funding, which is important in Departmental criteria.

Your NSF grant supported your research program between October, 2018 and December, 2020. The grant supported a portion of your salary and a graduate research assistant to facilitate your research efforts. You are to be and were, at the

time, congratulated on the accomplishment this award represents. Several important articles resulted from the research supported by this funding.

The project application on which you were a junior investigator was submitted by Professor Trumble and your contributions to the application were comparable to those of other junior colleagues. A report by Professor Trumble on your contributions to the project has been shared with you and made a part of your evaluation file. Professor Trumble indicated you were a helpful colleague, but your participation was largely limited to the discussions of the project team. One of your presentations reported the results of your portion of the research. Your involvement in this project did contribute to the development of the proposal funded by NIMH.

Your record in obtaining grant funding justifies a recommendation that you be awarded tenure and promoted. You have received two major grants and have been a junior investigator on a third. You have made good use of Faculty Senate Research Grants, with externally funded research projects resulting from both of your Senate grants.

#### External Reviews

Your materials were submitted to four external reviewers for their comments on the merit of your record. Two of the reviewers came from the list you submitted; the other two came from the list submitted by the Departmental Personnel Committee. All reviewers indicated your record did represent significant contributions in research and that you would be awarded tenure at the reviewers' institutions.

The comment of one reviewer captured the views of the other reviewers about your record:

Professor Smart's record is one of great promise that is being realized. Her dissertation and the articles based on it suggested a young scholar who had the potential to make important contributions to our field. Her 2022 and 2023 articles demonstrate that her potential is being realized. The 2022 Professional Ecologist articles identify variables and relationships which are proving significant in the full understanding of our field. The already extensive citations of these articles demonstrate how important her findings were. The 2023 Social Ecology article is a thoughtful and important summary of the intellectual development of our field. My only regret is that Professor Smart has not yet contributed to the field through publication of a scholarly book. I hope the 2023 article may be the start of a coalescing of ideas that will see publication in a book.

#### Overall Research Performance

Since your appointment in 2018, you received from me ratings of your research effort as follows: in 2018-19, satisfactory; in 2019-20, good; and since that second review,



excellent. Such a record supports my conclusion that you have made significant contributions in research.

The Departmental Committee's review letter indicates that the Committee believes you have achieved the level of performance needed to justify an award of tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. I concur with the Departmental Committee: there is evidence of achievement needed for me to recommend the award of tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. You are to be congratulated on your accomplishments in research, publication, and the acquisition of grant support.

### Teaching

Faculty members are also expected to make significant contributions in teaching if tenure and promotion are to be awarded. The number of courses you have taught each semester has varied and is summarized on the following table. The NSF grant made possible a lighter teaching load for three semesters; under these circumstances, such a reduced teaching assignment is typical for faculty in our Department.

Your teaching assignments have represented a mix of undergraduate and graduate courses. You have taught a total of ten undergraduate sections. The undergraduate courses assigned have included "Introduction to Social Ecology" (SE62), "The Principles of Social Ecology" (SE 240), and the senior "Social Ecology Seminar" (SE 290). You have also taught ten graduate sections. The graduate courses assigned to you have included "Social Interaction and Space" (SE 340) and "Advanced Topics in Social Ecology" (SE 460). Since your initial appointment in 2018, then, you have had a total of five different preparations.

### Course Syllabi

In earlier annual review letters, you have been reminded of the need to submit course syllabi for each semester so the evolution and development of your courses could be followed. I was pleased to note that you took advantage of this, your critical year review, to submit course syllabi from past years, making it possible to assess the development of courses over your career.

The syllabi in your file indicate your courses have been well conceived. Course bibliographies and assignments have been consistently revised to reflect developments in the field. You have used a variety of teaching methodologies in undergraduate courses in an effort to better communicate with students. Graduate course syllabi indicate graduate students are being appropriately challenged by the assignments made.

Student Evaluations

Another means of evaluating teaching effectiveness is student ratings. The following chart summarizes student evaluations of your instruction as reflected in question 22 on the University's Student Evaluation of Instruction. That question asks, "The instructor's teaching effectiveness was . . ." Students rate the teaching on a five point scale with a rating of "5" the highest a faculty member may receive. Student ratings suggest continued improvement in the quality of your teaching.

<u>Semester</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Mean Rating</u>
Fall, 2018	SE 240	26	3.2
Fall, 2018	SE 240	29	3.2
Fall, 2018	SE 340	12	3.4
Spring, 2019	SE 62	32	3.2
Spring, 2019	SE 340	15	3.3
Fall, 2019	SE 240	24	3.9
Fall, 2019	SE 240	19	3.8
Fall, 2019	SE 340	10	4.2
Spring, 2020	SE 62	41	3.1
Spring, 2020	SE 62	35	3.2
<u>Semester</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Mean Rating</u>
Fall, 2020	SE 62	34	4.4
Spring, 2021	SE 460	16	4.3
Fall, 2021	SE 240	27	3.9
Spring, 2022	SE 62	41	4.0
Spring, 2022	SE 340	21	4.2
Fall, 2022	SE 62	36	3.9
Fall, 2022	SE 240	24	4.1
Fall, 2022	SE 460	10	4.4
Spring, 2023	SE 460	11	4.5
Spring, 2023	SE 460	12	4.8

In addition to reviewing the quantitative ratings of your instruction, I have read the comments written by students on evaluation forms. The comments of undergraduate students suggest that you are viewed as a knowledgeable instructor. The initial complaint of some undergraduate students -- that you had difficulty communicating your extensive knowledge to students -- appears to have been overcome. Your participation in several of the programs offered by the Teaching and Learning Commons focusing on teaching effectiveness demonstrated the commitment you have to being an effective teacher.

The comments of graduate students are generally more positive than those of undergraduate students and graduate student ratings of your classes are higher. This is not surprising. Graduate classes are smaller, allowing the instructor to provide more individualized attention, and graduate students have a clearer interest in and commitment to our field. The comments of students enrolled in the advanced topics course you teach indicate they view you as among the best instructors in the department!

#### Peer Evaluations

Peer evaluations of your instructional effectiveness are also included in your evaluation file. In Fall Semester, 2018, Spring Semester, 2022 and Fall Semester, 2023 selected classes were observed by a member of the Personnel Committee. The same member of the Committee observed your class in 2018 and 2023. He mentioned the significant improvement in your teaching abilities over that time. I have observed at least one class session taught by you each academic year, and have observed steady improvement in your teaching effectiveness. Professor Smith, who teaches SE 245, for which SE 240 is a prerequisite, has submitted a statement for your evaluation file indicating students who have taken your SE 240 course have a good understanding of the knowledge expected.

#### Overall Teaching Performance

To be recommended for promotion and tenure you must demonstrate that you have made significant contributions in teaching. Course syllabi, student evaluations of instruction, and peer evaluations of instruction indicate a consistent record of improvement in your teaching abilities and support the conclusion that you have reached the level of achievement needed in this area.

In your first three annual reviews at West Virginia University, I rated your performance in teaching as satisfactory. Since that time, your teaching has improved dramatically; I rated your performance in this area as good in 2021-22, and as excellent in 2022-23. Because your efforts to improve your teaching and your success in doing so, which supported the more recent ratings, and because of the other evidence of your success noted above, I concur with the conclusion of the Departmental Personnel Committee

that you have made the significant contributions in teaching needed to support a recommendation that you be awarded tenure and promotion.

### Service

Service is an area in which you are to demonstrate at least "reasonable" contributions. Your service activities have gradually increased since your appointment to the faculty. You have served on a Departmental curriculum committee for three years. You have served on a College committee for two academic years. You served as an external member of a search committee for another department in our College.

In the last two academic years, your service contribution to organizations external to the University has increased substantially. You have served as an unpaid consultant to the State Department of Health for three years. You have consulted with two local health institutions on spatial arrangements.

With regard to service to the profession, you have served on the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Social Ecology Association for two years. You served on a committee of the National Association of Social Ecologists for one year.

Your service activities are appropriate for a social ecologist at this stage of your career, and represent reasonable contributions in this area of the university's mission.

### Summary

There is evidence of significant contributions in research and teaching and at least reasonable contributions in service to support your request for promotion and tenure. As a result, **I am pleased to be able to recommend that you be awarded tenure and promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.** I look forward to your continued contributions to our program and to the University.

Sincerely,

C. D. McKee  
Chairperson

cc: Smart Evaluation File  
Dean I. Sotope

**Sample Letter: Critical Year Review [Negative]**

CERTIFIED MAIL  
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED  
FIRST CLASS MAIL AND EMAIL

January 15, 2024

Dr. S. A. Smart  
231 Park Place  
Morgantown, WV 26505

Dear Professor Smart:

I have completed my review of your evaluation file and the recommendation of the Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee forwarded to me. As the Committee's letter of January 9 indicates, they do not believe your performance merits promotion to the rank of Associate Professor and the award of tenure. I am sorry to advise you that I concur with their assessment. I am recommending that you be issued a terminal contract for the next academic year and your employment with West Virginia University will end on May 15, 2025.

This decision reflects my evaluation of your record of performance given the University criteria for promotion and tenure. Those criteria indicate that a faculty member is "...expected to demonstrate significant contributions in teaching in the classroom or other settings and in research," and "at least reasonable contributions" in service (West Virginia University Procedures for Faculty Evaluation, Promotion and Tenure, 2014-15 version, p. 11). College and Departmental criteria also indicate that significant contributions in research and teaching and at least reasonable contributions in service are required to be promoted or tenured.

The results of my review of your teaching, research and service are summarized below. I did not find evidence of sustained meritorious performance in any of these areas which would support your request for promotion and tenure. Although I did not reference everything in your evaluation file in this report, my review of the file was holistic.

Research

University criteria indicate that evidence of scholarly productivity in most disciplines is provided by publications in media of high quality. It is evident in College and

Departmental guidelines that the presence of such publications is a requirement for the award of tenure. Departmental guidelines also indicate evidence of an independent and appropriately funded research program is required of those applying for tenure.

In addition to indicating that significant contributions in research are expected, University guidelines indicate that "The term 'significant contributions' in research means performance in research which meets or exceeds that of peers who recently achieved similar promotion and/or tenure and who are respected for their contributions in research at peer or aspirational peer research universities and at West Virginia University" (West Virginia University Procedures for Faculty Evaluation, Promotion and Tenure, 2014-15 version, p. 13).

### Research Publications

Since your appointment to the faculty, you have published six refereed journal articles:

1. An article based on your dissertation which appeared in The Social Ecology Reporter in 2018. Dr. P.C. Bees, a leading authority in our field, wrote the editor of The Reporter in 2018 to comment on the significance of your article to the field.
2. An article based on your dissertation which appeared in The Professional Ecologist in 2018.
3. A brief (one page) article which appeared in Spatial Relationships in 2019.
4. An article based on your dissertation which appeared in The Social Ecology Reporter in 2019.
5. An article based on the finding of your NSF research projects which was published in The Professional Ecologist in 2021.
6. A brief (one page) article which appeared in Spatial Relationships in 2022.

Of the six refereed articles published, three were based on your dissertation. Of the three not reflecting work done for your dissertation, two were brief discussions of an issue in social ecology. While there is nothing inherently wrong with brief articles, your articles do not present either research findings or a theoretical argument but are an abbreviated summary of an issue.

You have also published three articles in the West Virginia Social Ecologist, one in 2021 and two in 2022. This is not a refereed journal but a newsletter published by our state association; you are a member of the Board of Directors of this organization. While the articles provide useful information to other association members, consistent

with University, College and Departmental guidelines, the same importance is not attached to them as is given to articles published in refereed journals.

You have also had two abstracts published in the Proceedings of the Professional Ecologist. One abstract appeared in 2021 and the other in 2022. While peer review is involved in the selection of presentations at this meeting and, as a result, in the selection of abstracts to appear in the Proceedings, the review differs somewhat from that given journal articles. Since the presentation abstract, which is published in the Proceedings is limited to 500 words, the peer review is based on less information than is usually available to journal reviewers.

Your research publications, then, included six externally published journal articles, three based on your dissertation and two or which were relatively brief; three articles in a state newsletter; and two abstracts in conference proceedings.

The Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee indicates your research publications are not what they would expect, given the emphasis that Departmental criteria place on scholarly publication. Earlier reviews have indicated the need to increase your record of scholarly publications. The Departmental Committee's review for 2021 indicated the following:

"The area of scholarly publication seemed to the Committee to show the least evidence of output, particularly in view of Dr. Smart's relatively high assignment percentage."

"As Dr. Smart approaches her critical year for a tenure decision, we think that more scrutiny will be given to research publication, particularly in refereed journals."

The Committee's review for 2022 indicated, ". . . (she) must significantly improve her research if she is to meet standard for promotion and tenure. . . ."

My review letters for 2021 and 2022 also indicated the need to improve your record of publication in refereed scholarly journals, if tenure and promotion were to be achieved. My letter of January 10, 2021 expressed concern about the relatively few articles you submitted to refereed journals during the preceding academic year. My letter of January 18, 2022 expressed concern again about the reduced submissions to scholarly journals and your apparent decision to submit articles to the West Virginia Social Ecologist instead.

### Funded Research

Your productivity report identifies four funded research projects. On one of these projects, you were one of several junior investigators; Professor Trumble of our faculty was the senior investigator on the project, which was funded for \$123,000 by the National Institute of Mental Health. Two of the projects were funded by the Senate Research Grant Program for less than \$5,000 each. One project was funded by the

National Science Foundation for \$43,200. You submitted two funding applications in 2020, one to NSF and the other to NIMH, which were not funded.

The Senate Research Grants were described in the application materials as "seed money" awards which would be used to generate external funding. The first of these grants served that role: your NSF grant reflected work developed while supported by a Senate Research Grant. The second Senate Grant did not result in an application for external funding.

While there is some peer review involved in the award of Senate Research Grants, neither that review nor the application process is as extensive or rigorous as that associated with most external funding. Thus, while not discounting this funding, I also do not attach undue weight to it.

Your NSF grant supported your research program between October, 2018 and December, 2020. The grant supported a portion of your salary and a graduate research assistant to facilitate your research efforts. You are to be and were, at the time, congratulated on the accomplishment this award represents. It is disappointing, however, that the funding did not produce more in terms of tangible results. Only one published article resulted from the project. While you submitted another article based on the project findings, it was rejected for publication by two journals. A request for additional funding to extend the project was also rejected by NSF. Thus, the grant did not result in the launching of your career in research as I hoped might be the case when it was funded.

The project application on which you were a junior investigator was submitted by Professor Trumble and your contributions to the application were minimal. A report by Professor Trumble on your contributions to the project has been shared with you and made a part of your evaluation file. Professor Trumble indicated you were a helpful colleague, but your participation was largely limited to the discussions of the project team. However, unlike others involved in this project, you did not develop any scholarly articles reporting the results of your portion of the research. Also, unlike the other investigators, your involvement in this project did not result in the funding of a request submitted to NIMH.

Your record in obtaining grant funding, then, only includes one major funded research project -- the one from NSF. While this was an important project, it resulted in limited scholarly publications and a follow-up project was not funded.

Earlier annual review letters have emphasized the need to obtain external funding for your research. My review letter of November, 2018 indicated the ability to obtain external funding would be important in your evaluation for promotion and tenure. That message was repeated in the review letters in 2021 and 2022. Departmental Committee letters have also reminded you about the importance of external funding in decisions about tenure and promotion. Regrettably, after you were not funded for a



second time by NSF of NIMH, you did not continue to apply for external funding. You did not submit any requests for funding after March, 2021.

### External Reviews

Your materials were submitted to four external reviewers for their comments on the merit of your record. Two of the reviewers came from the list you submitted; the other two came from the list submitted by the Departmental Personnel Committee. Three of the reviewers indicated your performance was not comparable to that of others recently tenured and promoted at their institution, that they did not believe your performance represented a continued record of excellence, and that you would likely not be tenured at their university. One reviewer indicated your record did represent a significant contribution in research and that you would be awarded tenure at that reviewer's institution.

The comment of one reviewer who did not think your record represented excellence captured the views of the other two reviewers sharing this opinion:

Professor Smart's record is one of great promise that is not yet realized. Her publication record early in her career and receipt of an NSF grant suggested a potential superstar in the field. Unfortunately, that pattern did not continue. Her record in recent years suggests that she has lowered her sights and is no longer striving for excellence. At my University, since tenure and promotion are awarded for accomplishment rather than for the promise of accomplishment, Dr. Smart would probably not be tenured or promoted.

### Overall Research Performance

Since your appointment in 2017, you received from me ratings of your research effort as follows: in 2017-18, satisfactory; in 2018-19, good; in 2019-20, excellent; and for the two years since that third review, unsatisfactory. Consideration of one's research contributions during the probationary period is more than a simple summing of the ratings; an appropriate analysis places greater weight on trends toward improvement, and/or to sustained levels of high performance. While activity during your first three years was promising, your overall record, which shows a marked decline in productivity, does not support recommendations for promotion or tenure.

The Departmental Committee's review letter indicates that a majority of the Committee does not believe you have achieved the record of significant contributions needed to justify an award of tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. The minority report of two members of the five-member committee indicates that the promise of excellence in research is great enough that they recommend you be awarded tenure and promoted.

The minority acknowledges that you have not yet made significant contributions, but believe you are capable of doing so within the next few years.

I concur with the majority of the Departmental Committee: the evidence of significant contribution needed to recommend the award of tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor is not present. You were advised at the time of your appointment and repeatedly since then of the need to publish in refereed scholarly journals and obtain external research funding. Your initial activities suggested you would develop the kind of scholarly record needed for tenure and promotion. However, your performance in recent years has not resulted in the publications and grant funding needed to justify tenure and promotion.

### Teaching

Faculty members are also expected to make significant contributions in teaching if tenure and promotion are to be awarded. The number of courses you have taught each semester has varied. During three semesters (Fall, 2017; Fall, 2018; Fall, 2021) you have taught two undergraduate courses and one graduate course. During three semesters (Fall, 2019; Spring, 2020; Fall, 2020), while supported by the NSF grant, you taught one course each semester. You taught two courses in the remaining four semesters. The NSF grant made possible a lighter teaching load for three semesters; under these circumstances, such a reduced teaching assignment is typical for faculty in our Department.

Your teaching assignments have represented a mix of undergraduate and graduate courses. You have taught a total of ten undergraduate sections. The undergraduate courses assigned have included "Introduction to Social Ecology" (SE 62), "The Principles of Social Ecology" (SE 240), and the senior "Social Ecology Seminar" (SE 290). You have also taught ten graduate sections. The graduate courses assigned to you have included "Social Interaction and Space" (SE 340) and "Advanced Topics in Social Ecology" (SE 460). Since your initial appointment in 2017, then, you have had a total of five difference preparations.

### Course Syllabi

In past annual review letters, you have been reminded of the need to submit course syllabi for each semester so the evolution and development of your courses could be followed. Regrettably, you have not always submitted such syllabi and did not take advantage of this, your critical year review, to submit course syllabi from past years. The last syllabus for SE 62, for example, is from Spring Semester, 2019 even though you have taught this course three times since then in three different academic years. In the last academic year, you taught three sections of SE 460 but the only syllabus for this course is from Spring Semester, 2020, which is the first semester you taught this course.

The absence of such syllabi makes it difficult to determine the extent to which courses have been changed to reflect developments in the field and readings and bibliographies have been up-dated. The syllabi which are in your file reflect courses that are appropriately conceived and, in at least one instance, reflect a range of activities that are impressive. The SE 62 syllabus for Spring Semester, 2019 is especially impressive. However, the absence of a full range of syllabi makes it difficult to evaluate your instructional effectiveness as reflected in course syllabus development.

### Student Evaluations

Another means of evaluation teaching effectiveness is student ratings. The following chart summarizes student evaluations of your instruction as reflected in question 22 on the University's Student Evaluation of Instruction. That question asks, "The instructor's teaching effectiveness was . . ." Students rate the teaching on a five point scale with a rating of "5" the highest a faculty member may receive.

<u>Semester</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Mean Rating</u>
Fall, 2017	SE 240	26	3.2
Fall, 2017	SE 240	29	3.2
Fall, 2017	SE 340	12	3.4
Spring, 2018	SE 62	32	3.2
Spring, 2018	SE 340	15	3.3
<u>Semester</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Mean Rating</u>
Fall, 2018	SE 240	24	3.9
Fall, 2018	SE 240	19	3.8
Fall, 2018	SE 340	10	4.2
Spring, 2019	SE 62	41	3.1
Spring, 2019	SE 62	35	3.2
Fall, 2019	SE 62	34	3.3
Spring, 2020	SE 460	16	3.0
Fall, 2020	SE 240	27	3.2
Spring, 2021	SE 62	41	3.3
Spring, 2021	SE 340	21	2.9
Fall, 2021	SE 62	36	2.9
Fall, 2021	SE 240	24	3.1

Fall, 2021	SE 460	10	3.4
Spring, 2022	SE 460	11	3.3
Spring, 2022	SE 460	12	3.2

In addition to reviewing the quantitative ratings of your instruction, I have read the comments written by students on evaluation forms. The comments of undergraduate students suggest that you are viewed as a knowledgeable instructor, but as one who has difficulty communicating that knowledge to students. Comments from students in the fall, 2021 section of SE 62 suggest many students believed you did not respect them and held them up to ridicule.

While the comments of graduate students are generally more positive than those of undergraduate students, graduate students also report difficulty in understanding the points you attempt to make in class. In the last academic year, graduate students reported you often seemed distracted and ill prepared for class; several students indicated they felt most of the burden for providing information during class sessions was placed on them.

Earlier annual review letters have called your attention to issues concerning your teaching effectiveness as reflected in student evaluations. In 2020, a member of the Departmental Personnel Committee recommended that you not be retained because you had not demonstrated excellence in instruction. During that same year, I cautioned you of the need to demonstrate your ability to teach undergraduate as well as graduate students, given the Department's obligations in both its undergraduate and graduate programs.

### Peer Evaluations

Peer evaluations of your instructional effectiveness are also included in your evaluation file. In Fall Semester, 2017, Spring Semester, 2021 and Fall Semester, 2022 selected classes were observed by a member of the Personnel Committee. The 2021 and 2022 reports mentioned the apparent difficulty students had grasping points you were attempting to communicate and suggested specific techniques you might use to enhance student understanding. I have observed at least one class session taught by you each academic year, and have shared similar conclusions with you.

### Overall Teaching Performance

To be recommended for promotion and tenure you must demonstrate that you have made significant contributions in teaching. There is no evidence that you have achieved the level of excellence required in this area of your assignment. Course syllabi, student evaluations of instruction, and peer evaluations of instruction do not indicate a consistent record of significant contributions in teaching.

In every annual review since your appointment in 2017 I have rated your teaching as satisfactory. Such ratings do not suggest that you have made significant contributions in teaching. The document, West Virginia University Procedures for Faculty Evaluation, Promotion and Tenure, specifies that "a faculty member with a preponderance of 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' ratings, particularly in an area in which a significant contribution is required, would not qualify for promotion or tenure." Further, consideration of one's teaching contributions during the probationary period is more than a simple summing of the ratings; an appropriate analysis places greater weight on trends toward improvement, and/or to sustained levels of high performance. A record such as yours, which shows a marked absence of improvement and a lack of high-quality performance, does not support recommendations for promotion or tenure. Therefore, I concur with the conclusion of a majority of the Departmental Personnel Committee that you have not achieved the record of significant contributions needed to support a recommendation that you be awarded tenure and promotion.

### Service

Service is an area in which you are to demonstrate at least "reasonable" contributions. Your service activities have gradually increased since your appointment to the faculty. You have served on a Departmental curriculum committee for three years. You have served on a College committee for two academic years. You served as an external member of a search committee for another department in our College.

In the last two academic years, your service contribution to organizations external to the University has increased substantially. You have served as an unpaid consultant to the State Department of Health for three years. You have consulted with two local health institutions on spatial arrangements.

With regard to service to the profession, you have served on the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Social Ecology Association for two years. You served on a committee of the National Association of Social Ecologists for one year.

Your service activities are appropriate for a social ecologist at this stage of your career, and represent reasonable contributions in this area of the university's mission.

### Summary

There is insufficient evidence that you have made significant contributions in research and in teaching to support your request for promotion and tenure. While your service record is satisfactory, that record alone is not sufficient to justify a recommendation for promotion and tenure. Since significant contributions in research and in teaching must be achieved if a faculty member is to be tenured or promoted, and since you have not provided evidence of such achievement, I cannot recommend that you be tenured or promoted. Should the Provost concur with my recommendation, you will be issued a

terminal contract of the 2024-25 academic year and your employment will terminate on May 15, 2025.

Since I am recommending that you be issued a terminal contract, your request for promotion and tenure will automatically be reviewed by the College Promotion and Tenure Committee, the Dean, the University Promotion and Tenure Advisory Panel, and the Provost.

You may wish to submit a rebuttal to my recommendation. The West Virginia University Procedures for Faculty Evaluation, Promotion and Tenure indicate that such a rebuttal is to be forwarded for inclusion in your evaluation file within five working days of your receipt of this letter. Each member of the faculty received a copy of the Policies and Procedures for Faculty Evaluation earlier this academic year; you may wish to consult your copy to familiarize yourself with the procedures that apply when non-retention of a faculty member has been recommended.

Sincerely,

C. D. McKee  
Chairperson

cc: Smart Evaluation File  
Dean I. Sotope