

Dear Committee Members,

It is a pleasure to submit a letter of evaluation to the Committee on Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure for Dr. Dana Smith. I write as a tenured full professor who has been mentoring Dr. Dana Smith and I am in strong support of Dr. Dana Smith's reappointment as an Assistant Professor of Zoology. I have known Dana for almost four years, first meeting him when he interviewed for a faculty position at the University. At the time, I felt that he was an outstanding candidate given his strong research background, the teaching and research presentations that he gave, and his commitment to undergraduate education and research. I stayed in contact with Dana as he finished his post-doctoral work and began his transition to the University. Through these interactions we talked in detail about building research collaborations between our laboratories and the challenges that new faculty members face as they try to balance teaching loads and their research.

Overall, I believe that Dana has met the challenges that faced him and that he is making significant progress towards a successful application for tenure. He focused his initial efforts on creating a rigorous and challenging curriculum for his students that included course and laboratory preparations in basic zoology as well as more advanced molecular biology and genetics courses. I have been able to interact with many of his students in both his basic and advanced classes, and was impressed by their willingness to answer questions and think critically about the material. This reflects well on Dana's ability as a teacher to build a strong foundation and then foster critical thinking skills in a supportive environment. From informal conversations I have had with students who have taken his courses, it is also clear that Dana is a well-organized and devoted teacher.

With regard to service, I have not served on any committees with Dana. My impression is that he is easy to work with and will do an excellent job on any committee assignments he might have. He is an affable person and provides thoughtful comments on important academic issues. Both of these qualities are important for a faculty member to have. He is also active in his college and the greater community. Overall, I think he has committed the appropriate time to service that an Assistant Professor should commit and that his quality of service is excellent.

My only area of concern for Dana's professional development has been his progress in becoming an independent scientist with an active research program. He certainly is able to engage students in his research laboratory, and has helped a significant number of these students gain valuable experiences. His students have presented posters and given talks at local, regional and national meetings, all of which is important. One area to improve upon is in his research program. An increase in the number of peer-reviewed publications and extramural grant proposals/funded submissions that come out of his research program is essential. These would both directly benefit the reputation of the university and help support the overall research/scholarship environment at the university.

While I understand the challenges faculty members have in becoming independent scientists, I also know it can be done. Dana certainly has the intellect and training to be able to accomplish these goals, but in my opinion needs to focus intently on his research program to bring it to the next level. His Department Chair, Dean, and the Provost are the ones who best articulate the goals and expectations for each academic unit and individual faculty member, but given the allocation of internal resources I think there is the expectation for greater research productivity from Dana.

I would urge the RPT committee, Dean, and Department Chair to have a frank conversation with Dana regarding his progress towards tenure and promotion, including evaluations of his strengths and weaknesses. If the group agrees with my assessment, they can also expect that I will continue to help Dana in any way I can. I have put significant resources into a joint project with Dana already. Though I am disappointed on the return on this investment, I am also not ready to give up on Dana's research program. I do value his contributions to the university, and he is a trusted friend and colleague. As such I will continue to support him.

In summary, I continue to strongly support Dana's reappointment. The next couple of years are going to be critical for Dana's research program. Now that his coursework is firmly established he can devote more time to developing his research program. Alternatively, if the department and college value Dana's teaching and service contributions to a greater extent, then it may be possible to redefine his workload to more closely match Dana's strengths in these areas. In any case, Dana needs to be given clear guidance as he enters into the final three years of the tenure review process.

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