This fall, several questions have arisen about how to handle confidential letters solicited for the evaluation of faculty tenure, promotion, and extended-term decisions. The guiding regulation is UniReg 803, a relevant passage of which I've appended on the next page. In this memo I'd like to discuss two specific questions:

1. If the candidate has waived the right to see the letters, what information from them may the candidate see?
2. What is the proper way to forward the confidential letters with the candidate's packet?

The UniReg is pretty clear about how to solicit the letters and about how the candidate may waive the right to see them. Also, an annual memo of mine, which you should have received last summer, contains further guidance about how to solicit these letters.

**Question 1:** If the candidate has waived the right to see the letters, what information from them may the candidate see? Perhaps the best approach is for the department head to include in the packet a memorandum that the candidate and all reviewers can read. The memo should summarize:

- the names and affiliations of the reviewers, with a brief paragraph describing each reviewer's credentials in terms that a layman can appreciate;
- how the department selected the reviewers and solicited the letters, including a sample letter of solicitation;
- a short summary of the letters' assessments, with any direct quotes limited to a length that avoids letting the candidate infer particular identities.

It is possible to write an effective memo of this type in two or three pages. More important, people will actually *read* something of this length.

In my experience it is awkward and often not very effective to produce "blacked-out" copies of the letters as a substitute for a summary memo.

**Question 2:** What is the proper way to forward the confidential letters with the candidate's packet? Insert the original letters in a manila envelope attached securely to Packet I. The envelope should be removable, so that the candidate can review the packet when necessary and so that the letters can later be archived. The letters should be available to all faculty members and administrators who have proper roles in reviewing the packet. And it is important, both during the review and afterward, to store the packet in a fashion that makes all confidential letters inaccessible to the candidate.

Out of courtesy to the reviewers, please be extremely cautious about making photocopies or scanned electronic records of the letters. One paper backup copy of each, stored securely and then destroyed, ought to be plenty.
(3) Other Criteria:

(a) A department or college shall utilize written comments from reviewers outside the University to evaluate research and/or creative contributions of candidates for promotion and/or tenure. The procedures to be used to obtain these review letters are:

(i) The candidate and the department/unit head/chair shall each make a list of at least six possible reviewers. The candidate may delete up to one-third of the names on the department/unit list. The department/unit shall choose an equal number from each list (excluding the names deleted by the candidate) for a minimum of four potential reviewers.

(ii) The candidate shall prepare a packet to be sent to each potential reviewer. The packet should consist of a resume/vita and representative examples of recent scholarly and/or creative contributions.

(iii) The candidate may waive the right to see the letters, via a written statement to be included in the candidate's folder. The candidate shall, however, retain the right to see the texts of these letters that have been edited in such a way as to preclude identification of their respective authors.

(iv) The department/unit shall send the packet with an accompanying cover letter to each of the selected potential reviewers. It shall be the responsibility of the Provost to announce a reasonable deadline for the solicitation of these outside reviews. The cover letter shall indicate whether or not the candidate has waived the right to see the letters, and will state the degree of confidentiality of the response. This letter shall request an evaluation by the reviewer of the scholarly and/or creative contributions of the candidate. It shall refrain from asking the reviewer to state whether the candidate would be tenured at the reviewer's institution.

(v) The department/unit head shall prepare a summary statement describing the process of solicitation of reviewer letters. This summary and the letters shall be included in the candidate's folder. A copy of this summary shall be provided to the candidate.

(vi) If the candidate waives the right to see the letters, only those who will vote or make administrative recommendations on the case (including members of tenure and promotion committees) shall have access to a confidential folder containing the original letters (or copies thereof) and the summary defined in section 2.b.(3)(iii.).

(vii) The solicitation of letters from outside the University of Wyoming is not meant to discourage solicitation of, or diminish the value of, letters from within the University.