External Reference Letter Template: Promotion to Professor with Indefinite Tenure

Dear [Dr. LName]

In the [SEMESTER of [YEAR], the Department of [DEPARTMENT] will consider the promotion of Dr. [CANDIDATE] from Associate Professor (without indefinite tenure) to Professor with indefinite tenure. Within Carnegie Mellon's engineering college, the decisions to grant tenure and to promote to Full Professor are customarily made simultaneously, although they can be uncoupled. These decisions are usually made after eight years of professional experience.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Carnegie Mellon University campus was closed for four months in the spring and summer of 2020. Laboratories re-opened in a limited way beginning in June 2020, with reduced access and an inability to perform some training and experiments due to social distancing requirements. Human subjects research has not yet resumed as of June 2021. Teaching transitioned to all virtual in mid-Spring 2020 and remained hybrid with a majority of classes have virtual components for AY 2021. Offices have remained closed for more than 15 months with virtually no in-person research meetings permitted. These closures are likely to have significantly impacted the educational, research, and scholarly activities of faculty being considered for reappointment, promotion, and tenure.

This promotion is an important decision, and it is the practice of the University to have an internal committee review the candidate's qualifications and accomplishments. The committee has a number of criteria for promotion, including proficiency and reputation in research and problem solving, as evidenced by publications, reports, invited lectures and patents; impact of research on industry and professional practice; and professional leadership, including impact of consulting, as well as work on government study commissions and within professional societies. Although the committee will review information of various types, considerable emphasis will be placed upon opinions of persons outside the University.

We would very much appreciate receiving a letter concerning your evaluation of Professor [NAME]'s professional contributions with which you are familiar. Activities that you may wish to consider are their past and present research, professional society activities, interactions and national and international colleagues, and professional consulting. [ENCLOSED OR LINKED] you will find Professor [NAME]'s curriculum vitae and copies of several manuscripts that reflect their research work. We seek comments with regard to:

* the quality of their work and its impact (or potential impact) in their technical field, in industry and in professional practice;
* their professional reputation relative to that of contemporaries in the same area;
* while the Carnegie Mellon promotion timeline may differ from your institution's, would Dr. [NAME] be eligible for promotion at your institution?

The review committee will also consider Dr. [NAME]'s educational activities. Of great importance will be excellence of teaching (both undergraduate and graduate), proficiency in guiding students on projects and theses, success in developing new educational programs, and contributions to the overall activities of the Department, College and University. We would, of course, welcome any comments on their educational activities that you may have.

Your evaluation of Dr. [NAME] will be carefully considered by the review committee. We would appreciate a response by [DATE]. Your letter will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law and will be read only by those persons directly involved in the review process.

Thank you for your help on this important matter.

Sincerely,