Sample Letter to External Evaluators in Academia

[promotion from assistant professor to associate professor]

[date]

Dear [evaluator’s name],

We are considering [candidate] for possible promotion to the rank of Associate Professor with indefinite tenure in the [department name]. Letters of evaluation from at least five scholars or professional specialists outside the university are required for each nominee. Therefore, it would be most helpful to have your independent evaluation of:

* The candidate’s current research activities and the significance of these accomplishments to date; please consider the totality of the contribution to the field with attention to all forms of scholarly production, if relevant;
* The candidate’s promise of becoming a leading scholar;
* If you are able to do so and believe it would provide a fuller sense of the candidate’s contributions, please comment on the candidate’s diversity, equity, and inclusion activities;
* The candidate’s teaching and service contributions, if you feel you can provide such an evaluation;
* Factors you think may be of importance to us in evaluating the candidate’s capabilities, accomplishments, and potential reputation.

The University of Illinois provides a public engagement research option (PERO) to our faculty members whose research is largely publicly engaged to capture the societal impact of their work (see attached PERO Guide). Faculty members taking the public engagement research option are expected to have scholarly and/or creative products (e.g., peer reviewed journal articles, books, and/or grants) that can be evaluated with traditional disciplinary metrics. A significant portion of their dossier will also be comprised of products (e.g., policy reports, museum exhibits, and/or websites) whose impact may not be adequately captured by traditional metrics. [Candidate] has chosen to take PERO. Thus, it is likely their dossier differs from those typical for your field. We ask you take this into account in your evaluation and consider both the scholarly and societal significance of their research activities which may be reflected in non-traditional metrics that may be necessary for evaluating the impact of their research.

Our institution permits one or more extensions (i.e., tenure clock “rollbacks”) during the pre-tenure probationary period. Our policy states that the criteria for promotion and tenure at Illinois are the same for all faculty regardless of length of service during the probationary period.

The provost of our campus requests that you provide, in addition to your own comments about this case, the names of two or three other authorities that might be consulted about the candidate’s accomplishments.

The policy of the University of Illinois is to hold in confidence all letters of evaluation from persons outside the institution. Only the committees and administrative officers directly responsible for the decision of concern here will have access to your letter. It will not be provided to the person on whom you comment unless we are required specifically and legally to do so.

Upon accepting this request to review [candidate] dossier, you will be able to access their curriculum vita, research statement, and samples of their work [add to the list all attachments for review, as needed] via the online system.

Because your evaluation will provide essential input in our review and because the entire review process is a lengthy one, we would appreciate receiving your comments at your earliest convenience and by [date]. If you will be unable to complete your evaluation by this date, please let me know immediately. Please submit your evaluation through the Interfolio [online] system link you received with this request letter.

Thank you for your contribution to this important process.

Sincerely,

[Unit Executive Officer name]

### Enclosures:

* Public Engagement Research Option (PERO) Guide.
* [Candidate] Dossier – list all materials included.