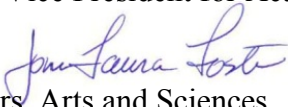




**TO:** Dr. Vicki Golich  
Executive Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs

**FROM:** Dr. Joan Laura Foster   
Dean, College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

**DATE:** February 27, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Tenure and Promotion Recommendation for Dr. Ethan Tsai  
Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry

---

I recommend that Dr. Ethan Tsai be granted tenure and be promoted to Associate Professor with his 2018-19 academic year contract. Dr. Tsai has made important contributions in teaching, scholarly activity, and service, and his portfolio provides adequate evidence that he meets the criteria required for a tenure review as measured by his departmental guidelines. In addition, he is likely to continue his high level of accomplishment throughout his MSU Denver career.

Following is a summary of the minimum requirements needed for tenure and promotion as measured by departmental guidelines; highlights illustrating how he has met or exceeded them; and a few general statements.

**Teaching: Meets Standards**

- Taught upper division courses in Organic Chemistry I & II, Organic Chemistry I & II Laboratory, Chemistry in Therapeutics (team taught), and Senior Experience in Chemistry;
- Designed and taught a course for the Brewing Science program;
- Developed a “bounty board” system, test retake policy, and a shared google doc to allow students to post questions;
- Obtained 89% of his mean SRI scores within 0.5 of the prefix average, which meets the criteria in his Department Guidelines;
- The majority of the student comments over the past two years were positive. There was a bi-modal nature to the comments and some were even bimodal from the same student. For example:
  - Some indicate Dr. Tsai that is available to help, is well-organized, genuinely cares about his students, is approachable, uses analogies to apply material, has changed the way they think, and wants them to succeed;
  - Others state that he is intimidating, is demeaning and condescending, doesn’t care about their success, is difficult to approach, and seems inconvenienced by questions during office hours;
  - Some students comment that his courses are challenging but fair, his tests are hard, and that he explains things in a way that is easy to understand;

- Others say that his tests don't reflect what is being taught, he treats courses as if they were graduate courses rather than undergraduate courses, which makes it difficult for some students to relate and understand;
- Supervised multiple students regarding their undergraduate research projects; and
- Wrote letters of recommendation for students applying to Research Experience for Undergraduates programs as well as graduate school.

The narrative and CV provided by Assistant Professor Tsai provide adequate evidence that he has met his departmental guidelines as I interpret them. His narrative and portfolio document his desire to improve students' critical thinking and analytical skills to address complex research problems or post-baccalaureate careers. He encourages students to think independently and develop their own inquiry driven projects. His narrative addressed the efforts to make his course more accessible to students with complex lives. There is still some disparity in the student comments in his SRIs. Likewise, his tenure evaluations have been bimodal and whether or not he is awarded tenure this year, I strongly encourage him to continue his efforts at reaching a larger audience of MSU Denver's students.

#### **Scholarly Activities: Meets Standards**

- Published a paper in 2017 in *The Journal of Physical Chemistry B*;
- Published two peer-reviewed papers in 2015 in *Langmuir* and *Soft Matter/Royal Society of Chemistry*, each of which have a high impact factor;
- Presented his research findings regarding "Paintbrush Terminated NTB Mesogen" at a Gordon Research Conference;
- Presented his pedagogical work on undergraduate scholarship at the 249<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Chemical Society;
- Prior to his tenure-track position he cowrote an NSF grant that was funded for \$199,719 to advance Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectroscopy in the classroom and since becoming tenure-track, he has served as a co-PI, requiring extensive hours of work;
- Wrote several other grants which unfortunately were not funded, but illustrate his expertise in grant writing; and
- Has multiple other ongoing research projects.

Dr. Ethan Tsai has established an impressive record of grant writing and scholarship while at MSU Denver. His expertise in liquid crystals brings a unique research specialty to our undergraduate student population.

#### **Service: Meets Standards**

- Served his department by participating in the Curriculum Committee, on the Faculty Development Committee, and on a Category II and Tenure-line search committee;
- Additional departmental service includes work around safe and productive chemistry laboratory facilities such as developing field manuals and videos for laboratory techniques, storage standards for organic chemistry laboratories, and by acting as a liaison with AHEC to address classroom space issues;
- Served his Department by the time-intensive work of managing the NMR research facility;

- Served the University by initiating a scholarship to honor Dr. Ball, by attending Open House events, and by contributing to the Differentiated Workload Task Force;
- Served his profession by advising the Future Doctors of Denver organization and by reviewing a journal article; and
- Served the community by giving tours of laboratories form High School students.

Dr. Tsai has presented evidence of many of service activities in his narrative and portfolio. The depth of and breadth of his service to the Department of Chemistry is commendable.

**Narrative and Selected Items for Review:**

Dr. Tsai wrote a comprehensive narrative illustrates his ongoing efforts to improve his performance, a vision for his future in the Chemistry Department in which he hopes to establish more cutting-edge curriculum and research opportunities for our students.

In addition, Dr. Tsai’s portfolio meets the minimum Handbook requirements of additional materials for review: two supporting teaching, one supporting scholarly activities and one demonstrating service. This candidate supplied:

- Item 1 (3 examples) addressing teaching performance;
- Item 2 (5 examples) addressing scholarly activities; and
- Item 3 (4 examples) addressing service contributions.

**Recommendation:**

Based on my evaluation of his materials and Departmental Guidelines, as highlighted above, I recommend Dr. Ethan Tsai be tenured and promoted to Associate Professor with his 2018-2019 academic year contract. I recommend that Dr. Tsai take to heart the concerns expressed by his department and work to address their critique. He needs to make sure that he is in line with the majority of the department’s vision for the future. Based upon current reviews, I anticipate that future contributions in teaching, scholarly activities and service will continue to grow and benefit the entire Department, College, University and community.

cc: Dr. Ethan Tsai, Assistant Professor of Chemistry  
Dr. Andrew Bonham, Chair, Department of Chemistry  
Dr. Ting Jiang, Chair, College of Letters, Arts and Sciences  
Committee for Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion