

Arthur Stevens

Mechanical Engineering

Arthur Stevens, Associate Professor in Mechanical Engineering working in the area of automatic control systems, came up for promotion to full professor after five years in grade. He published 25 articles during his 10 years at the university; 11 of these articles appeared in conference proceedings. One of his articles won a best paper award within an ASME session devoted to novel advances in control of smart structures. Stevens was almost always listed as last author of his collaborative publications, except for two papers listing him as first author. His collaborators were almost all graduate students. He never published an article, book, or conference proceeding as the sole author. He applied for one provisional patent in his sixth year, but did not pursue the full patent agreement when it came to term.

Regarded as a capable, confident teacher who offered a range of required and elective courses needed by the unit, Stevens' teaching averages on his student evaluations ranged from 3.8 to 4.2 in undergraduate courses and from 4.3 to 4.5 in graduate courses (on a five-point scale). A number of undergraduates remark on evaluations ranging over recent years that Stevens is "very accessible" and an "interesting lecturer" who provides "wonderful illustrations and graphics" to get across his points. Although he has been nominated for his school's teaching award, he has never received it. He carries the load in teaching courses in his area. Graduate students in his research group attest to his willingness to advise them regarding career prospects in academe and industry. Some students express amazement at his accessibility compared with other faculty.

Stevens managed to support his research group with a steady funding level of \$100,000 per annum average, slightly below department norms. He was a good citizen, serving diligently and effectively on several different school-level committees. As a good deal of his research has commercial application, much of his funding has come from industrial sources.

Stevens never served on university-level committees, nor did he take leadership roles in scholarly and professional organizations, although his collaborative articles have established his international research reputation in the field; two of the five articles submitted with his promotion dossier were termed "breakthrough" and "now classic" by two external reviewers. One committee member comments that it is her understanding that his field is fairly specialized and small, so it is possible that the reviewers are too familiar with the candidate; she points out that both glowing reviews come from faculty who shared the same graduate institution as Stevens.

Some members of the school-level promotion and tenure committee endorse promoting Stevens to full professor because he is a good citizen and a "good guy." They argue that if he does not get promoted, it might upset him and there is no point of that. Others question whether his publication record is adequate for such a promotion. One member is concerned that 14 journal articles in ten years "is not competitive," as many current applicants who have done post docs already have 5-10. Another member is concerned that only half of Stevens' papers are from refereed journal articles, while yet another member argues that as the last author, Stevens had little technical input into these papers. As a member of the committee, how would you respond to these concerns and ensure that Stevens receives a fair evaluation?