


November 19, 2001

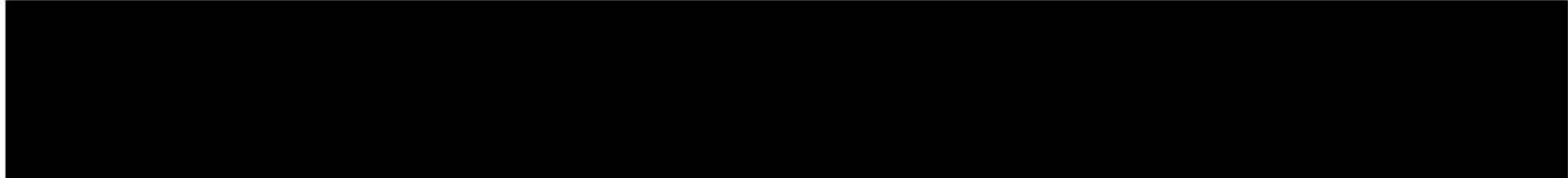
Dr. John A. Edwards, Chair
Department of Psychology
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon 97331-5303

Dear Dr. Edwards:

I am responding to your request that I serve as an external evaluator for Dr. Bob Uttl's case for promotion and tenure to Associate Professor in Psychology. By way of introduction, I do not know Dr. Uttl personally, nor have I had discussions with him concerning his research endeavors. In fact, my contact with Dr. Uttl has been limited to my attendance at a single talk at one of the Annual Meetings of the Psychonomic Society. I have not served as an ad hoc reviewer for any of his papers, nor did I receive any in my former capacity as associate editor for the journal *Memory & Cognition*. All of this is to say that I have no bias in evaluating his case and I can be objective in that regard.

Dr. Uttl has amassed an impressive publication record since the appearance of his first article in 1993 when he was a graduate student. He has a total of 17 published articles which translates to approximately two articles per year. By all accounts, this rate would be more than adequate for him to acquire promotion and tenure at the University of  However, to Dr. Uttl's credit 11 of the 17 articles are published in journals with an impact rating of about 2.0 or better. Thus, over 64% of his papers are published in outstanding journals where they are destined to be read, influence his field, and ultimately be cited. Given that 95% of all research articles in Psychology are published by 5% of the Ph.D.s, Dr. Uttl can arguably be placed in this upper crust. Thus, I can only say that I wished my own department had more junior faculty of Dr. Uttl's caliber.

Like my own program of research, Dr. Uttl has chosen to keep his research varied as opposed to narrowly focused along only one line. I applaud this decision because I believe that it is likely to keep him actively engaged in research for many years to come. I have seen many a pillar fall when the only area that they know fades or falls out of favor. My very best prognostication is that Dr. Uttl will not fall prey to this outcome. Another keen advantage of his approach to the research endeavor is that he will be able to keep his students actively busy along several different lines of research. From his application materials, I see that you are



examining the feasibility of establishing a graduate program. Should this come to fruition, I am positive that Dr. Uttl would attract students that would end up being ably trained as young cognitive psychologists. He is after all, actively involving undergraduates in his research right now, which is a definite sign of sustained research productivity.

Dr. Uttl has already received a number of small intramural grants which are to his credit. He has also applied for several large extramural grants as well. Regardless of whether these are ultimately funded, this grant-seeking activity demonstrates to me that Dr. Uttl is thinking like a major player in his field. The grant-getting process is fraught with ambiguity and is very difficult to navigate for junior faculty. The fact that he is in the thick of it is indeed meritorious for someone at his level.

I do not feel qualified to interpret Dr. Uttl's teaching record and will let your local expertise weigh in on this issue. However, I do feel qualified to echo Dr. Uttl's remarks that difficult courses like Research Methods and Psychometrics should be evaluated differently from other psychology courses (e.g., abnormal, social, etc.). As someone who teaches graduate level statistics and mentors undergraduate instructors who teach statistics, I can say that students often react negatively to the material and make the (obviously erroneous) misattribution that it must be the instructor's fault. Thus, I strongly encourage you to consider this fact. (Even without this consideration Dr. Uttl's teaching record appears quite solid to an outside observer.)

With respect to whether Dr. Uttl would obtain tenure and be promoted at the University of [REDACTED] the answer would be that he would be promoted as soon as our bylaws allowed. Our bylaws do not allow early promotion, rather they require our junior faculty to have 5 years in rank (including credit from other tenure-track positions should they have it). Thus, Dr. Uttl is being promoted a year or two earlier at your institution than would be possible at [REDACTED]. However, this is a commentary about my institution, not Dr. Uttl's very strong record of scholarship.

In sum, my evaluation of Dr. Uttl's scholarly activity and his creativity is very high indeed. I strongly recommend that you promote him as means of holding on to such a creative scientist and scholar. If we did not just implement a hiring freeze, then I would have strongly encouraged Dr. Uttl to apply for one the several open lines we ourselves have in Cognitive Psychology. Perhaps this is the highest compliment that I can pay Dr. Uttl and his record. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Email: [REDACTED]