IMPORTANT PRACTICES FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION COMMITTEES

Fall 2016

ROADMAP

Objectives for this workshop

Policy Review

Committee practices and expectations

Open discussion/Questions

Closing thoughts

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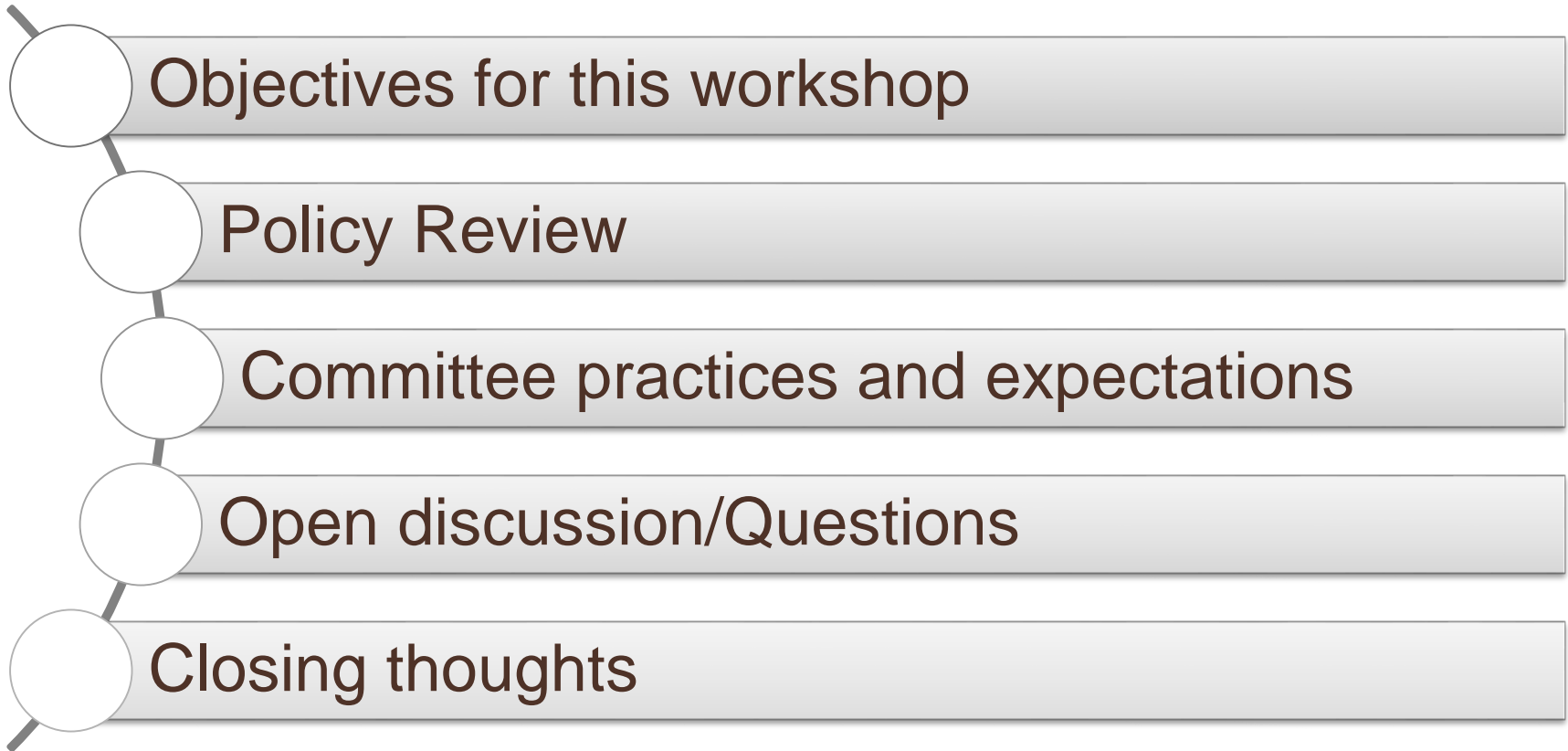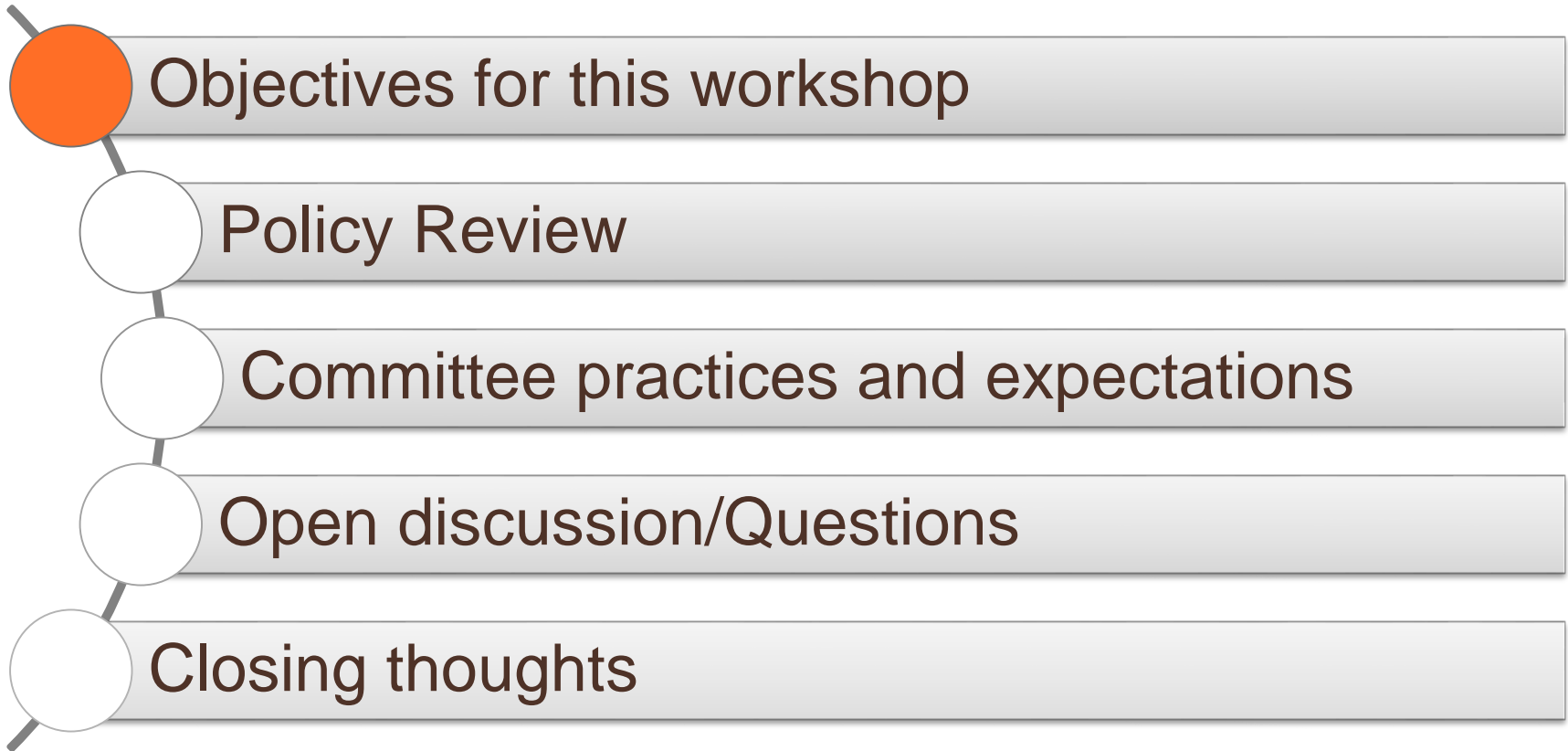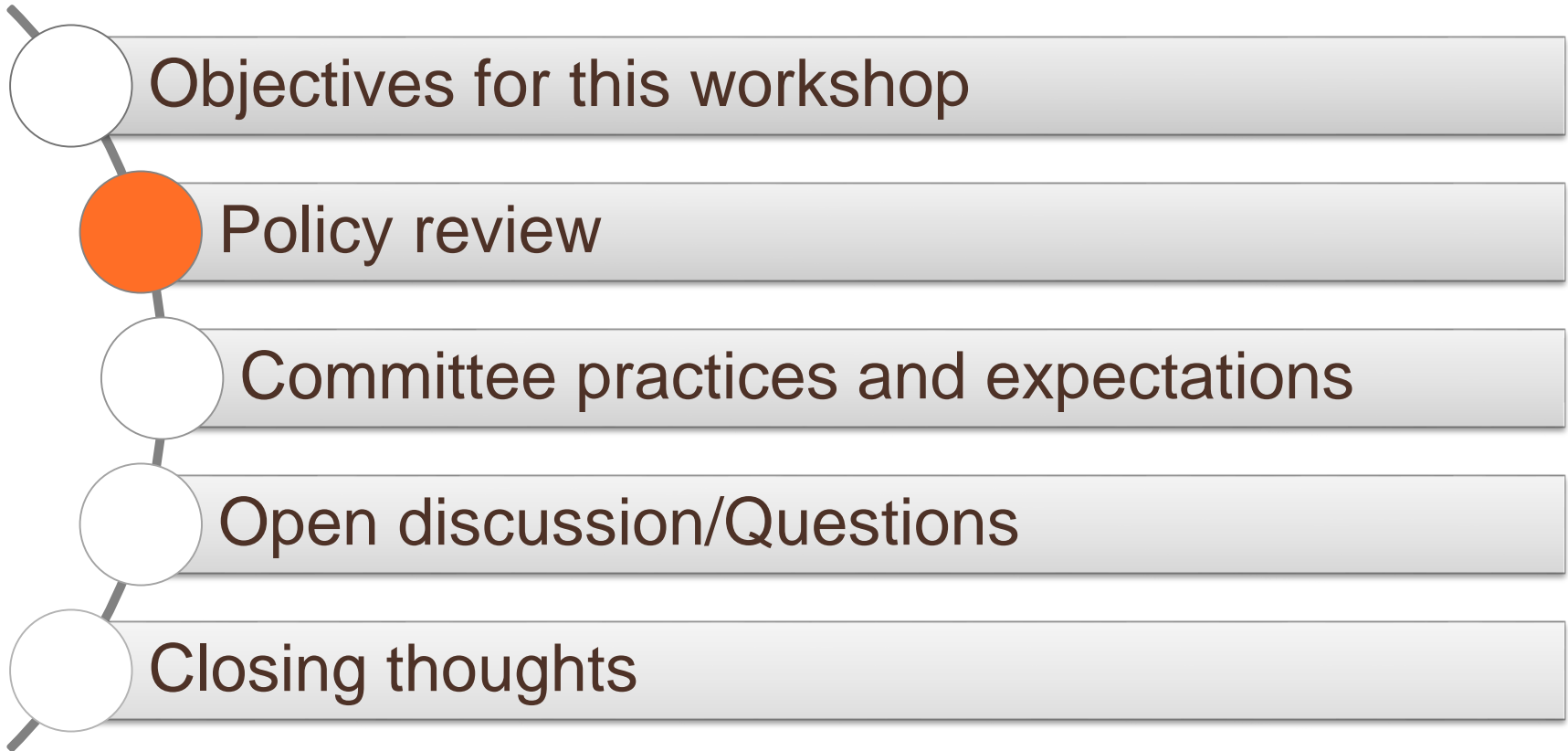
OBJECTIVES

- Facilitate a sharing of information on P&T committee practices

- Articulate upper administration ideas on important process practices for P&T committees

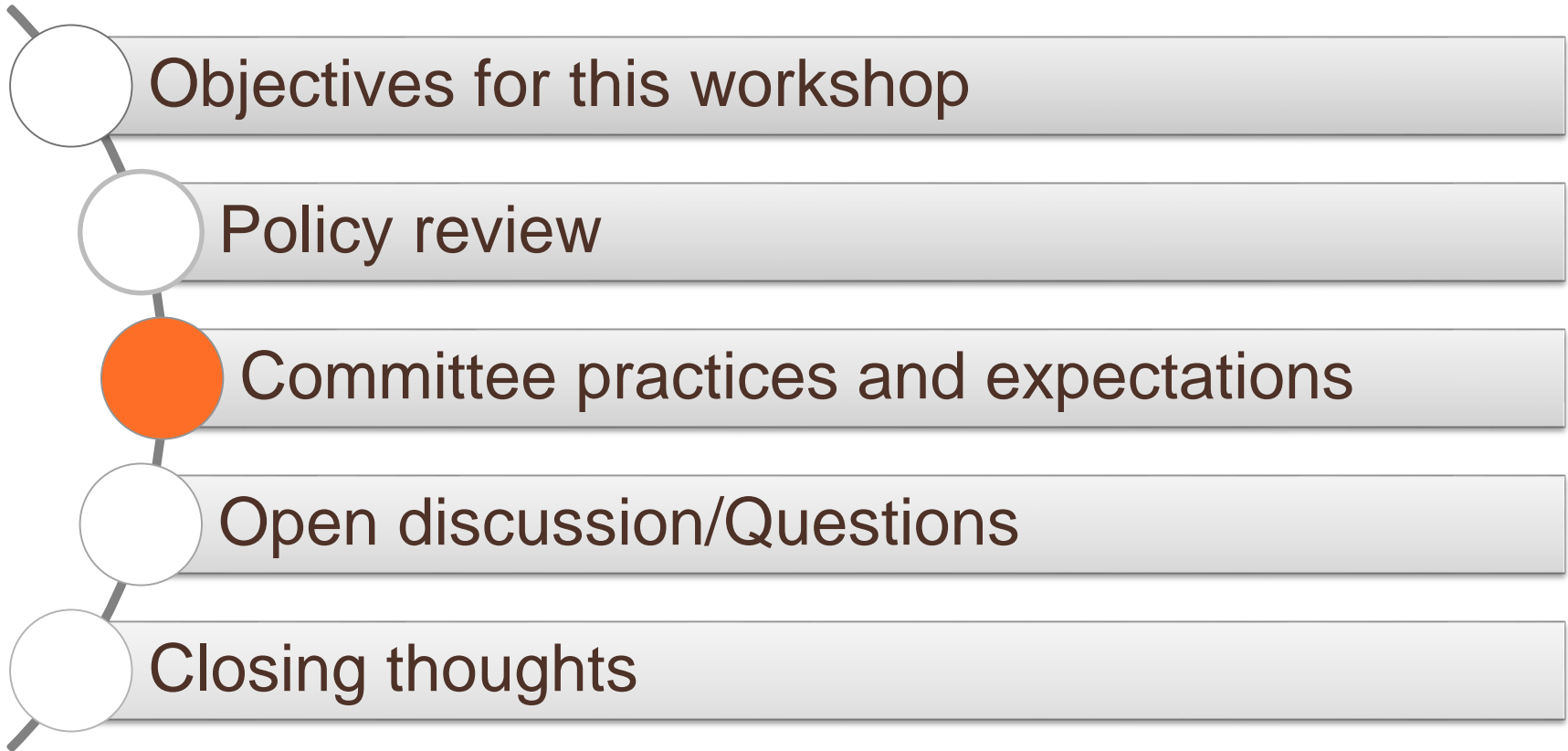- Discussion about core responsibilities and best practices

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POLICY REVIEW

▼ Revised October 1, 2015

▼ sections 2.c.4(d) – added September 1 as the deadline by which a faculty member can request an extension to the probationary period

▼ 3.a.(1) – clarified language relating to 'portfolio' and 'documentation', removed references as to who supplies required documentation; clarified that annual evaluations are to be provided by the Dean's Office and that they cannot be seen by members of the candidate's department. The tables in the policy that summarize access to documents were updated accordingly.

▼ 3.c(1) – the word 'dossier' was changed to 'candidate's portfolio of documentation and all letters except those of the dean and the provost'; and

▼ 3.d. – language about applying for other positions at RIT was added.

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COMMITTEE PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS*, I

- **Confidentiality**: No portion of the discussion may be shared outside the committee except when needed by the dean and provost

- **Objectivity**: Based on the materials of the package and the college expectations

- **Policy/Procedural Precision**: It is imperative that the committee follow policy and procedures in an exacting fashion so as to be fair to every candidate and not to introduce violations of due process that might lead to a faculty grievance

* However, committees are advised to follow current college policy if contrary to these practices.

COMMITTEE PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS*, II

Interdisciplinary work – where does it fit?

- A strategic priority of the campus
- High impact research involves multiple disciplines
- If your college policy demotes interdisciplinary work, the policy should change
- If your college policy does not demote interdisciplinary work, then the P&T committee **must not demote this work** either.
- Questions:
  - How will the committee assess interdisciplinary work?
  - Are there specific types of evidence that committees should use?

COMMITTEE PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS*, III

Committee Review of Candidate Documentation:

/ It is expected that each member of the committee will conduct his or her own review of the candidate materials

/ It is not advised to assign this task to one member of the committee

/ Candidates should be reviewed based on their own merit – not compared to others.

Interviewing candidates: Candidates should **NOT** be interviewed by the committee*

/ If additional information is needed, the committee chair should communicate with the candidate in writing

/ However, if current college written policy/practice allows interviews, committees are advised to follow policy. The advice is that this should either be done for all candidates or none.

COMMITTEE PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS*, IV

- **Role of External letters**: External letters are required and useful for the review; these letters should primarily address the quality of the scholarship.

- **Important notes about External letters**:
  - Should not be shared with the candidates
  - Can be shared with department tenured faculty, the department head, the tenure committee, the dean, the provost, and the president.

COMMITTEE PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS*, V

◤ **Summative evaluation**: Committee letter must be unambiguous in communicating the summative evaluation of the candidate's qualifications for tenure

◤ **Dissenting Vote(s):** If the vote of the committee is not unanimous, the letter must address issues raised by those dissenting

/ A separate dissenting letter is **NOT** appropriate

COMMITTEE PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS*, VI: IMPLICIT BIAS

Formal mechanisms for the evaluation and retention of faculty. Crucial in maintaining the intellectual excellence, creativity and scholarly reputation of the faculty.

- When processes are biased in subtle, often invisible ways, or when processes fail to provide equal protection and transparency for all faculty, they may result in inequity that serves to maintain the status quo.

- Increased efforts to hire women faculty does not lead to growth in women's overall representation unless attention is also paid to advancement through ranks.

COMMITTEE PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS*, VI: IMPLICIT BIAS

Bias, often unconscious, limits women's progress in scientific and engineering fields.

Even people who consciously reject negative stereotypes about women in science can still hold those beliefs at an unconscious level.

Brief video on Impact of Implicit Bias from OSU

COMMITTEE PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS*, VI: IMPLICIT BIAS

Handout:

Questions to Consider during P&T Review Processes: Understanding How Preferences Influence Decision-Making

& Recommendations for Reducing Unconscious Bias in Promotion & Tenure Review Processes

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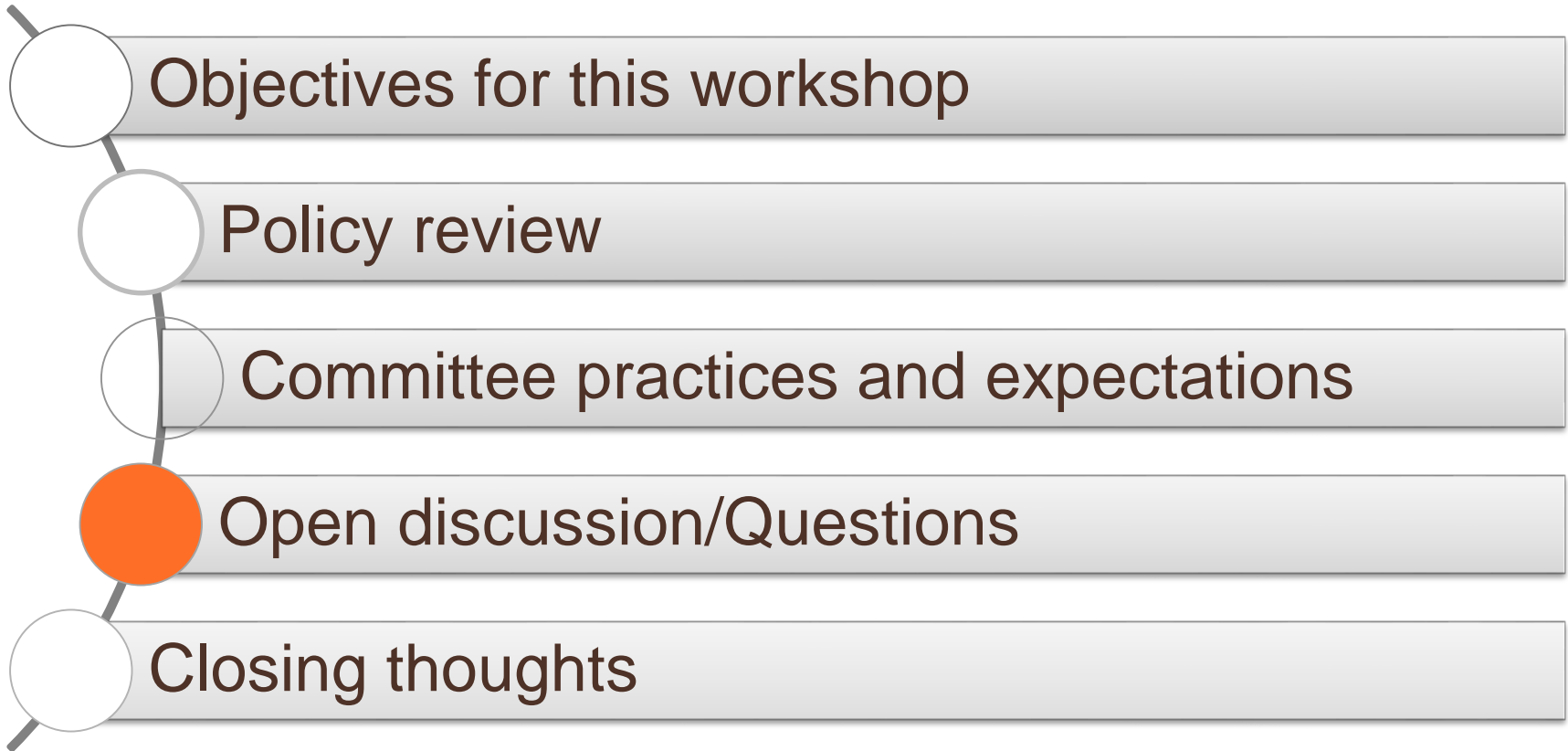
OPEN DISCUSSION I

Departmental Peer Recommendations (Votes):

/ What type of supporting rationale should the tenure committee look for in these recommendations?

/ Often, department faculty write one or two lines in each of the performance categories…is that sufficient?

/ If committee weighs departmental peer recommendations differently based on the evidence that the peer uses to make judgment, should peers know this at the beginning of the process?

OPEN DISCUSSION II

External Letters: What should the committee look for in the external letters?

- Quality of the institution of the reviewer?
- Rank or stature of the reviewer?
- Thoroughness of the letter to assess quality of the scholarship?
- Should these criteria be applied to all 4 letters or only those reviewers recommended by the candidate?
- Should these criteria be applied at all, since the reviewers have been pre-approved?

OPEN DISCUSSIONS III

- **Sources of evidence**: Should the committee decide what weight to give to different sources of evidence?
  - / If yes, how?

- **Annual Reviews**: What role does the annual evaluation play in committee decisions?
  - / Should the mid-tenure review have more or less importance than annual reviews?

- **Voting**: Should the department representative be allowed to vote both as a department peer and then as a committee member?
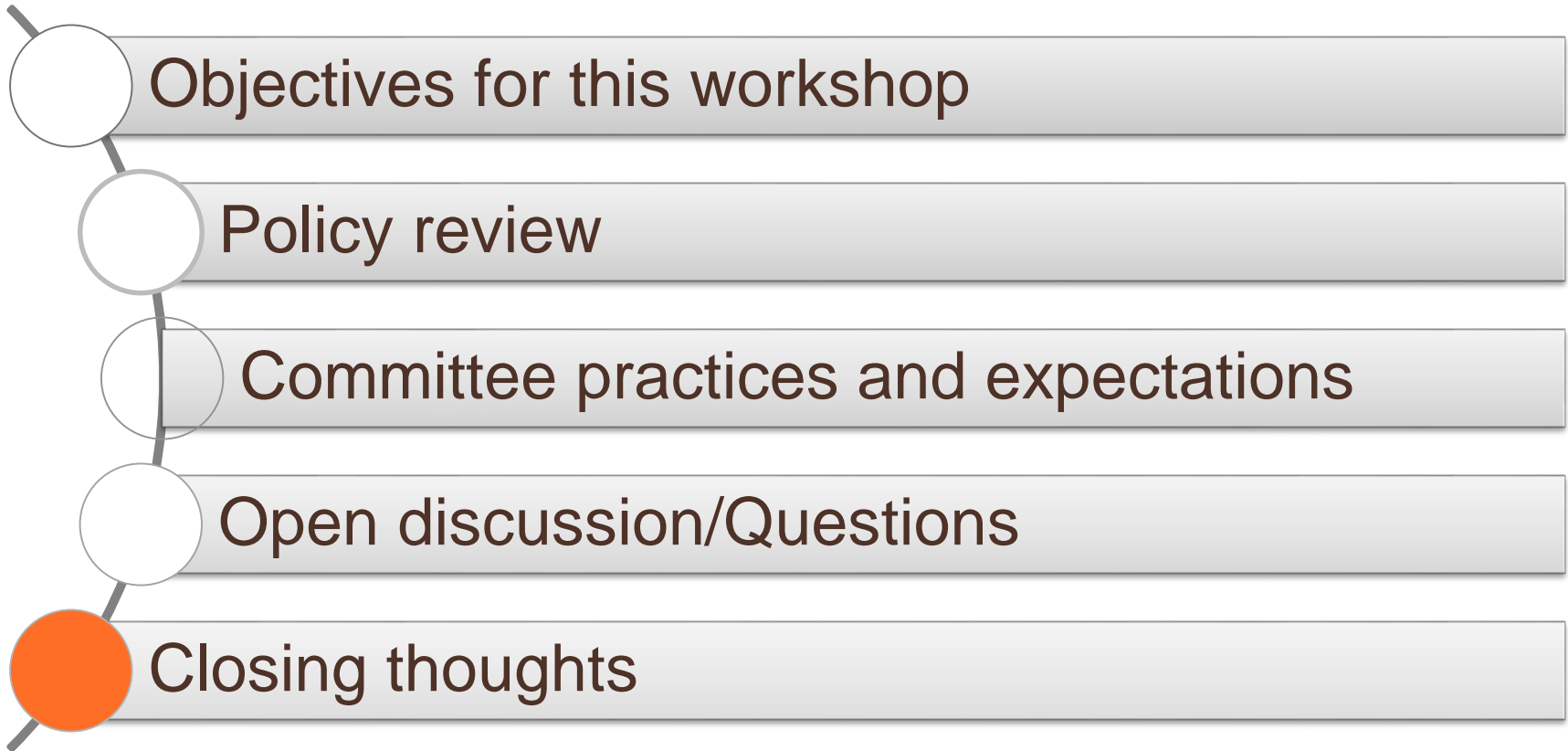
OPEN DISCUSSIONS IV

Collegiality: Collegiality is not a stand-alone criteria. It can be used in decision-making but evidence must be presented as to how the lack of collegiality has undermined effectiveness in the three areas of faculty work

/ How can lack of collegiality manifest in this way?

/ Could unconscious bias creep into discussions of collegiality?

QUESTIONS?

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R·I·T

Questions to Consider during Promotion & Tenure Review Processes
Understanding How Unconscious Bias Influences Decision Making

1. **Is the feedback provided within external/internal letters consistently valid, constructive, pertinent, and useful to the career development of the faculty member under review [1]? Do letters include basic features while aligning the candidate with their critical job responsibilities [2]?** Compared with recommendation letters written on behalf of men, research has shown that letters written on behalf of women were shorter and more likely to lack basic features, such as a statement of how the letter writer knew the applicant, concrete references to the applicant's record, or evaluative comments about the applicant's traits or accomplishments [3]. Letters written on behalf of women had more "doubt raisers" (hedges, faint praise, and irrelevancies) and were four times more likely to refer to their personal lives, compared with letters written on behalf of men [2,3,4]. Research has also shown that in recommendation letters, descriptions of men more closely align with critical job requirements (i.e., research record and ability) compared with descriptions of women [3].

2. **What approaches to evaluating collaboration might be appropriate [1]?** With regard to collaboration, identify the advantages and disadvantages to collaborating [1]. Research has found that women prefer collaborative work more than their male peers do [5]. Address the difficulties and complexities related to the assessment of collaboration for tenure and promotion [1]. Is the work of women faculty members unfairly attributed to a research director or collaborators, despite contrary evidence in publications or letters of recommendation [4]? Is less credit given to women faculty because the research was not done alone? Are collaborators viewed as equal contributors, or is one viewed in a secondary or assisting role?

3. **How will you weigh student teaching evaluations, and what other mechanisms will you use to evaluate teaching effectiveness?** Some scholars have found gender to have no (or very little) influence on evaluations of teaching, whereas other scholars have found gender to affect evaluations significantly [6,7,8], in which case findings generally show that student teaching evaluations are more negative for women faculty [9-19] with possible implications extending to award considerations [20]. Other possible alternative evaluation methods may include alumni ratings, peer ratings, informal student surveys, self-assessment statements, syllabi and other course documents, examples of student work, and teaching portfolios [6,21,22].

4. **Is a heavy service burden evident in the candidate's portfolio [1]?** Many possible conditions exist for excessive service. For women and minority candidates who report spending more time on service commitments than their male and majority peers, respectively, it could lead to evaluation penalties for their not saying "no" to excess service, when saying "no" is sometimes not a viable option for them [1, 23]. **Are there any additional positive benefits to the institution when the female or minority faculty members participate in this type of service [1]?**

5. **How will the committee account for gaps in the candidate's record, leaves of absence, or tenure clock extensions [1]?** Gaps during the review period can be evaluated in various ways such as by viewing achievements as cumulative. Extensions to the tenure probationary period should not increase the expectations for an individual faculty member's achievements towards tenure [24]**.** If the

candidate for tenure had received an extension to his/her tenure probationary period, the reasons behind this extension will not be disclosed within the committee's letter [25].

6. **Consider how gender shapes expectations for family responsibilities. Does parental status of a candidate affect arguments for or against a case [1]?** Traditionally, men with families are viewed as stable, settled, and committed to career, whereas women with families are expected to put family first and thus not considered to be serious about their careers [1,4].

7. **What is *your* responsibility as a reviewer to notice and address potential issues of bias for the committee [1]?** Becoming aware of and minimizing bias is a collective endeavor. As a committee member, is the expectation that members will inform the committee of possible bias issues in the review process for a particular candidate? Is the expectation that members will discuss bias that they or others exhibit?

Recommendations for Reducing Unconscious Bias in Promotion & Tenure Review Processes

1. Require committee members to participate in a bias literacy workshop. Research provides evidence that educational interventions lead to a reduction in unconscious bias [26,27].
2. Recognize and accept that all of us are subject to the influence of bias and assumptions, despite good intentions. Avoid considering yourself as "objective" [2,4].
3. Diversify promotion and tenure review committee membership by race, gender, rank (if appropriate), hearing status, age, etc. This will provide committee members with visible reminders that excellence comes in diverse forms. It will increase group members' motivation to respond equitably [4].
4. Discuss criteria that your review committee will use before evaluating candidates, and apply the criteria consistently [4].
5. Devote sufficient time and attention to evaluating each candidate, and minimize distractions [4].
6. Minimize time pressure and stress from competing tasks [28].
7. Evaluate the entire package of each candidate [4].
8. Recognize how the differential power/status of committee members shapes group discussions [29].
9. Use an inclusive rather than an exclusive decision-making process (such as considering why a candidate should be granted tenure or promotion rather than why they should be denied). This will cause evaluators to pay more attention to the merits of individual candidates and less attention to their membership in a specific demographic group [4].
10. Periodically evaluate the criteria being used during the review process and the manner in which the committee implements the review process [4].
11. Hold tenure and promotion review committee members responsible for fair and equitable evaluations [4]. In addition, hold them responsible for decisions based on concrete information, not on vague assertions or assumptions [4].

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Other Resources:

- AdvanceRIT Project Resources on Career Success and Benchmarking
    - http://nsfadvance.rit.edu/resources
- Gender Equality in Engineering – Advocacy Tips, A National Imperative, NDSU
    - http://wied.asee.org/AdvTips.html
- "Solving the Equation" – AAUW publication
    - http://www.aauw.org/research/solving-the-equation/
- Facebook, Managing Unconscious Bias
    - https://managingbias.fb.com/
- Implicit Association Test, Project Implicit, Harvard University
    - https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
- The Impact of Implicit Bias from Ohio State University, Part 1 Bias and Schemas,
    - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZHxFU7TYo4&feature=plcp
- Video: AAMC, "What You Don't Know: The Science of Unconscious Bias and What To Do About It in the
  Search and Recruitment Process"
    - https://surveys.aamc.org/se.ashx?s=7C7E87CB561EC358
- Tips for Reducing Unconscious Bias Language in Job Descriptions
    - http://www.ncwit.org/resources/ncwit-checklist-reducing-unconscious-bias-job-
      descriptionsadvertisements
- How Can Reducing Unconscious Bias Increase Women's Success in IT?
    - Avoiding Gender Bias in Recruitment/Selection Processes (Case Study 2):
      http://www.ncwit.org/resources/how-can-reducing-unconscious-bias-increase-womens-success-it-
      avoiding-gender-bias
- Video: Unconscious Bias and Why It Matters For Women & Tech
    - http://www.ncwit.org/resources/unconscious-bias-and-why-it-matters-women-and-tech
- Students: How Do Stereotype Threats Affect Retention? Better Approaches to Well-Intentioned, but Harmful
  Messages (Case Study 1)
    - http://www.ncwit.org/resources/how-do-stereotype-threats-affect-retention-better-approaches-well-
      intentioned-harmful

EXAMPLES OF BIAS IN LETTERS TO WATCH OUT FOR (Trix, F. & Psenka C., 2003)

Length of Letters and Level of Assurance

- Recommendation letters for women are often shorter for women than for men.
- Shorter letters are *often* associated with *minimum assurance*.
- To achieve full or maximum assurance, a letter of recommendation must include:
    1. commitment and relationship of recommender with the applicant
    2. specificity of focus and record of applicant
    3. evaluation or comparison of traits and accomplishments

Anything less is considered minimal assurance

FINDINGS: 15% for women's and 6% for men's letters

SAMPLE LETTER

> *Dear Dr Alfred Koop:*
>
> *It gives me great pleasure in writing this recommendation letter for Dr Sarah Gray. I have known Sarah as a resident and as staff at The Metropolitan Hospital. She is knowledgeable, pleasant, and easy to get along with. I have no hesitation in recommending her for a faculty position at Centvingcinq. I will be happy to answer any further questions in this regard.*
>
> *Charles Lewis, MD, Chairman, Department of Psychiatry*

This letter shows commitment and relationship to applicant but that's all, making it a letter of minimal assurance.

Use of Gender in the Letter

- Dr Gray is a thorough, hardworking, extremely intelligent and insightful woman.
- On a personal level Sarah is, in my opinion, the quintessence of the contemporary lady physician who very ably combines dedication, intelligence, idealism, compassion and responsibility without compromise.
- I believe Dr Harvey to be a man of great personal integrity.
- He is entirely dedicated to patient care, personable, a gentleman in every sense of the word.

FINDINGS: 10% for women and 5% for men's letters

Doubt Raisers

- **Negative Language**

While Sarah has not done a lot of this type of research . . .	*Although* his publications are not numerous . . .

- **Hedges**

It *appears* her health and personal life are stable.	He *appears* to be a highly motivated colleague

- **Potential Negative**

An independent worker, she **requires only a minimum of supervision.**	Bright, enthusiastic, he *responds well to feedback*

FINDINGS: 24% of women and 12% of men's letters had at least one doubt raiser

Stereotypical Language

- Dr (William) Smith has been very *successful* in obtaining grants from both the NIH (National Institute of Health) and industry and has developed an excellent clinical trials group for the study and treatment of AIDS.

- His substantial record of publication in reputable journals, during those developing years, certainly attests to his overall research capabilities and *accomplishments*.

- Dr (Sarah) Simpson is a caring, *compassionate* physician who has excellent interpersonal relationships with patients and their families as well as nursing and medical staff.

FINDINGS: 16% of women and 4% of men's letters had at least one of these

Grindstone Language

- She is an extremely *conscientious* and *meticulous* researcher who devotes her time to laboratory work and the training of graduate students in laboratory technique.

- She is a superb experimentalist – very well organized, *thorough* and *careful* in her approach to research.

- I have found William to be *hard-working, thorough, and conscientious* in providing all aspects of patient care.

FINDINGS: 34% letters for women and 23% for men had grindstone language

Interrupting biased or exclusionary comments

General pointers

- Know yourself: Do you tend to freeze? Or get too angry too fast? What holds you back from taking action? Take time to reflect on what you need in order to act.
- Doing something is almost always better than doing nothing. "Mistakes" are part of the learning process. Intervening constructively takes practice!
- Decide whether you want simply to stop the escalation or also to educate. Educating might work best later, in a private setting.
- When addressing the person making offending comments, keep your voice non-judgmental and non-confrontational. Also reach out to offer solidarity with those who were targeted.
- Enlist others who are witnessing. When two or three people speak up instead of just one, even just to say, "I agree," the action is often far more effective.
- Seek institutional resources. Talk to an advisor, someone from HR… Consider whether new policies are needed.

Possible tactics

(1) Make your discomfort known
- Find a short phrase you can readily use in lots of situations.
- Examples: "Ouch." "I'm not comfortable with that." "What do you mean by that?"

(2) Reflect what you heard
- **Paraphrase** what they said. It clarifies it for you and for them.
- **Empathize**. Listen for the feelings and needs behind the statement.

(3) Ask questions
- **Ask for clarification.** When people explain themselves they may realize they're off-base,
- **Ask for additional info.** Try to genuinely understand why people hold those views.

(4) Build a bridge
- **Be personal.** Share ways that you used to have blinders.
- **Be affirming.** Acknowledge that they may not have meant to be offensive or hurtful. Tell them they are too good a person to say something like that.

(5) Challenge
- **Express your feelings**: Explain why you're offended or uncomfortable.
- **Humanize:** Ask how they'd feel if someone said a similar comment to someone close to them.
- **Reveal:** Share your own experience or perspective.
- **Claim authority:** Name policies or laws that prohibit such conduct.