

## **COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY FOR PROMOTION AND TENURE**

Promotion to a higher rank and appointment with tenure may be granted to faculty members on standard faculty appointment who have demonstrated satisfactory accomplishments in an appropriate combination of instructional, research, extension, and other professional activities. This document outlines procedures for evaluation of a faculty member's performance for purposes of reaching a recommendation regarding the granting of promotion or tenure. Nothing in these recommendations shall contravene provisions regarding promotion and tenure policy as presented in the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University *Faculty Handbook*.

University policy states that faculty members being considered for either promotion or the awarding of tenure will have their dossiers reviewed at as many as three levels: by a departmental committee and the Head, by a college committee and the Dean, and by a university committee and the University Provost. Methods for selection of the Departmental and College Promotion and Tenure Committees and guidelines for the considerations of the respective committees are presented below.

### **Departmental Evaluation**

Each department shall have a committee with appropriate faculty representation to evaluate candidates for promotion or tenure and make recommendations to the Department Head. The Department Head will remain separate from the committee's deliberations and will subsequently receive its recommendations.

The respective departments will set up their Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committees as they see fit. However, it is suggested that between four and seven faculty members be selected to serve on the Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee on the basis of a vote of the tenured and tenure-track departmental faculty, and that the Head of the department appoints one additional member of the committee. In any case, the composition and method of selection of Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committees must be in accord with guidelines developed by the University Commission on Faculty Affairs.

All tenured faculty members are eligible for selection to the Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee. While university policy presented in the *Faculty Handbook* does not mandate that members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee be full professors, it is clear that the review process may benefit from the perspective of a full professor, especially when a possible appointment to the rank of full professor is under consideration.

The committee will elect its chair. The committee shall review the cases of all faculty members who submit their credentials to the Department Head for consideration for promotion or tenure, including those faculty members in the sixth year of probationary service. The Department Head furnishes the committee with a dossier for each candidate. The form and contents of the dossier will be in accordance with the most recent Promotion and Tenure Guidelines distributed by the University Provost.

The dossier will include a statement by the Department Head. This statement should be limited to 3-4 pages, and should include:

1. a summary of the candidate's professional assignment at Virginia Tech;
2. an evaluation of the academic performance and effectiveness of the candidate in each of the areas of faculty responsibility – teaching and academic advising; research, scholarly and/or creative achievement; and public service and extension;
3. a summary of important accomplishments and interpretation of significant contributions;
4. an explanation of the procedures by which the candidate was evaluated; and
5. the Department Head's recommendation.

Peer teaching reviews should be completed and accompany the promotion and tenure dossier for all candidates.

At least six evaluative letters from external assessors will be solicited and, where available, should be included with the materials sent forth to the Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee for all candidates. Procedures for solicitation of external reviews are presented as Appendix 1.

The Department Head may make presentations on each candidate as requested by the committee, but the Head must be absent from further deliberations concerning the merits of the candidates and from the framing of the recommendations of the committee. The Department Head does not vote in committee decisions.

The Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee will make a recommendation on each candidate to the Department Head, including a written evaluation that assesses the quality of the candidate's performance in each relevant area. The committee will reach its recommendation by means of a vote, the outcome of which is determined by a simple plurality. Whenever the Department Head does not concur with the committee's recommendation, the committee is so notified.

In all cases of mandatory (sixth-year) tenure decisions, the Head will pass on to the Dean the dossier of every candidate, which will include the committee's evaluation and recommendation (including the division of vote) and the Head's own recommendation, whether concurring or not. If not concurring, the Head will include a letter specifying the reasons. If concurring, the Head may submit a letter that combines the committee's and Head's evaluations and recommendations. Should the committee and the Head agree on a negative recommendation, the Dean may declare this to be the final decision or may choose to have the recommendation reviewed by the College Committee.

In all other cases (promotion or tenure before the sixth year of probationary service), the Head will follow the same procedures, except that, when the committee's recommendation is negative and the Head concurs, the Head declares a final decision and no further review is carried out. The Head will inform the faculty member of a negative decision if no further review is scheduled. In that case, the faculty member is notified of appeal options.

Accompanying the set of dossiers submitted to the college level will be a statement from the Head describing the formation and procedures of the departmental committee and summarizing the number of candidates considered in each category (mandatory tenure, pre-sixth-year tenure, promotion at each rank).

## College Evaluation

The College of Natural Resources shall have a committee with appropriate faculty and administrative representation to review the recommendations on promotion and tenure sent by the Department Heads. The committee will consist of two voting faculty members and the non-voting Head from each department in the college. The committee will review the cases of any candidates recommended by the departmental committees and/or the Heads and will, if requested by the Dean, review cases of mandatory tenure receiving negative recommendations by both the departmental committee and the Head.

Faculty members who were members of their Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committees should not serve on the college committee. It is recognized that for smaller departments some participants may have to serve at more than one level; however, per university guidelines, participants may only vote once for a case. The two faculty members from each department serving on the college committee are encouraged to observe department-level deliberations to better prepare for their roles, but should not participate or attempt to influence department-level recommendations.

Given their responsibilities to make a separate and independent recommendation on each case, Department Heads or Chairs may not vote as members of their Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee or as members of the College Promotion and Tenure Committee. While university policy presented in the *Faculty Handbook* does not mandate that members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee be full professors, it is clear that the review process may benefit from the perspective of a full professor, especially when a possible appointment to the rank of full professor is under consideration. A committee chair will be elected by voting faculty members exclusive of Department Heads and Chairs serving on the College Promotion and Tenure Committee. The College of Natural Resources representative on the University Promotion and Tenure Committee will serve as a non-voting member of the college committee. The composition and method of selection of College Promotion and Tenure Committees are in accordance with guidelines developed by the University Commission on Faculty Affairs.

The purposes of the review by the college committee are to verify that the recommendations are consistent with the evidence, reflecting college-wide standards, and that they consider the goals, objectives, and programmatic priorities of the college as components of the university mission.

When the recommendation for promotion and tenure made by the departmental committee and the Department Head differ, the college committee will consider both recommendations, which should appear in writing as part of the dossier. The college committee may also ask the candidate and/or a representative(s) of the department committee to appear before the college committee to present additional information or clarification of recommendations.

The committee shall make a written recommendation on each candidate to the Dean. Should the recommendation be at variance from that received from the Department Head, reasons for that variance should be specified in the recommendation.

Whenever the Dean does not concur with the committee's recommendation, the committee will be so notified. The Dean will send to the Provost the full dossier of every candidate for whom the Dean makes positive recommendation and also the dossiers of those cases where the Dean does not concur with the college committee's positive recommendation. The Dean will

include a letter specifying the reasons for any reversal of the committee's recommendation and, in cases of concurrence, will include a letter to bring out any additional points not raised in earlier evaluations.

Both the Dean of the college and a representative of the college committee should have the opportunity to appear before the university committee to present their differing views.

If a positive department recommendation is rejected by both the college committee and the Dean of the college, the normal process of review is concluded.

The set of dossiers that the Dean sends to the Provost will be accompanied by a statement describing the formation and procedures of the college committee and by a summary of the number of candidates considered by the committees in each category.

In the case of any candidate for promotion or tenure whose dossier is not being sent to the Provost, the Dean will inform the Department Head of the rejection and the Department Head will so notify the departmental committee and the faculty member. In that case, the faculty member is notified of appeal options.

### **University Evaluation**

The College of Natural Resources will be represented on the University Promotion and Tenure Committee by the Dean and by a college-elected member to the University Promotion and Tenure Committee who serves as a nonvoting member of the College Promotion and Tenure Committee.

## Appendix 1

### Procedures for Solicitation of External Letters for Promotion and Tenure

Evaluative letters from external assessors will be included with the materials submitted to Promotion and Tenure Committees for all candidates. The following guidelines apply to these letters.

At least six letters will be sought for submission with the dossier of each candidate. The candidate may submit three to six names to the Department Head; however, at least half of the letters will be solicited from outside the candidate's list. The Department Head or Chair will share all letters received with the Department Promotion and Tenure Committee, and all letters are to be forwarded to higher levels in the evaluation process.

It is preferred that external letters be solicited from peer academic institutions; however, at times it may be appropriate for letters to be solicited from government or private research agencies (e.g., EPA, DOE, NIH, etc).

For each letter submitted, a brief paragraph should be included describing the qualifications of the individual who submitted it.

It is the responsibility of the Department Head to contact the external evaluators to request their letters. A requested due date for return of the evaluative letters should be stated in the Department Head's request. Candidates should not contact the evaluators.

The request for an evaluative letter should include the candidate's dossier and samples of publications. Specific items to be asked of the evaluators include:

- length and nature of professional knowledge about the candidate.
- judgment of the quality and significance of the candidate's scholarly activity. This judgment should identify the originality and impact of the candidate's scholarly program.
- assessment of the candidate's accomplishments relative to others in comparable positions in the discipline.
- opinion of the candidate's future potential for contribution to the discipline or to interdisciplinary work.

**Sample Letter Requesting Evaluation for Promotion and Tenure**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The Department of \_\_\_\_\_ of the College of Natural Resources at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University is considering \_\_\_\_\_ for promotion to the rank of \_\_\_\_\_ professor (with tenure).

To assist in its deliberations and for reviewers in subsequent levels of the university promotion and tenure process, university policy requires that written evaluations be obtained from experts external to the university in the candidate's scholarly or creative field. Although a final decision will be based on several types of evidence, the external letters will be an important contribution to determining whether the candidate has achieved the professional stature and recognition among professional colleagues in the field that is commensurate with the rank being sought.

I am writing to ask you to provide a thorough, objective assessment of \_\_\_\_\_'s accomplishments as a scholar and an opinion as to whether the degree of accomplishment is appropriate for the level of \_\_\_\_\_ at a comprehensive research, teaching, and extension-oriented university with high standards of achievement expected of its faculty.

Specific items that I would like you to address are:

1. Length and nature of professional knowledge about the candidate.
2. Your judgment of the quality and significance of the candidate's scholarly activity. This judgment should identify the originality and impact of the candidate's scholarly program.
3. Your assessment of accomplishments relative to others in comparable positions in the discipline.
4. Your opinion of the candidate's future potential for contribution to the discipline or to interdisciplinary work.

We will endeavor to keep your comments confidential to the committees and administrators participating directly in the review process, and they will not be shared with the individual being reviewed.

To assist in your evaluation, I am enclosing a copy of \_\_\_\_\_'s dossier. Because our deliberations must be concluded by \_\_\_\_\_, I would appreciate your earliest response. If you are unable to respond by that date, please let me know as soon as possible.

**Appendix 2****Suggested Dates in the Promotion and Tenure Decision Process**

All dates suggested below are appropriate for the promotion and tenure decision process as of October 1993. Any subsequent changes in the decision process may require alteration of this timetable.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Late Summer	Candidate prepares and submits dossier to Department Head.
September 1	Department Head solicits evaluative letters from external assessors, asking response within 28 days.
Early October	Candidate updates dossier. Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committees selected.
October 15	All candidates' dossiers for promotion and tenure should be submitted to the Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committees.
Late October- November	Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committees consider dossiers of all candidates.
December 1	All candidates' dossiers for promotion and tenure should be submitted to the College Promotion and Tenure Committee.
Early December	College Promotion and Tenure Committee considers dossiers of all candidates.