PURDUE UNIVERSITY | Office of the Provost

To: Tenured, Tenure-Track Faculty
From: Patrick Wolfe, Provost
Date: June 15, 2026
Subject: West Lafayette Campus Promotion and Tenure Policy

This memorandum has been prepared to inform all members of the Tenured and Tenure-track Faculty of Purdue University of the policies and procedures that are followed in recommending them for tenure and/or for promotion to higher academic rank. We continue to operate under the promotion and tenure policy for tenured/tenure-track faculty that was approved by the Board of Trustees during the 2015-2016 academic year, and procedures and criteria updated during 2025-2026 academic year, as posted on the Office of the Provost website: https://www.purdue.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/promotion/. Faculty are encouraged to carefully read the full documents on this website.

## SECTION I GENERAL CRITERIA FOR PROMOTION

The tasks of University faculty members are to acquire, discover, appraise, and disseminate knowledge. They should communicate this knowledge and the manner of its acquisition or discovery to their immediate community of students and scholars, to their profession, and to society at large. Service to the institution, the community, the state, the nation, and the world also constitutes an important mission of University faculty members. As an institution of higher education with a commitment to excellence and a diversity of missions, Purdue University values creative endeavor and scholarly activity in many forms. These include research and discovery; teaching and learning in its many forms; and engagement in its many forms, including extension and outreach. To be considered for promotion, a faculty member should have demonstrated excellence and scholarly productivity in at least one of these areas: discovery, learning, and/or engagement. Ordinarily, strength should be manifest in more than one of these areas. In evaluating performance in any of the three areas, no single indicator should be used as the sole measure of excellence and/or scholarly productivity, but rather multiple elements as described in the university and unit promotion criteria documents should be considered, as part of a holistic assessment.

As we evaluate the teaching impact of candidates, note that the structure and content of the student on-line evaluations of teaching were changed as the result of a 2017-19 review process. In addition, during the first semester of the pandemic (spring 2020), we did not collect any summative student evaluations of teaching. In the 2020-21 AY we collected evaluations in both semesters, using the new format, but the results of these student responses must be put into the context of that year's challenging teaching conditions. Thus, the data available from student on-line evaluations are not consistent with past data and will be different from 2020-21 forward. This change, and the teaching environment created by the pandemic, emphasizes the need to adhere to university criteria, which state that the evaluation of teaching in promotion should be holistic and not dependent on single metrics.

## RECOGNITION OF VARIETY IN ACHIEVEMENT

The diversity of the academic enterprise in a land-grant institution such as Purdue University is to be taken into account when promotions are considered. The Criteria for Tenure and Promotion for the West

Lafayette Campus document contains updated criteria and examples that should be used as a guide for the completion of tenure and promotion packages. Colleges, and some schools and departments, have also developed more detailed criteria specific to their disciplines. The unit promotion criteria applied by the Primary Committee should be appended to the end of each completed Nomination for Promotion Form (President's Office Form 36). The Form 36 Instructions document contains guidelines and examples for documenting activities. Many examples of excellence in scholarly activities across missions exist and must be recognized by members of the successive committees on tenure and promotion. In addition, each college has developed recommendations for documenting mentoring activities, and these guidelines should be made available to faculty.

## THE FACULTY REVIEW SYSTEM

The promotion requirements are intended to guide all academic units of the University. Throughout the entire promotion process, Primary, Area, and Campus Promotions Committee members respond to each tenure or promotion nomination individually, interpreting ~~the~~ achievements described in the nominating documents in the light of standards and criteria appropriate for the nominee's discipline and the college and University criteria for promotion. In the course of these evaluations, the give-and-take of full and confidential discussion is a critical element to informing each committee member of the candidate's accomplishments. To this end, and with the unanimous support of the University Senate Faculty Affairs Committee, only those promotion committee members present for the entire discussion of a candidate's record shall be extended the privilege of voting (Faculty Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes, March 2, 1998). Additional information about Purdue's promotion process is included in Section III of this document and in the documents on the Promotion and Tenure website.

Faculty growth, productivity, and success require that Primary Committee chairs actively and annually convey, to each colleague who is not a full professor, what levels of performance and achievement are viewed favorably by the Primary and Area Committees. To facilitate this communication, all colleges must have written promotion criteria available to their faculty. Area Committee chairs, who have an active role on the Campus Promotions Committee have corresponding obligations to convey university expectations to the members of their Area Committees.

Since 2021, in response to the broad and varied effects of the pandemic on faculty work, candidates for promotion continue to have the option of including in their promotion document a Professional COVID Impact Statement. The guidelines for composing and interpreting the Statement, and language to provide to external reviewers, are found in the Guidelines document circulated to faculty, Heads, and Deans on March 8, 2021, and also found here: Assessment of Productivity During The COVID Pandemic.

## SECTION II PROMOTION TO DIFFERENT RANKS

Tenure-track Faculty

Promotion to Assistant Professor

A tenure-track instructor may be promoted to assistant professor upon attaining the level of professional accomplishment which would have justified appointment as an assistant professor.

Promotion to Associate Professor

Academic tenure is usually acquired on promotion to this rank. A successful candidate should have a significant record of accomplishment as a faculty member and show promise of continued professional growth and recognition.

Promotion to Professor

Successful candidates should be recognized as authorities in their fields of specialization by external colleagues – national and/or international as may be appropriate in their academic disciplines – and be valued for their intramural contributions as faculty members.

## SECTION III GENERAL PROCEDURE

Before or during the first semester of each academic year, the head of each school, division, or department shall convene the Primary Committee, which is to consist of all tenured full professors and all tenured associate professors in the respective administrative unit. Tenured associate professors discuss and vote upon promotion up to and including the associate professor level. The department head shall act as chair of the Primary Committee.

A Nomination for Promotion form ―(President's Office Form 36)― must be submitted for all faculty members being considered for tenure and/or promotion. Refer to the Operating Procedures for the nomination process. Form 36 also should be submitted for penultimate year faculty members who choose not to be reviewed. Supporting documents are not required with Form 36 if the penultimate year faculty member chooses not to be considered for promotion. For more detail on completion of Form 36; the promotion and tenure policy, procedures and criteria; and accompanying documentation, see the Office of the Provost's website. Form 36 and the corresponding instructions incorporate the new requirements for promotion and tenure set forth in Indiana law.

A candidate should be given the opportunity to help create and review their tenure and/or promotion documentation and may receive a copy of any document (with confidential statements omitted) that will be submitted to the Primary, Area, and/or Campus committee(s). It is the right of the candidate to have included in his/her promotion document whatever the candidate chooses to add, including the candidate's own brief (one page) comments about excellence, creative activity, and scholarship in discovery, teaching/learning, and/or service or engagement. The candidate must also include documentation of mentoring within the discovery/research activities, teaching/learning, and/or service or engagement sections as appropriate. Candidates may also choose to include specific instances of external events beyond their control that have materially impacted their productivity and progress. Candidates and units are encouraged to keep documents to a maximum length of 100 pages (or less). If needed, additional supporting material may be linked to the promotion document.

The information in the promotion document must be accurate before sending it to external reviewers or submission to the Primary Committee. While this is the responsibility of the candidate, senior faculty or heads assist in developing the document and they should check on items such as status of publications or role in grant awards where there is any uncertainty with the item. Refer to the Operating Procedures.

External evaluation letters should be collected for all tenure and/or promotion cases. External letters should typically be sought from peer or aspirational peer universities. Examples of peers and aspirational peers include members of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and leading international institutions. Letters may also be sought from faculty members at top academic programs from other institutions, and preeminent experts at other institutions, although justification in the form of expertise credentials is expected in all cases. Deans should certify that the lists of letter-writers meet these expectations for each case going forward in their college. Letter-writers must be asked explicitly:

> *...to comment on the suitability of the candidate for a tenured appointment at the level of [Associate Professor/Professor, as applicable] at an institution whose goal is to be recognized as a top 5 public institution.*

A minimum of 8 letters is expected for tenure and/or promotion cases, and documentation should be included stating whether a letter writer was suggested by the candidate or by the department/school (or both). It is essential to obtain unbiased external evaluations, so the letters should come from distinguished scholars who are not: the candidate's thesis advisor (M.S. or Ph.D.) or postdoctoral advisor; a business or professional partner; any family relation such as a spouse, sibling, parent, or relative; a collaborator on a substantive project, book, article, paper, or report within the last 24 months. An exception would be a letter from a collaborator, clearly identified, who can help to define and evaluate the candidate's role in major collaborative work, as per section IV.B.6 of the promotion Procedures document.

Some candidates for promotion and tenure will have received an extension of the tenure clock by virtue of University policy. Under these circumstances, the criteria for promotion and tenure are the same as those expected for a faculty member who has not received a tenure clock extension. The same is true for those being considered earlier than is typical. To ensure that our external reviewers are aware that we hold all promotion cases to the same criteria, the following statement must be included in every request for an external evaluation letter for a candidate for tenure:

> *Please note that length of service in rank by itself is not a factor in promotion and/or tenure decisions at Purdue. Our criteria clearly state: "...issues of timing should not be paramount, and discussions should focus instead on the question of whether the faculty member has provided evidence of a sustainable and impactful record that warrants promotion and/or tenure..." We do not designate any promotion nomination to be "early" (records are ready for promotion or they are not), nor are any extensions of the tenure clock granted to a faculty member to be considered in the decision.*

It should be noted to external reviewers, under Purdue University policies, that their reply will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. The following statement should be included in all external evaluation letter requests:

> *Candidates may request a summary of all evaluations in their file; however, sources remain confidential. We cannot guarantee that at some future time a court or government agency will not require the disclosure of the source of confidential evaluations. Purdue University will endeavor to protect the identity of authors of letters of evaluation to the fullest extent allowable under law.*

If a promotion document includes a Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement, then this language should be included in the letter to the external reviewers:

> *Purdue University acknowledges the differential and negative impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had on faculty career development. In carrying out decisions about promotion and tenure, we will evaluate each candidate's research, teaching, service, and engagement activities within the context of the pandemic. To this end, candidates have had an opportunity to include in their document a Professional COVID-19 Impact Statement, which documents how the pandemic has affected their professional accomplishments in discovery, teaching, and engagement, as well as their service obligations. To assist in your evaluation, we include this statement in the promotion document with which you have been provided. It presents information about what obstacles were faced by this candidate during the COVID year and how they overcame them, and helps to put their impact during that year into the context of what was possible.*

Finally, tracking the number of solicited reviewers who decline or fail to provide letters and/or recording their stated reasons for not writing does not provide relevant, useful information about the quality of the candidate's case. Thus, such information should not be part of the document.

SECTION IV

STRUCTURE OF PROMOTION COMMITTEES

1. Primary Committees
    a. For Purdue West Lafayette Faculty

    Primary Committees are chaired by the school, division, or department head/chair, who serves as a non-voting member unless the number of members on the committee is less than seven. Membership is comprised of all tenured faculty members in the respective administrative unit (see note below). The committee must consist of at least five tenured faculty members for cases of promotion to associate professor, and five professors for voting on cases of promotion to professor. When this minimum number is not available in the candidate's unit, then additional tenured faculty members are appointed by the chair of the Area Committee to which the Primary Committee reports, following consultation with the appropriate department head. The Provost, dean of Libraries and School of Information Studies, dean of the Honors College, and the academic deans may not be voting members of any Primary Committee.

    Department heads with faculty members who have joint appointments should follow college guidelines for evaluating joint-appointed faculty. In units that lack college guidelines for this process, please consult with the Office of the Provost on these cases.

    b. For University Tenure in Indianapolis Faculty

    There are two Primary Committees structured around disciplinary areas for faculty with the tenure home of University Tenure in Indianapolis: one for all technology faculty, and one for all engineering and computer science faculty. The Primary Committee for the technology disciplinary area is chaired by the associate dean for faculty affairs for the Purdue Polytechnic Institute. The Primary Committee for the engineering and computer science disciplinary area is chaired by the associate dean for faculty affairs for the College of Engineering. The chair of the Primary Committee serves as a non-voting member. Membership for each Primary Committee is comprised of all Tenured professors with the tenure home of University Tenure in Indianapolis in the relevant disciplinary area. The committee must consist of at least seven associate or full professors holding University Tenure in Indianapolis for cases of tenure and promotion to associate professor, and at least seven full professors holding University Tenure in Indianapolis for cases of promotion to professor. When this minimum number is not available in the candidate's disciplinary area, additional Tenured professors from Purdue West Lafayette disciplinary areas are appointed by the chair of the Area Committee to which the Primary Committee reports, following consultation with the appropriate department head and associate dean for faculty affairs

2. Areas Committees
    a. For Purdue West Lafayette Faculty

    Each college's Area Committee is chaired by its dean, who serves as a non-voting member. Membership is comprised of:

        1) One tenured faculty member at the rank of professor from each school or department, appointed by the dean; and

2) Tenured faculty members at the rank of professor elected by the voting faculty of the applicable college/school in accordance with procedures established by that faculty.

If specified by college/school by-laws, Area Committees may include associate deans as ex-officio (non-voting) members only. At least a third of the membership of each Area Committee consists of tenured faculty members without administrative responsibilities. In no case may the number of faculty members without administrative responsibilities be fewer than two. The membership of the Area Committee of the Libraries and School of Information Studies will have a different composition due to its unique academic role.

b. For University Tenure in Indianapolis Faculty

The Area Committee for faculty with the tenure home of University Tenure in Indianapolis is chaired by the Senior Vice Provost for Purdue in Indianapolis, who serves as a non-voting member. Membership is comprised of eight voting members as follows:

1. The chairs of the two Primary Committees for faculty with the tenure home of University Tenure in Indianapolis; and
2. Three Tenured faculty members at the rank of professor from each Primary Committee, elected by the voting faculty for each disciplinary area, in accordance with procedures established by Tenured faculty in each disciplinary area who hold the tenure home of University Tenure in Indianapolis. If a Computer Science faculty member is being considered for promotion, one of the Area Committee members must be from Computer Science. At least one-third of the membership of the Area Committee consists of Tenured faculty members without administrative responsibilities.

3. Campus Promotions Committee (Panel A)

The Campus Promotions Committee (Panel A) is chaired by the Provost, who serves as a non-voting member, and consists of all academic deans, the dean of Libraries and School of Information Studies, one tenured professor from each academic college and Purdue Libraries, and a number of additional at-large tenured faculty members so that there are equal numbers of administrators and faculty members without administrative appointments on the committee. Faculty representatives are selected by each academic college and Purdue Libraries for three-year terms following a college-specific process. The reappointment terms for these faculty members will be staggered across colleges to reduce turnover in any given year.

The dean of each college is responsible for determining and overseeing the process for selection of the college's representatives from among all tenured full professors in good standing. Each college should identify:

1) A primary representative
2) An alternate representative who will serve in place of the primary in situations when the primary is unable to serve, and
3) An at-large candidate for filling one of the at-large representative roles.

The Senate's Nominating Committee will select the at-large representatives (and alternates) from among the at-large candidates identified by each college. At-Large representatives serve for three-year terms. In the event that an at-large representative

cannot serve on Panel A, the corresponding alternate at-large representative will serve in place of that at-large representative.

For consideration of promotion and tenure cases for faculty holding University Tenure in Indianapolis, Panel A will be augmented by the Senior Vice Provost for Purdue in Indianapolis and one tenured full professor, in good standing, holding University Tenure in Indianapolis, selected by a process overseen by the Senior Vice Provost in Indianapolis, similar to that for the colleges. Both individuals will have voting rights for University Tenure in Indianapolis cases only.

If a vacancy occurs that must be filled when convening a college committee or the University Senate Nominating Committee is difficult or impossible, the President, in consultation with the University Senate chair, may appoint a tenured professor as the replacement, ensuring that every college is represented. The Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (VPFA) is invited to attend Panel A sessions as a non-voting advisor to the Provost.

As described in Procedures for Granting Academic Tenure and Promotion, it is in the best interest of the University and faculty that full and frank discussions occur during the deliberations of Promotion Committees. The confidentiality of remarks made at such meetings should, therefore, be carefully preserved. Recommendations against promotion may be discussed with the faculty member affected, as described in Procedures, in a discreet manner and without undue delay, by the appropriate department head or dean. Faculty will be advised of their promotion progress by their department head after the Primary Committee and by their dean or their designee after the Area Committee and Campus Promotions Committee meetings. Official notice will be sent to promoted faculty members after the President and the Board of Trustees approve the promotions.

Given the sensitive and confidential nature of discussions, all promotion committee meetings that discuss and vote on nominations for promotion require in person attendance. Exceptions need approval of the chair of the committee and the VPFA or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (VCAA).

Faculty on leave or sabbaticals are not precluded from attending (in person) and voting in promotion committee meetings which they belong to. Non-voting members should be limited to one faculty member to assist with running the meeting and/or clarifying policy. Exceptions need approval of the chair of the committee and the VPFA or VCAA.

Other than the requirements stipulated above, attendance requirements and the specific rules governing the meaning of participation for the members of the Primary, Area, and Campus Promotions Committees are determined by the committee chair or an academic officer with authority commensurate with or higher than the committee level, in consultation with committee members.

A final version of the promotion document should be shared with the Primary Committee at least two weeks before the Primary Committee meeting. If factual errors or inaccuracies were identified or additional external letters received during the two-week review period, a revised document must be shared 24 hours prior to the Primary Committee meeting. The promotion documents are frozen with no other changes 24 hours prior to the Primary Committee meeting. Any new accomplishments or updates occurring after the document is frozen should be communicated by the head and/or dean/EVPR. Colleges may adopt earlier time frames to share and/or freeze promotion documents however, any deviations from these timelines must provide Primary Committee members with a reasonable timeframe for review and corrections. Refer to the Operating Procedures for Granting Academic Tenure and Promotion for additional information.

**Relevant Policies, Procedures, and Criteria:**

Operating Procedures for Granting Academic Tenure and Promotion:
https://www.purdue.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/promotion/criteria-tenure-procedures.html

Academic Tenure and Promotion (I.B.2): https://www.purdue.edu/policies/academic-research-affairs/ib2.html

Criteria for Tenure and Promotion for the West Lafayette Campus:
https://www.purdue.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/promotion/criteria-tenure.html

Structure of Faculty Promotion Committees for Purdue West Lafayette:
https://www.purdue.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/promotion/promotion-committee-structure.html