PURDUE UNIVERSITY | Office of the Provost

To: Tenured, Tenure-Track, Research Faculty
From: Patrick Wolfe, Provost
Dan DeLaurentis, Executive Vice President for Research
Date: June 15, 2026
Subject: West Lafayette Campus Promotion Policy – Research Faculty

This memorandum has been prepared for the purpose of informing the members of the Research Faculty of Purdue University, and their promotion committees, of the policies and procedures that are followed in recommending them for promotion to higher academic rank. The policy on research faculty appointment and promotion and related operating procedures for research faculty appointment, review and promotion were revised on June 18, 2025. Faculty are encouraged to carefully read the policy and procedures documents in addition to this memo to become familiar with the updates.

SECTION I
GENERAL CRITERIA FOR PROMOTION

Purdue University values creative endeavor and scholarly activity in many forms. To be considered for promotion, a research faculty member should have demonstrated excellence in discovery and its scholarship. As described in the University and unit promotion criteria documents, performance in this area should be evaluated not on the basis of any single indicator, but rather by considering multiple elements as part of a holistic assessment. Many examples of excellence in faculty research activities across missions exist and must be recognized by members of the successive committees on promotion.

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 promotion nomination individually, interpreting achievements described in the nominating documents in the light of standards and criteria appropriate for the nominee's discipline and the college and University~~'s~~ 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 or those appointed to chair the Area Committee, 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 President's Office Form 36 Part II 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

Research Faculty

Promotion to Research Associate Professor
A successful candidate should have a significant record of accomplishment as a research faculty member, including a significant and sustained record of research leadership, scholarly accomplishment and externally funded research. The successful candidate must additionally show promise of continued professional growth, national recognition and contribution to the discovery mission of the University.

Promotion to Research Professor
Successful candidates must be nationally and internationally recognized authorities in their field and have established significant and sustained extramural research funding, which contributes to the discovery mission of the university.

SECTION III
GENERAL PROCEDURE

Before or during the first semester of each academic year, the head of each school, division, or department that reports to a dean, or the director of a Discovery Park District center/institute that employs Research Faculty and reports to the Executive Vice President for Research, shall convene the Primary Committee, the composition of which is described in the operating procedures for research faculty appointment, review and promotion. The chair of the Primary Committee for Research Faculty appointed in colleges is the department/school head, and for Research Faculty appointed in Discovery Park District centers/institutes the chair of the Primary Committee is the director of the DPD center/institute.

Research Faculty must be evaluated for promotion or retention in rank every six years. Refer to the Operating Procedures for the nomination process.

A Nomination for Promotion Form (President's Office Form 36) must be submitted for all Research Faculty who are nominated for promotion to Research Associate Professor or to Research Professor and receive a majority affirmative Area Committee vote. For more detail on completion of Form 36; the promotion 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 set forth in Indiana law.

A candidate should be given the opportunity to help create and review their 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. The candidate should also include documentation of mentoring within document where 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.

External evaluation letters are desirable for promotions of Research Faculty. However, a combination of internal and external letters is acceptable and may be more appropriate, depending on the duties of the position. A minimum of 3 letters is expected. External letters should be sought from peer or aspirational peer universities. Examples of the peer 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 from preeminent experts at other institutions, although justification in the form of expertise credentials is expected in all cases. Documentation should be included stating whether a letter writer was suggested by the candidate or by the department/school. Deans or the Vice President for Discovery Park District should certify that the lists of letter-writers meet these expectations for each case going forward in their college or Discovery Park District, respectively.

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 to the latter 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 Procedures document.

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 review 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 evaluations 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 external 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

The Primary and Area Promotion Committee compositions vary based on the hiring and primary appointment unit for the Research Faculty candidate being considered for promotion as follows:

1. Research Faculty appointed in colleges are reviewed for promotion by the Primary and Area Committees of their academic home unit (the composition of which is described here: https://www.purdue.edu/academics/faculty-affairs/promotion/promotion-commitee-structure.html) augmented as follows:
    i. At least one Research Faculty member at the rank of professor within the appropriate discipline serves on the Primary and Area Committees when Research Faculty are considered for promotion to professor.
    ii. At least one Research Faculty member at the associate professor or professor level within the appropriate discipline serves on the Primary and Area Committees when Research Faculty are considered for promotion to associate professor.
    iii. When the minimum number of Research Faculty is not available in the candidate's department for the Primary Committee, the chair of the Area Committee to which the Primary Committee reports appoints a Research Faculty member of another department, following consultation with the appropriate department head. In cases where no appropriate Research Faculty at the associate professor or professor level are employed on the campus considering the case for promotion, the standing Primary or Area Committees conducts the review.
    iv. Department heads with faculty members who have joint appointments should follow college guidelines for evaluating joint-appointed faculty. Units that lack college guidelines for this process should consult with the Office of the Provost on these cases.

2. Research Faculty appointed in Discovery Park District (DPD) centers/institutes are reviewed for promotion by Primary and Area Committees structured as follows:
    i. The Primary Committee for a DPD center/institute is chaired by the director of the DPD center/institute, who serves as a non-voting member unless the number of members on the committee is less than seven. Membership is comprised of all Research Faculty of higher rank in the respective DPD center/institute. The committee must consist of at least five Research Faculty at the associate or professor ranks for cases of promotion to the Associate Research Professor rank, and five Research Faculty at the professor rank for cases of promotion to the Research Professor rank. When this minimum number of Research
    Faculty is not available in the candidate's DPD center/institute, additional Research Faculty or tenured faculty of higher rank are appointed by the chair of the Area Committee to which the Primary Committee reports, following consultation with the appropriate DPD center/institute director.

ii. The Area Committee for a DPD center/institute is chaired by the EVPR or VP for DPD, who serves as a non-voting member. The committee must consist of at least five voting members. Membership of the DPD Area Committee is comprised of 1) each DPD center/institute director with a Research Faculty member being considered for promotion, and 2) Research Faculty members at the rank of professor, including those from the centers/institutes with a Research Faculty member being considered for promotion. Each DPD center/institute will vote to select their Research Professor nominee to represent them on the Area Committee. The Chair of the Area Committee will select an additional Research Faculty member from the center nominees so that the number of Research Faculty on the Area Committee exceeds the number of DPD center/institute directors by one. When this minimum number of Research Faculty is not available in DPD, additional Research Faculty or tenured professors are appointed by the chair of the Area Committee so that the number of professors on the committee exceeds the number of DPD center/institute directors by one.

The Campus Promotions Committee for review of Research cases (Panel C) is chaired by the Provost, who serves as a non-voting member. Membership is comprised of the Executive Vice President for Research (ex officio), two academic deans or associate deans from colleges/schools that employ Research Faculty, three faculty members appointed by the Provost from the Campus Promotions Committee Panel A, and three Research Professors appointed by the Provost. The Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (VPFA) is invited to attend Panel C 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 per 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 or center/institute director after the Primary Committee and by their dean or EVPR, or their designee, after the Area Committee and University 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:

Policy on Research Faculty Appointment and Promotion (VI.F.8): https://www.purdue.edu/policies/human-resources/vif8.html

Procedures for Research Faculty Appointment, Review and Promotion: https://www.purdue.edu/provost/procedures-promotion-research/

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