

**To:** Tenured, Tenure-Track Faculty  
**From:** Jay Akridge, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Diversity  
**Date:** April 22, 2021  
**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, procedures, and criteria for tenure/tenure track faculty that were approved by the Board of Trustees during the 2015-2016 academic year, as posted on the Office of the Provost website at <https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/index.html>. 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 this 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 this point 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 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. Form 36 and its instructions also contain 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 Promotion Committee members respond to each tenure or promotion nomination individually, interpreting the achievements described in the nominating documents in the light of standards appropriate for the nominee's discipline and the 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, who have an active role on the Campus Promotions Committee (Panel A), have corresponding obligations to convey university expectations to the members of their Area Committees.

This year, in response to the broad and varied effects of the pandemic on faculty work, candidates for promotion will 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 referees, 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 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 – President’s Office Form 36 (Form 36) - must be submitted for all faculty members being considered for tenure and/or promotion. 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 Provost’s Office [website](#).

A candidate should be given the opportunity to help create and review his/her 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 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 or possibly changes over time.

External 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 preminent experts at other institutions, although justification in the form of expertise credentials is expected in the latter case.

A minimum of 5 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 referees are aware that we hold all

promotion cases to the same criteria, the following statement must be included in every request for an external review 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.*

Additionally, 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 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 referees:

*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 referees 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, this practice is strongly discouraged.

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 the Graduate School, 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.

Each college's Area Committee is chaired by its dean, who serves as a non-voting member. Membership is comprised of: 1) each school and/or department head, 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 members. 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.

The Campus Promotions Committee (Panel A) is chaired by the Provost (who does not vote) and consists of the dean of the Graduate School, dean of Libraries and School of Information Studies, all academic deans, one tenured professor from each college, 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. At-large faculty members are elected by the University Senate's Nominating Committee for three-year terms, staggered in the first instance. In selecting candidates, the Nominating Committee will attend to the representation of college, interdisciplinary programs, and diversity in background and experience. In the event a vacancy occurs that must be filled at a time when it is difficult or impossible to convene the Nominating Committee, 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 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 his/her 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.

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.

Substantive changes should not be made to the tenure and/or promotion documents once they have been submitted to and voted on by the Primary Committee. New substantive information that is available before the Area Committee meeting, such as newly published works, new funding, and new recognition, should be discussed by the head at the Area Committee, or by the dean if new information becomes available prior to Panel A.

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

Promotion and Tenure Procedures:

<https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/criteria-tenure-procedures.html>

Promotion and Tenure Policy:

<https://www.purdue.edu/policies/academic-research-affairs/ib2.html>

Promotion and Tenure Criteria:

<https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/criteria-tenure.html>