

Tenure and Promotion Guidelines

Department of Natural Sciences

College of Arts and Sciences

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This document establishes a set of guidelines to evaluate candidates applying for tenure and promotion in the Department of Natural Sciences. These guidelines are designed to provide a comprehensive, balanced, and discipline-specific assessment of a faculty member's accomplishments and future potential. There are three main categories of achievement - teaching, scholarship, and service - that warrant careful consideration and reflection. The criteria by which these three areas will be assessed are described below.

Evaluation of Teaching

Effective teaching is fundamental to the University's mission, as it directly impacts student learning and development. High-quality instruction enhances the University's reputation, attracts and retains talented students, and prepares graduates to contribute meaningfully to society. Continuous improvement and growth in teaching should be consistently demonstrated throughout the tenure-track period. When evaluating teaching effectiveness, the department takes a holistic approach to mitigate the bias inherent in using a single assessment metric and considers the following factors, which are listed below:

1) Student evaluations

Numerical scores and written comments from students on the University's end-of-semester evaluation surveys provide insights into a candidate's teaching effectiveness, ability to engage students, and overall impact on student learning. While student evaluations are a useful tool, they should be carefully considered alongside other measures of teaching effectiveness, including those described below, to provide a more balanced and comprehensive evaluation of a candidate's performance.

2) Peer observations

Peer classroom observations are another approach to evaluate a candidate's teaching practices and effectiveness, allowing experienced colleagues to assess various aspects of teaching, such as pedagogical methods, classroom management, student engagement, and the clarity and organization of the material presented. This is an opportunity for a faculty peer to simultaneously recognize teaching excellence and identify areas for professional growth. All new Department of Natural Sciences faculty are assigned a teaching mentor, who will typically conduct peer observations unless alternative, mutually agreeable arrangements are made with the department chair. As part of the tenure and promotion process, at least one peer classroom observation per year will be conducted during the tenure-track period. A formal classroom observation template will be shared

with the peer observer and tenure-track faculty member. The completed observation document will be returned to the department chair after the candidate reflects on the peer feedback. This practice supports the development of a high-quality educational environment and fosters a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and collaboration among faculty.

3) Curriculum development and pedagogical innovations

A candidate's engagement in curriculum development and pedagogical innovations demonstrates their commitment to educational excellence and student success. Evidence of a candidate's engagement in high-quality curriculum development showcases their ability to design relevant, forward-thinking course content that meets the evolving needs of students and the academic discipline. A candidate's utilization of evidence-based pedagogical approaches and innovations highlights their dedication to adopting and refining teaching methods that enhance student learning, engagement, and success. Together, these efforts underscore the faculty member's role as a leader and innovator in their field of instruction.

Evaluation of Scholarship

Scholarship is a fundamental component of the tenure and promotion process, as it demonstrates a candidate's ability to contribute original knowledge to their field, enhance their academic reputation, and advance the University's mission. Engaging in scholarship showcases the candidate's expertise, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to scholarly excellence. When evaluating scholarship, the department recognizes Boyer's model of scholarship, which includes the following four categories: (1) Scholarship of Discovery, (2) Scholarship of Integration, (3) Scholarship of Application, and (4) Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. A candidate's scholarly contributions help to elevate the University's standing in the academic community and highlights the candidate's role in driving innovation and fostering a culture of inquiry on campus and within their field of expertise.

The department recognizes that the mentorship of undergraduate and/or graduate students in research plays a critical role in their development as scholars by providing them with personalized guidance, support, and opportunities for intellectual and professional growth. Publications and conference presentations that include students as co-authors and/or co-presenters are celebrated and encouraged. It is also recognized that high-quality mentoring activities are time intensive and may present productivity and scheduling challenges for research-active faculty. Scholarly efforts that directly impact the University student population will be considered part of a candidate's scholarship activities.

Candidates should articulate the development of a cohesive research theme and body of work that highlights their scholarly independence and establishes thought leadership. This includes demonstrating the ability to generate novel ideas, build expertise, collaborate strategically,

and publish select works as lead or corresponding author. Furthermore, a candidate's scholarly activities should reflect their potential for sustained productivity and growth. In the review of scholarly activity, appraisals will be solicited from professional colleagues in a candidate's area of expertise external to the university at the time of portfolio evaluation. Research outputs, such as peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, and grant applications are tangible indicators of a candidate's productivity, scholarly progression, and impact on their discipline. These expectations are described in more detail below:

1) Publications

The department places high priority on publications in peer-reviewed journals. Strategic collaborations with faculty inside and outside the LTU community, including those with former advisors and colleagues, are welcomed and encouraged. Collaborative activities enhance a candidate's scholarly productivity and positively impact the University. Reviews, editorials, conference proceedings, and book chapters are also encouraged in the promotion of scholarship development, when appropriate for the field and scope of a candidate's scholarly work.

At the time of tenure and promotion, it is expected that the applicant has published peer-reviewed journal articles that support the case that they have developed an independent program of scholarship. Additional publications in other areas of scholarship are supported and encouraged when appropriate for the field of expertise and interest of the candidate; however, the primary criterion for tenure and promotion is independent, programmatic "Scholarship of Discovery" work. Evidence of a candidate's continuous growth in scholarship and future plans for research projects, dissemination, and grant writing are important considerations when awarding tenure and promotion.

The department recognizes that the number of publications appropriate during the tenure-track period will vary according to a candidate's specific field of research. During the first year of employment on the tenure track, the department chair will meet with the new faculty member to discuss publication expectations in their field and will mentor the candidate in the creation of scholarship goals to meet by their mid-tenure review. During a candidate's mid-tenure review, which occurs in the spring semester of their third year on the tenure track, the candidate will assemble publication benchmarking data for three or more associate professors in their field at comparable institutions. Comparable faculty are those who have achieved tenure and promotion at institutions with similar departmental programs, teaching loads, and resources. Benchmarking data will be included as an appendix attached to the candidate's mid-tenure review portfolio for review by the dean, department chair, and committee. This data will be reviewed by all parties, with feedback provided in mid-tenure review letters and discussions with the candidate. The goal is to provide a roadmap for the second half of the candidate's tenure-track appointment as well as support for the candidate to reach their scholarship goals.

2) Conferences

The department recognizes that the presentation of scholarly work at local, regional, national, and/or international conferences is important for a candidate to disseminate their research findings and build their academic reputation. The department values the involvement of students as co-authors and/or presenters.

At the time of tenure and promotion, it is expected that the applicant has regularly disseminated their scholarly work at relevant conferences on an annual basis. While local and regional conferences are valuable experiences, a candidate should also aim to present at national and/or international conferences to promote their visibility, provide new networking opportunities, and to further enhance their academic reputation as well as that of the University. The department and college will financially support such endeavors.

3) Grants

The department acknowledges that seeking external funding is an important activity for tenure-track faculty, significantly influencing their research capabilities and professional growth. Securing external funding also contributes to the broader academic and institutional environment, enhancing the quality and impact of a candidate's research endeavors. Historically, there has not been a requirement to secure external grants; therefore, the absence of funding is not construed as negative. However, a continuous, high-quality effort in grant writing is essential. The composition of internal grant applications to secure seed funding and/or support for student researchers is also celebrated and encouraged.

At the time of tenure and promotion, it is expected that the applicant has made a significant and sustained effort to apply for external funding, typically to federal agencies such as the NSF or NIH. In addition, private foundation grants and other innovative funding sources should be considered and pursued as appropriate for the candidate's field of expertise and interests. The candidate's grant writing experience will have demonstrated the strong possibility of obtaining grant funding and the leadership required to successfully manage a grant. Reviewer feedback will be considered evidence of high-quality grant writing and should be included in the candidate's tenure and promotion portfolio.

Evaluation of Service

Service is an important component of a full-time faculty member's role, encompassing a wide range of activities that contribute to the academic community, the institution, and the profession at large. When evaluating service, the department considers evidence of meaningful activities at the department, college, and university level as well as efforts that impact the broader community that serve to improve the overall campus environment and positively represent the scientific enterprise and profession. Service activities are outside the typical day-to-day duties of teaching and scholarship and include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- 1) Service to Students:** Academic advising, mentoring, serving as a faculty advisor for a student organization, writing letters of recommendation, participating in activities that enhance student success and retention.
- 2) Service to the Department, College, and University:** Participating in faculty governance through Faculty Senate, Faculty Council, Faculty Research Council, or search committees, committee and task force work, assessment, course coordination, course and/or program development and review work, participating in recruitment activities such as LTU Visit Days, Campus Open House events, Exploration Day, summer camp programs, and other outreach programs.
- 3) Professional Service to the Community:** Participating in professional societies, serving as a grant proposal and/or manuscript reviewer, serving as a conference symposium organizer and/or presider, science-related community outreach and service, public lectures.

At the time of tenure and promotion, it is expected that the applicant has engaged in meaningful service activities at multiple levels of the University and has utilized their professional expertise to engage with the broader community. The applicant should highlight any leadership roles as well as their commitment to sustained service activities and growth beyond the tenure-track period.

Professional Development Activities

Engaging in internal and/or external professional development activities demonstrates a candidate's dedication to staying current in teaching, scholarship, and service within their field of expertise. By participating in relevant workshops, conferences, seminars, and other developmental opportunities, a candidate shows their proactive approach to professional growth, which is a key indicator of their potential for long-term success and leadership within the University.

Revision Process

Any revisions to these guidelines must be presented to the Natural Sciences full-time faculty for review, followed by a comment period of at least one week. Following the review of feedback, an anonymous vote will be conducted on the updated guidelines. The updated guidelines will be adopted if more than 50% of the full-time faculty vote in favor of the changes.