

POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 236

TO: All Instructional Faculty
Deans and Department Heads

FROM: Charles W. Steger

DATE: June 7, 2004

SUBJECT: Revision of Faculty Handbook Section 2.8.4
on Criteria for Promotion and Tenure

Approved by CFA: February 13, 2004
First Reading, University Council: March 1, 2004
Approved by University Council: April 5, 2004
Approved by President: April 5, 2004
Approved by the Board of Visitors: June 7, 2004
Effective Date: Fall 2004

The University Council and the Board of Visitors, on recommendation of the Commission on Faculty Affairs, approved a resolution modifying language concerning the criteria for promotion and/or tenure.

Following is the text of that resolution:

WHEREAS, the Commission has been systematically reviewing policies related to promotion and tenure over the last two years following recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee appointed by then-Interim Provost Jim Bohland; and

WHEREAS, the university-level promotion and tenure committee identified inconsistencies in the application of standards for promotion and/or tenure among the colleges, and that language calling for “....signs of genuine excellence in one or two areas” contributed to that inconsistency of interpretation; and

WHEREAS, additional minor editing is recommended by the Commission to improve clarity and understanding of the general criteria for promotion and/or tenure;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that section 2.8.4 of the Faculty Handbook concerning criteria for promotion and tenure be modified as recommended below:

2.8.4 Evaluation Procedures for Promotion and Tenure

Promotion to a higher rank and appointment with tenure may be granted to faculty members on a regular faculty appointment who have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in an appropriate combination of instructional, research, outreach, and other professional activities. Every faculty member should maintain a current curriculum vitae, with copies filed in the department and college (or equivalent academic units, as appropriate). The curriculum vitae together with annual reports, student evaluations, reprints of publications, reference letters, and other similar documents comprise a dossier, which furnishes the principal basis for promotion and tenure decisions.

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 or chair; by a college committee and the dean; and by a university committee and the provost.

Each candidate for **tenure and/or promotion to associate professor** ~~promotion or tenure~~ will be evaluated in the light of the triple mission of the university: instruction, research, and outreach. Although not all candidates can be expected to have equal levels of commitment or equal responsibilities in each of these missions, a high level of general competence is expected, in recognition of the need for flexibility in the future establishment of priorities in academic programs. Beyond that basic foundation of competence, decisions related to tenure ~~and/or~~ promotion to associate professor will **require evidence** ~~be significantly influenced by signs of~~ **genuine** excellence in at least one areas.

The award of tenure is based on the achievement of distinction in an area of learning and the prediction of eminence throughout the individual's professional career. ~~Should the candidate's strength be sharply concentrated in only one of these missions, the~~ documentation and evaluation should recognize some significant impact of the candidate's contributions beyond the borders of the university. If the primary strength is in instruction, there should be recognition that the candidate's pedagogical contributions have influence beyond the immediate classroom; if in research, that there is significant impression on colleagues nationally; if in outreach that the influence of the contributions reaches beyond the immediate clientele.

Each candidate for the rank of professor must demonstrate a high level of competence in an appropriate combination of instruction, outreach, and professional activities relevant to their assignment. Because of the university's mission and commitment as a major research institution, successful candidates for the rank of professor must demonstrate excellence in research, scholarship, or creative achievement, as appropriate for the candidate's discipline and assignment.

~~The university's mission and commitment as a major research institution requires high accomplishment for promotion to professor. Faculty members must demonstrate excellence in at least two of the three aspects of the university's mission, one of which must be research, scholarship, or creative achievement broadly defined as appropriate for the various disciplines, and reflecting the faculty member's assignment.~~—Promotion to the rank of professor is contingent upon national or international recognition as an outstanding scholar and educator.

The university recognizes and encourages appropriate international involvement of its faculty as a mission of the university that cuts across the three traditional missions of instruction, research, and outreach. Occasionally faculty members are placed on international assignments at full salary from the university, with responsibilities that require their residence far from the campus for a considerable period. Under such circumstances, faculty members should be given the usual consideration for tenure, promotion, and salary advancement, with the recognition that international assignments can be an important stimulus to professional growth. The University Committee on International Programs has developed a guideline on the "Employment and Evaluation of Virginia Tech Personnel on International Assignment," which should be recognized by all evaluation committees.

In cases of tenure recommendation—besides evaluation of the candidate's professional abilities—consideration should be given, at all stages of evaluation and review, to future departmental program directions and concern for maintaining currency and flexibility by preserving opportunities to appoint new faculty members in the various sub-fields of the department.

Levels of expectation will vary, of course, with the level of the decision. Where probationary reappointments will recognize, in part, perceived potential instead of accomplishment, recommendations for tenure should suggest that the potential is being achieved and should imply few, if any, lingering doubts about the value of the candidate to the department's program for a "lifetime." And promotion to professor, which leaves limited

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opportunity for further university recognition of professional development, should be reserved for those whose achievements are broad and noteworthy.

Besides consideration of specific professional criteria, evaluation for promotion or tenure should consider the candidate's integrity, professional conduct, and ethics. To the extent that such considerations are significant factors in reaching a negative recommendation, they should be documented as part of the formal review process.