

**Department of Communication
Virginia Tech**

**Guidelines for Promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure &
Promotion to Professor**

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The Department of Communication at Virginia Tech recognizes the value of each of the foci of the tripartite mission of a land-grant institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge. Candidates for promotion to associate professor with tenure and for promotion to professor shall be evaluated, therefore, on the basis of contributions to research or creative activity, instruction, and service or outreach. The purpose of this document is to provide those candidates guidance beyond that delineated in the Faculty Handbook. Candidates should recognize that the Faculty Handbook establishes the standards the university expects for tenure and promotion, and it should be consulted regularly by the faculty member.

While we recognize that professional excellence can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, because Virginia Tech is a land-grant, Carnegie Foundation Research Extensive institution with an explicit primary focus on research, candidates for promotion at any level must recognize that an observable program of research is essential to success. At a minimum, the program of research must demonstrate that the candidate has achieved a national or international reputation as an independent scholar.

The quality of a faculty member's scholarly work is key in assessing that individual's potential and, therefore, justification for promotion. It is difficult, however, to avoid the methodology of counting, since quantity is often easier to assess than quality. Throughout this document and in the accompanying Appendix, numbers are provided as guidelines rather than checkpoints. Implicit in the Appendix is the understanding that the faculty member must demonstrate quality. If that quality is demonstrable, a reasonable interpretation of the indicators is that they represent a minimally plausible case. Some indicators for assessing quality are discussed later in this document.

In addition to contributions to the research and teaching mission of the department, all faculty are obligated to contribute to the shared work of the department, including appropriate contributions in the area of departmental service. While much of academic work is individual and evaluated through contributions to the discipline, external contributions must be balanced with local commitments.

Promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure

Promotion to associate professor with tenure should “imply few, if any, lingering doubts

about the value of a candidate to the department's program for a 'lifetime'" (Faculty Handbook 2006, p. 31).

Thus, for promotion to the rank of associate professor with tenure, a faculty member must demonstrate

- (a) a record of effective instruction in the classroom, in advising and mentoring students, and in the development of curriculum and pedagogy;
- (b) a significant body of published research that is held in high regard by persons knowledgeable of the field;
- (c) service to the department, and service to the college, university or the community beyond the university.

University guidelines require the faculty member to demonstrate a high level of competence in two of the three areas and excellence in the third. Faculty in the Department of Communication are encouraged to demonstrate that excellence in the area of research.

The awarding of tenure is a long-term commitment by the university and, therefore, requires evidence of both excellence in past performance and forecast of continued excellence. Benchmarks for the evaluation of excellence and promise, therefore, are whether the candidate's work advances the field, reflects increasing professional development, is recognized as valuable by experts in the field, and demonstrates potential for increased contributions to the body of knowledge in the discipline.

Promotion to Professor

Promotion to the rank of professor requires

- (a) a record of effective teaching in the classroom and commendable advising of undergraduate students and/or mentoring of graduate students;
- (b) a nationally or internationally recognized body of published research that contributes in significant ways to knowledge in the discipline;
- (c) service to the department, college or university, and service or outreach that goes noticeably beyond the boundaries of the university and constructively applies knowledge for the benefit of society.

University guidelines require that promotion to professor be awarded only to faculty members who have achieved national or international acclaim in their areas of expertise and have achieved excellence in research and one of the other two areas.

Measures of Quality and Productivity

The tenure and promotion decision is based on a broad range of factors demonstrating a candidate's productivity and contribution to the department, university, and discipline.

Indicators of quality may vary according to the nature of the candidate's scholarship, teaching assignments, and outreach efforts.

This section is designed to provide guidance and neither to limit or exclude contributions from consideration. Additional indicators of quality not listed in this document may be appropriate to a candidate's case.

The shared standards and expectations provided in this document are designed to direct the work of individuals toward the long-term success of the Department of Communication in all its mission areas.

Indicators: Research and Scholarship

Research and scholarship are fundamental to the department, college and university and all faculty should be actively involved in scholarly or creative pursuits. Candidates for associate professor with tenure should establish a record of sufficient quantity and quality to remove all lingering doubt about their productivity as scholars. Productivity includes consideration of both quantity and quality.

The Appendix offers general standards for quantity. Faculty Handbook Section 2.8.4.4 lists all categories of scholarly activity to be considered for review. The guidelines for quantity recognize the differing scope and nature of scholarly activities conducted by communication faculty. Whatever the nature of activity, candidates must demonstrate ongoing research productivity.

The Faculty Handbook 2006 provides the following guidance in considerations of quality:

While both the quality and quantity of a candidate's achievements should be examined, quality should be the primary consideration. Quality should be defined largely in terms of the work's importance in the progress or redefinition of a field or discipline, the establishment of relationships among disciplines, the improvement of practitioner performance, or in terms of the creativity of the thought and methods behind it. Original achievements in conceptual frameworks, conclusions, and methods should be regarded more highly than work making minor variations in or repeating familiar themes in the literature or the candidate's previous work. Determination of excellence is difficult and requires informed professional judgment

Quantity is often easier to measure than quality, since comparisons can be made more readily. However, because scholars and artists sometimes—and for good reasons—disseminate essentially the same information or exhibit the same work, it is important to note the relationships among various publications, exhibitions, and performances where redundancy or duplication appears to occur. (2.8.4.4)

Because Department of Communication faculty engage in diverse scholarly activities, no single set of criteria are appropriate in all cases. The following indicators, among others, may be considered to establish quality:

- Awards and other scholarly recognitions for research and creative endeavors;
- Journal standards of excellence as indicated by acceptance/rejection rates, externally established impact factors, reputation of review board, etc.;
- Publisher reputation and selectivity as indicated by acceptance/rejection rates; awards or other recognitions;
- Dissemination of creative works in high-quality venues;
- Citations in work in other scholarly works;
- Extramural support for scholarly endeavors;
- Invited publication of scholarship or presentation of creative works;
- External reviews of scholarly or creative activity

External reviews conducted by scholars at peer-institutions offer additional insight into the quality of a candidate's scholarly works.

Indicators: Teaching and Instruction

The Department of Communication expects all faculty to be effective teachers and advisors. The following indicators, among other possible evidence of excellence, are used to assess contributions in the area of teaching and instruction.

- Awards or recognition for teaching and advising.
- Summary scores of students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness.
- Qualitative comments from students on teaching effectiveness.
- Unsolicited correspondence from students.
- Peer reviews of teaching.
- Special achievements of former undergraduate and graduate students.
- Volume and quality of teaching and advising as determined by the department head and personnel committee.
- Awards of grant funding for teaching and advising activities.
- New course creation.
- Innovations and changes in existing courses.
- Peer-reviewed articles in pedagogical journals.
- Innovations developed in teaching and advising.
- Invited lectures on teaching, curriculum or pedagogy.

Indicators: Service and Outreach

Communication lends itself in particular to service and outreach to a variety of constituencies. Such service is valued of all faculty, but expectations are greater for promotion to professor than for promotion to associate professor with tenure. Faculty

Handbook 2006 section 2.8.4.4 details the categories for contributions in service and outreach.

The following indicators are used to assess the quality of contributions to service and outreach.

- Awards and recognitions related to service and outreach.
- Volume and quality of departmental service as determined by the department head and personnel committee.
- Unsolicited or solicited evaluations of contributions to service on college and university committees.
- Leadership in college and university service activities.
- Leadership roles in professional associations and scholarly or academic organizations.
- Selection as a journal editor;
- Estimates of journal editor performance such as journal submission acceptance/rejection; review board caliber; awards.
- Selection for service on editorial boards of journals, standing grant-review panels or similar scholarly service;
- Selection to serve as a reviewer of manuscripts, grant applications, academic programs, candidates for promotion; judging performances, shows or other creative output;
- Participant evaluation of presentations to civic and professional associations;
- Contributions to public policy through testimony before governing bodies, membership on government boards or councils, membership in organizations involved in policy matters and similar activities.