

Standards and Criteria for Promotion and Tenure Decisions

Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences

To be appended to [Department Promotion and Tenure Guidelines](#)

These statements are intended to:

1. Promote clarity regarding Departmental minimum standards and types of evidence considered when judging a candidate for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor and promotion to Professor,
2. Promote openness about our measures of performance, approaches for constructive criticism about areas of concern during pre-tenure decisions, and guidance for improvement, and
3. Ensure confidentiality during deliberations.

We seek to address herein issues such as lack of transparency in promotion criteria, confusion over the definition of scholarship, and disproportionate service demands. The candidate must demonstrate quality of scholarship, which includes research, instruction, and service. We provide numbers that correspond with past practices and that define an “initially plausible case” for tenure and promotion. Most candidates will come forward with stronger dossiers than the standards described here. Our intent is to help candidates assess their progress toward achieving a compelling case for promotion or tenure. Candidates are encouraged to discuss these standards and their own progress with their mentors and other senior faculty. This document is not meant as a substitute for, but rather as a supplement to, regular interactions among colleagues regarding a candidate’s development and progress towards tenure and promotion..

Fundamentally, the awarding of tenure is a recognition of excellent performance that gives reason to anticipate a vibrant lifetime career at the University. The body of scholarly work will be assessed by the following questions:

- Does the work advance the field?
- Does the work reflect increasing professional competence?
- Does the work reflect standards of excellence in research, teaching, and practice?
- Is the work valued by other professionals as evidenced by peer reviews, application, citations, awards, or other recognitions?

Promotion to Associate Professor with Award of 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 2009](#); Section 2.8.4). Candidates for tenure and promotion are expected to be both active research scholars and effective teachers of undergraduate and graduate students, demonstrating substantial scholarship and ability to promote learning through

on-campus or off-campus education programs. The essence of scholarship is the innovative discovery, transmission, and application of knowledge that is based in the ideas and methods of disciplines, professions, and interdisciplinary fields in or associated with fisheries and wildlife sciences.

We recognize that faculty members, including non-University faculty, have unique positions and varied appointments for teaching, research, and engagement. We support promotion of individuals who have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in a combination of instructional, research, outreach, extension, and other professional activities appropriate to their appointment. The Department Head will provide a specific position description for each candidate, specifically addressing any issues of disproportionate teaching, service, or administrative load. For reference, a 50% teaching appointment is normally 1-1/2 to 2 courses per year. Greater or lesser teaching loads would lead to lesser or greater expectation, respectively, for achievement in other mission areas. We acknowledge that teaching of laboratory courses is more time-consuming than that for non-laboratory courses. Similarly, faculty who are asked to develop multiple new courses, even if they end up teaching two per year, face a heavier burden than those who assume delivery of existing courses.

RESEARCH:

Standard metrics of research performance include research publications, invited research presentations, external research funding, and the mentoring of graduate students. A Fisheries and Wildlife faculty member who meets or exceeds expectations for promotion to Associate Professor will demonstrate an emerging national reputation and typically has:

(a) published 10 or more research articles in high-quality, refereed journals, some of which are from research performed largely while a faculty member at Virginia Tech. These publications primarily should describe the results of her/his independent research and research done collaboratively with graduate students. Books, book chapters, edited or co-edited collections of articles, reviews, or awarded patents may substitute for some, but not all, of the publications. Online publications count equally with print publications, provided they appear in professionally refereed collections. Quality of papers is more important than numbers and candidates should provide information to document quality. We value *excellent basic and applied science with relevance to conservation or management of natural resources*.

(b) presented presentations on his/her research at nationally recognized meetings or peer academic institutions;

(c) demonstrated the ability to obtain funding at a level appropriate for long-term support of his/her independent research program; and

(d) mentored an average of 2-3 graduate students per year after the first year, and have mentored 2-3 M.S. students to successful completion of degrees and started mentoring

Ph.D. students. While mentorship of graduate students is expected, mentorship of post-doctoral fellows is recognized as a positive contribution.

TEACHING

On the basis of student evaluations, peer reviews, awards, and participation in efforts to improve teaching (including departmental, college, or university activities related to teaching, teaching forums at professional meetings, visiting other instructors' classes, and reading the literature), the candidate must demonstrate effectiveness as a teacher in the classroom, in student advising, in his/her writings, in direction of graduate and undergraduate research, or other forms of instruction involving students. Demonstrating a new or unique contribution to the teaching program is valued. Candidates who are assigned to take over existing courses should document how they have improved and added to the course.

Candidates whose record reflects difficulty in teaching also must be able to document steps they have taken to correct these problems, and the record must indicate, in the form of student evaluations, peer evaluations, or other means, that significant improvement has occurred.

- (a) Student evaluations of teaching will be compared to historical evaluations for the same course (rather than just to a departmental or college average), and the candidate's own trajectory will be examined, to determine performance.
- (b) Peer evaluations of teaching typically will be conducted in the second year of teaching a course, will be conducted consistently with discussion and feedback, and will follow an approved protocol.
- (c) Candidates whose teaching performance is considered strong based on student and/or peer reviews of teaching are encouraged to participate in mechanisms to advance their pedagogy. Candidates needing improvement are expected to demonstrate participation in multiple mechanisms to improve their teaching.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Research and teaching expectations for Extension Specialists will be set as negotiated during initial appointment or annual re-adjustment of position expectations.

Standard metrics used to measure extension performance include number of peer-reviewed extension bulletins, workshops, short-courses, and grants and contracts.

On the basis of client evaluations, peer reviews, awards, and participation in workshops and short-courses related to cooperative extension, the candidate must demonstrate effectiveness in developing and delivering research-based educational programs to a well-defined off-campus audience or client base.

Adopted October 2, 2009

A Fisheries and Wildlife Extension Specialist who successfully meets or exceeds expectations for promotion to Associate Professor will demonstrate an emerging national reputation and typically has:

(a) published 10 or more extension publications since appointment to faculty at Virginia Tech. These publications should at least in part describe the extension of her/his independent research program. Books, book chapters, journal articles, edited or co-edited collections of articles, reviews, or awarded patents may substitute for some, but not all, of the publications. Online publications count equally with print publications, provided they appear in recognized and professionally refereed collections;

(b) presented 3-5 invited seminars on his/her extension activities at nationally recognized meetings or peer academic institutions.

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement can be interpreted broadly to mean participation in activities that contribute to the life of the department, the College, the University, the discipline, and society on issues relevant to the candidate's expertise. Successful candidates for tenure and/or promotion to associate professor are expected to attend departmental meetings, to render effective service on student and departmental committees, and, if asked to serve, limited service on College and University committees and governing bodies. Reasonable expectation might be service on one departmental committee per year, with additional service on college, university, or search committees in the last year or two before candidacy for promotion and tenure. Traditional methods of evaluating scholarly faculty productivity (grants and scholarly publication) may not be adequate for evaluating scholarly engagement. Engagement in the form of university-community collaboration is recognized expressly in the promotion and tenure process as important faculty work. Service to the profession includes reviews of manuscripts and proposals, efforts to increase representation of women and minorities in the institution and profession, moderating sessions at professional meetings, serving as an officer or on committees of professional societies, and work on review panels. Organizing symposia at professional meetings and serving on editorial boards of journals are valued, but not expected of most candidates at this stage.

We expect all candidates for tenure to demonstrate relationships with communities and partners that are appropriate for the scholarly exchange of ideas relevant to his/her expertise. This may be demonstrated by patents, participation in continuing education, in-service training of cooperative extension agents, regional, national or international research or development committees, commissions, or centers, international education, service learning and experiential education, and scholarly publication in outlets not typically read by the candidate's peers. Publications generally are expected to be peer-reviewed; however, we recognize that this scholarship of engagement often involves non-traditional modes of peer review, including review by partners, clients, and multi- or inter-disciplinary professionals.

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Some degree of involvement in service to institution, discipline, and society would be expected of successful candidates for promotion and tenure.

AWARD OF TENURE TO CANDIDATES FOR WHOM AN INITIAL APPOINTMENT WAS AT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

A strong dossier for tenure will approximate the criteria applied to the period of university service for the rank of Associate Professor as described above.

This table summarizes the expectations at the 2-year and 4-year review of tenure-track faculty.

	2-year review	4-year review
Teaching	Evidence of satisfactory classroom teaching at undergraduate and graduate levels. Clear and up-to-date syllabi. Available and knowledgeable for undergraduate advising and graduate student mentoring. Participation in teaching workshops.	Presentation of candidate's statement expressing a cogent statement of teaching philosophy. Good classroom teaching, successful effort to improve, reliable student mentoring and academic advising. Good peer reviews of instruction.
Research	Publications from faculty member's own doctoral and postdoctoral research studies. Grant support for research.	Completion of some research projects Regular (~2/year) scholarly publications of high quality and high impact. Grants and contracts received to support research program. Scholarly publications with mentored students. Candidate's statement includes focused research plans with high likelihood of successful completion.
Engagement	Support to governance of department, and possibly also to college, university, profession, or society.	Initiative and responsible actions to address needs of students, department, college, profession, and/or society.

PROMOTION TO FULL PROFESSOR

Candidates for full professor are expected to have made important contributions to their chosen area of specialization and to possess a national or international reputation for excellent scholarship in his/her specific discipline. We recognize that while there will likely be much variation among candidates at this level, there is an expectation of high contributions in the engagement mission.

TEACHING

On the basis of student evaluations, peer reviews, awards, and participation in departmental and/or college or university activities related to teaching, the candidate must demonstrate effectiveness and maturity as a teacher in the classroom, in student advising, in direction of graduate or undergraduate research, or other forms of instruction involving students.

Candidates whose record reflects difficulty in teaching also must be able to document steps they have taken to correct these problems, and the record must reflect, in the form of student evaluations, peer evaluations, or other means, that significant improvement has occurred.

RESEARCH

Promotion to Professor depends on demonstration of significant achievement in the research area. Standard metrics of research performance include research publications, invited research presentations, external research funding, and the mentoring of graduate students with consideration of their career trajectories. A Fisheries and Wildlife faculty member who successfully meets or exceeds expectations for promotion to full professor typically has:

(a) published research articles in high-quality refereed journals at an annual rate of 3 for a period of at least four years immediately prior to consideration. Some of these articles per year should be co-authored with graduate students. Publications primarily should describe the results of her/his independent research program. Books, book chapters, edited or co-edited collections of articles, reviews, or awarded patents may substitute for some, but not all, of the publications. Online publications count equally with print publications, provided they appear in recognized and professionally refereed collections. For promotion to Full Professor, it is expected that the faculty member is recognized nationally or internationally for his/her research as indicated by the number of journal articles that are highly cited or have made major direct impact on management or conservation practices. Quality of papers in which the candidate took a leadership role is more important than numbers. We value *excellent basic and applied science with relevance to conservation or management of natural resources*.

(b) presented invited seminars on his/her research at national or international meetings or at peer academic institutions, and received a research award in the four-year period immediately prior to consideration;

(c) maintained external funding at a level appropriate for long-term support of his/her independent research program for a period of at least four years immediately prior to consideration. Funding is expected to include major research grant(s) for which the candidate is principal investigator;

(d) has mentored eight or more graduate students, including at least two Ph.D. students, to successful completion of degrees since the award of tenure or the promotion to Associate. While mentorship of graduate students is expected, mentorship of postdoctoral fellows is seen as an indicator of a mature research program.

Successful candidates generally will have a record that approximates or exceeds these departmental expectations. In rare cases, should the candidate fall *significantly* short in a single area, other compensatory measures could substitute in demonstrating qualification for promotion. In addition to these metrics, evidence of the impact and national and international recognition of the candidate's research in the form of external assessments, reviews, citations, or awards, is essential.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Research and teaching expectations for Extension Specialists will be set as negotiated during initial appointment or annual re-adjustment of position expectations.

Standard metrics used to measure extension performance include number of peer-reviewed extension bulletins, workshops, short-courses, and grants and contracts.

On the basis of client evaluations, peer reviews, awards, and participation in workshops and short-courses related to cooperative extension, the candidate must demonstrate effectiveness in developing and delivering research-based educational programs to a well-defined off-campus audience or client base.

A Fisheries and Wildlife faculty member who successfully meets or exceeds expectations for promotion to Professor will demonstrate a national reputation and typically has:

(a) maintained a steady output of 3 extension publications per year for a period of at least four years immediately prior to consideration. These publications should at least in part describe the results of her/his independent research program. Books, book chapters, journal articles, edited or co-edited collections of articles, reviews, or awarded patents may substitute for some, but not all, of the publications. Online publications count equally with print publications, provided they appear in recognized and professionally refereed collections;

(b) presented numerous invited seminars on his/her extension activities at nationally recognized meetings or peer academic institutions.

ENGAGEMENT

Successful candidates for tenure and/or promotion to Professor are expected to demonstrate a strong leadership role in their service. Service can be interpreted broadly to mean participation in activities that contribute to the life of the department, the University, the discipline, and society. Candidates are expected to have contributed to improving the departmental environment, through support to untenured faculty, efforts to create a more diverse and welcoming department, and effective service as chair of departmental, college, or university committees.

Traditional methods of evaluating scholarly faculty productivity (grants and scholarly publication) may not be adequate for evaluating scholarly engagement. Engagement in the form of university-community collaboration is recognized as important faculty work. Engagement cuts across and is embedded in all missions of the University.

We expect all candidates for promotion to Professor to demonstrate relationships with communities and partners that are appropriate for the scholarly exchange of ideas relevant to his/her expertise. This may be demonstrated by patents, participation in continuing education, in-service training of cooperative extension agents, regional, national or international research or development committees, commission, or centers, international education, service learning and experiential education, and scholarly publication in outlets not typically read by the candidate's peers. Publications are expected to be peer-reviewed; however, we recognize that this scholarship involves non-traditional modes of peer review, including review by partners, clients, and multi- or inter-disciplinary professionals.

AWARD OF TENURE TO CANDIDATES FOR WHOM AN INITIAL APPOINTMENT WAS AT PROFESSOR

A strong dossier for tenure will approximate the criteria applied to the period of university service for the rank of Full Professor as described above.