



## Faculty Promotion and Tenure Policies and Procedures

**Policy Type:** Board of Visitors

**Responsible Office:** Academic and Faculty Affairs

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### Policy Statement and Purpose

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Virginia Commonwealth University herewith establishes its policies and procedures for faculty promotion and tenure. This document institutes a unified promotion and tenure system throughout the University, while allowing variations in the academic units to accommodate their specific needs.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

### Table of Contents

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Who Should Know This Policy.....	2
Contacts.....	2
Procedures.....	2
Goal, Objectives and Authority.....	2
Faculty Ranks.....	5
Appointments.....	9
University Promotion and Tenure Policy Review Committee.....	16
School Promotion and Tenure Committee .....	17

University Appeal Committee .....	18
Academic Review Procedures for Promotion and Tenure for Tenured, Tenure-eligible, and Term (Non-tenure) Faculty.....	19
Administrative Review Procedures for Academic Personnel Actions .....	24
Appeal Process.....	26
The President and Board of Visitors.....	27
Procedure for Termination of Employment of Tenured Faculty Members.....	28
Procedures for Review and Amendment of this Document.....	33
Forms.....	34
Related Documents.....	34
Revision History.....	34
FAQ.....	35

## **Who Should Know This Policy** \_\_\_\_\_

All faculty eligible for tenure and promotion are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.

## **Contacts** \_\_\_\_\_

The office of Academic and Faculty Affairs officially interprets this policy. The office of Academic and Faculty Affairs is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy *Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures* through the appropriate governance structures. Please direct policy questions to the office of Academic and Faculty Affairs.

## **Procedures** \_\_\_\_\_

### **1.0 Goal, Objectives and Authority**

#### **1.1 Goal**

Excellence is the original and continuing goal of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). A prerequisite of this goal is the recruitment and retention of a distinguished faculty. This requires the appointment, promotion and tenure of a faculty in a way that encourages excellence in the creation, dissemination and application of new knowledge and artistic expression and fosters an atmosphere of free inquiry and innovation in a global setting.

Appointment, promotion and tenure are based on the merit of the individual, consideration of comparable achievement in the faculty member's particular field, and the faculty member's value to the mission, needs and resources of the university. Central to the appointment, promotion and tenure process is VCU's commitment to recognize and reward faculty members who help fulfill the mission and vision of the university.

Recognized and rewarded contributions include those made to the intellectual and academic success of a diverse student body through teaching; to research and discovery that advances knowledge, inspires creativity and improves human health through scholarship; and to the global engagement of students, faculty, and staff that transforms lives and communities through service in support of the university's mission.

Faculty members may be recognized and rewarded for academic work conducted in an integrated way by using their research to inform their teaching; using their service and teaching as sources of ideas for their research; and using their teaching as opportunities to provide service to the community, as well as to foster student learning.

Promotion in rank reflects quality of performance in appropriate teaching, scholarship and service as noted above. Tenure shows the university's continuing commitment to the faculty member, whose position shall not be terminated without adequate reason. The promotion and tenure system at VCU is designed to foster:

- Academic freedom of thought, teaching, learning, inquiry and expression
- Fair and equitable treatment for all individuals

- Appropriate participation by the faculty, the student body, the administration, and the Board of Visitors
- A normal succession and infusion of new faculty members.

## **1.2 Objectives**

The objectives of the system described in this document are:

- Promotion of an engaged, learner-centered environment that fosters inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global setting
- Faculty achievement to the highest attainable degree within the context and resources of the university
- Support of university goals and support of the diverse missions and characteristics of its individual academic units
- Commitment to administrative management which provides for fair and reasonable allocation of time and resources
- Assurance of the financial integrity of the institution
- Sufficient flexibility to permit modifications of programs, curricula and academic organizational units to meet changing academic, institutional and societal needs.

## **1.3 Relationship of Schools and Departments to University Promotion and Tenure Policy**

Each school<sup>1</sup> and each department of a school where recommendations for academic appointments are initiated shall establish written guidelines for promotion and tenure. The policies and procedures for granting expedited promotion and tenure shall also be established at the unit level. Unit guidelines shall be consistent with the university-wide policies in this document, but shall also specify the details involved in meeting the particular goals and objectives of those units.

Promotion in rank and tenure are considered initiated wherever the budgetary and signature authority for Personnel Actions Forms resides. If promotion and tenure are initiated only at the school level, guidelines shall be written only for the school. If promotion and tenure are initiated at the departmental level, guidelines shall be written for both the department and the school. The guidelines for the procedures and criteria for a given department of a school may be identical to the guidelines of that school.

Guidelines shall define tenured, tenure-eligible, and term (non-tenure) faculty positions and the relationship of the unit's promotion and tenure system to the unit's work plan and individual faculty member work plans developed in accordance with the Faculty Roles and Rewards Policy<sup>2</sup>. The guidelines of each school and each department must be consistent with university policy but shall include procedural variations, composition of committees and criteria for promotion and tenure relative to the unit's mission. The guidelines shall include specific measures for evaluating faculty member performance.

The guidelines for all departments and/or schools shall be formulated and reviewed periodically by a committee of the department and/or school. The faculty shall elect the committee members, and the committee members shall be open to faculty recommendations. A majority vote of the faculty shall be required for the approval of all unit guidelines.

#### **1.4 Appointing Authority**

Promotion and tenure of the faculty are made under the ultimate authority and with the final approval of the Board of Visitors.

The president is authorized to recommend faculty promotions and conferral of tenure to the Board of Visitors according to the procedures set forth in this document.

#### **2.0 Faculty Ranks and Appointments**

This document applies to the university faculty appointments at the ranks of professor, associate professor, assistant professor and instructor whose responsibilities are primarily teaching or research. All faculty appointments shall be either tenured, probationary (tenure-

eligible), term (non-tenure), or adjunct (non-tenure). Section 3.0 defines these types of appointments.

### **2.1 General Criteria and Criteria Definitions for Tenured, Tenure-eligible, and Term (non-tenure) Faculty Members**

In order to ensure distinction in learning, research, scholarly pursuits and creative expression, and service, the following criteria shall apply in the evaluation of all tenured and tenure-eligible faculty members for promotion and tenure. For faculty members holding term (non-tenure) faculty appointments, the criteria shall be applied in the evaluation for promotion as appropriate to the individual faculty member's special mix of duties. All faculty members' work plans are developed in accordance with the Faculty Roles and Rewards policy. Faculty members holding administrative positions must meet the guidelines of their own academic unit. General criteria include:

1. Appropriate credentials and experience.
2. Demonstrated continuing scholarship and professional growth. Faculty members should be continuously engaged in productive and creative scholarly activity in areas relevant to the goals and mission of their academic unit. They should make a substantive contribution to the body of knowledge in their discipline that reflects high standards of quality in creativity, scholarship and professional competence. They should demonstrate leadership and professional competence in independent scholarship and/or collaborative research that leads to the creation of new knowledge or creative expression. Scholarship can be in the form of research and discovery scholarship, the scholarship of teaching and learning, or community-engaged research. Research and discovery scholarship breaks new ground in the discipline and answers significant questions in the discipline. Scholarship of teaching and learning includes applied research regarding various pedagogies, student learning, and assessment practices; development and dissemination of materials for use in teaching beyond one's own classroom. Community-engaged research is a collaborative process between the researcher and community partner at all stages of the research process. Examples are community-based participatory and action research.

3. Demonstrated quality in teaching. Teaching shall be evaluated based primarily upon the impact of the faculty member's teaching in programs relevant to the mission of their academic unit. Faculty members must demonstrate mastery of their subject matter and at communicating this understanding to student learners; most fundamentally, faculty members should demonstrate that their students learn. There should be evidence of the candidate's sustained commitment to classroom instruction, to inclusion of advising and availability to students as a component of teaching, to sustained effectiveness as a contributor to the intellectual development of students through devices such as course design, course material, curriculum development, and attention to other mechanisms of enhancing student learning. Mentoring, and other forms of beneficial interactions between the candidate and learners, may be given appropriate weight as a part of the teaching criteria as determined by the academic unit. Demonstrated quality of teaching may include community-engaged teaching that connects students and faculty members with activities that address community-identified needs through mutually beneficial partnerships that deepen students' academic and civic learning. Examples are service-learning courses or service-learning clinical practica.
4. Demonstrated performance in service. Faculty members are expected to give of their time and expertise for the betterment of their department, school and university, their profession and/or the broader community. Service includes engaging in the application of learning and discovery to improve the human condition and support the public good at home and abroad. Demonstrated performance in service may include community-engaged service, which is the application of one's professional expertise to address a community-identified need and to support the goals and mission of the university and the community partner.

#### **2.1.1 Application of Criteria and Criteria Ratings for Tenured and Tenure-eligible Faculty**

Faculty member performance with respect to teaching, scholarship, and service shall be rated (in descending order) as excellent, very good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. Credentials and

experience shall be rated as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. All written reports and evaluations of tenure and tenure-eligible faculty performance ratings shall use this terminology.

Appointment or promotion to assistant professor shall indicate the candidate can be expected to perform satisfactorily all required academic duties and holds promise for further professional development.

Appointment or promotion to associate professor requires a minimum rating of excellent in either scholarship or teaching and a rating of very good in the other of these two categories. Candidates also must achieve a minimum rating of satisfactory in service. Candidates must be effective researchers and teachers and show a pattern of accomplishment in scholarship that indicates progress toward a national or international reputation in their discipline.

Appointment or promotion to professor requires a minimum rating of excellent in either scholarship or teaching and a rating of very good in the other of these two categories. Candidates also must achieve a minimum rating of very good in service. Candidates must be effective researchers and teachers and demonstrate a pattern of distinguished accomplishment in scholarship that indicates achievement of a national or international reputation in their discipline.

### **2.1.2 Application of Criteria and Criteria Ratings for Promotion for Term (Non-tenure) Faculty**

Each unit with term (non-tenure) faculty appointments shall provide written guidelines for promotion of term (non-tenure) faculty. The criteria and definitions of criteria as specified in 2.1 shall apply to term (non-tenure) faculty to the extent that the criteria and definitions are consistent with that faculty member's special mix of duties. The guidelines shall address how a term (non-tenure) faculty member's effort shall be weighted by the special mix of duties assigned to faculty members holding these appointments. The guidelines shall also specify the voting rights of the faculty regarding a recommendation to promote or renew these faculty appointments.



## **2.2 Departmental and School Criteria for Tenured, Tenure-eligible and Term (Non-tenure) Faculty Members.**

- The detailed school and/or department guidelines shall amplify the general criteria of the university.
- Additional special criteria unique to a given school and/or department are encouraged.
- The individual school and/or departmental guidelines shall designate the relative importance of the scholarship, teaching, and service criteria and define what they mean by ratings of excellent, very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory in each area.
- These guidelines shall be approved by the unit's faculty and thereafter provided to all new faculty members and filed with the school and provost's office and the University Promotion & Tenure Policy Review Committee.

## **3.0 Defining Appointments**

All faculty appointments shall be either tenured, probationary (tenure-eligible), term (non-tenure), or adjunct (non-tenure). Adjunct (non-tenure) appointments are part-time. All other appointments shall be full-time and either tenured, probationary (tenure-eligible), or term (non-tenure).

A tenured appointment is an appointment that continues until the faculty member either voluntarily leaves the university or is dismissed for cause as specified in Section 11. Tenure is conferred in accordance with the criteria and procedures established by this document and supplemented by appropriate school and department guidelines. Tenure is granted only at the rank of associate professor or professor.

A term (non-tenure) appointment is a full-time appointment to the faculty for a specified mix of duties and does not lead to tenure. Term (non-tenure) appointments shall always be at the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor. Term (non-tenure) faculty members shall hold the same rights and

responsibilities specified in the Faculty Handbook as tenured or tenure-eligible faculty except they shall not be afforded tenure or tenure eligibility. When appropriate to the duties assigned to the faculty member holding a term appointment, modifiers as defined by the unit (e.g., Clinical Professor, Visiting Professor, Research Professor or Teaching Professor) should be used. A term (non-tenure) appointment may be for a period of one to five years and may be renewable. Conditions and notifications for non-renewal are to be specified in the contract letter for term (non-tenure) appointments.

Adjunct faculty (non-tenure) appointments are granted to faculty members who serve the university part-time and are employed for specific activities. The rights and privileges of adjunct faculty shall be specified in the guidelines of the unit making the appointment, but they shall not participate in the evaluation of full-time faculty members for promotion or tenure. Recommendations for appointments or rank of part-time, non-tenured faculty shall not require academic review outside the school. These personnel actions shall be reviewed using guidelines established by the school and department and recommended by a letter from the department and/or school with the concurrence of the dean.

### **3.1 Tenured Appointments**

Tenure is conferred based on the faculty member's demonstrated capabilities, academic achievement and the university's anticipated long-term academic needs.

A recommendation for a tenured appointment is initiated only by an academic unit of a degree-granting school or college. Typically, recommendations for tenured appointments are initiated in the department of a school, but in schools where recommendations for academic personnel actions are initiated at the school level, the recommendations for tenured appointments are also initiated at the school level. The guidelines for each academic unit where recommendations for tenured appointments are initiated shall specify written criteria and standards for recommending tenure in that unit. These criteria shall assure that recommendations are based on a record of effectiveness in teaching, scholarship appropriate to the discipline, professional

growth and service to the university, the profession, and/or the public. These guidelines shall also specify each unit's procedures for consultation with external evaluators and how the use of external evaluators is reported to the candidate. External evaluators shall be at a rank equal to or higher than the rank for which the candidate is being reviewed.

### **3.2 Probationary (Tenure-Eligible) Appointments**

Probationary appointments are granted to faculty members with suitable preparation and experience and are appointed in positions identified by the department and/or school as appropriate for tenured faculty.

The maximum period of probationary service for an assistant professor is typically six academic years. An initial appointment at the rank of professor or associate professor may also be probationary appointments. The maximum period of probationary service is typically two years as a professor and three years as an associate professor.

#### **3.2.1 Alterations of the Typical Probationary Period**

There are some situations where alterations of the typical probationary period are warranted and may be established at the time of the initial appointment by the mutual agreement between the faculty member and the department chair and/or dean. Following are situations where an altered probationary period is warranted and can be established:

1. Prior service at an academic institution at the rank of assistant professor or above warrants a reduced probationary period.
2. Prior service in a discipline unrelated to the present appointment, with the approval of the provost warrants a reduced probationary period.
3. Prior service while a candidate for a doctoral or equivalent terminal degree at any institution warrants a reduced probationary period.

4. In exceptional cases, when the special nature of a faculty member's scholarship or special mix of duties warrants an extended probationary period of time to meet the general criteria for tenure.

The agreed upon period of probationary service must be so noted in the notice of appointment. Faculty members reviewed for tenure before the end of their full probationary period shall not be subject to any extraordinary requirements and shall be required to meet the same standards required of them at the end of the full probationary period.

In no case shall such an altered probationary period exceed 10 years for an assistant professor, five years for an associate professor and three years for a full professor. Any altered probationary period must receive approval from the provost for faculty on the Monroe Park campus or from the vice president for health sciences for faculty from the medical campus. Academic units must specify and clearly describe the situations for an altered probationary period in their unit P & T document and apply the criteria for the alterations uniformly for all new faculty hires.

At the end of this agreed upon probationary period, the faculty member must be given an appointment with tenure or a one-year terminal appointment.

### **3.2.2 Extensions of the Initially Agreed Upon Probationary Period**

A tenure-eligible faculty member may request an extension of the agreed upon probationary period when extenuating circumstances are projected to impede significantly normal progress. Such circumstances might include but are not limited to childbirth, adoption, care of terminally ill immediate relative, personal trauma, short-term disability as defined by the Virginia Sickness and Disability Program, natural disaster, major accidents, or other circumstances beyond the control of the candidate. Extensions may also be granted for public or appointed university service. Application for extensions must be made through the unit within one year of the onset of the extenuating circumstances.

The faculty member's prior annual reviews shall be considered in making the decision about the extension of the initial probationary period. In no case shall an extended probationary period be granted based solely on lack of progress toward work plan goals.

Written approval of the extension by the dean and the provost on the Monroe Park campus or the vice president for health sciences is required. All extensions of the initial probationary period shall be entered in writing in the faculty member's personnel file. In no case shall such an extension of probationary period exceed 10 years for an assistant professor, five years for an associate professor and three years for a full professor exclusive of extensions for leave or extenuating circumstances described above.

### **3.2.3 Evaluation of Probation for Tenure-Eligible Faculty**

Probationary appointments at the rank of assistant professor shall be reviewed periodically by the academic unit where personnel actions are initiated. The guidelines for each such unit shall specify how this review shall be conducted and the criteria to be used to evaluate progress toward tenure. The guidelines shall specify the frequency of the review(s), how the individual work plan developed in accordance with the Faculty Roles and Rewards Policy shall be incorporated into the review process, and how the candidate shall be informed regarding progress toward meeting the standards and criteria for tenure in that unit. The guidelines shall specify the voting rights of the faculty regarding continued probation, terminal reappointment, or a recommendation to grant tenure.

The departmental chair, the reviewing faculty of the department or the candidate may request a review for a recommendation to grant tenure. A faculty member may be reviewed for tenure once before the normal review occurring at the end of the probationary period. Faculty members reviewed for tenure before the end of their maximum probationary period shall not be subject to any extraordinary requirements and shall be required to meet the same standards required of them at the end of the maximum probationary period.

A decision to terminate a probationary appointment may be made during any year of the probationary period and need not wait until the end of the normal probationary period.

### **3.2.4 Linkage**

Tenure-eligible assistant professors shall be reviewed in one process, with both promotion and tenure awarded or denied in a single decision.

Tenure-eligible associate professors may be reviewed for tenure alone or for promotion and tenure simultaneously. A decision to deny a promotion does not preclude a decision to award tenure.

### **3.3 Transition between Tenure Track Positions and Term Appointments.**

A tenure-eligible faculty member on a probationary appointment may transfer to a term appointment with the concurrence of the provost or the vice president for health sciences, dean, departmental chair where the academic personnel action is initiated, and the individual concerned. This transfer suspends the period of probationary service, but the faculty member retains rights consistent with other term appointment guidelines.

Transfers from term appointment to tenure track position must follow the VCU Guidelines for Faculty Transfers (see [VCU Guidelines for Faculty Track Transfers](#)). All policies outlined in this document apply to tenure track positions that transfer from term appointments.

### **3.4 Continuing Review of Faculty**

All tenured and term (non-tenure) faculty members shall be evaluated annually using criteria established in the guidelines of the school and/or department. Faculty members with term (non-tenure) appointments also shall be evaluated taking into consideration the special duties assigned to the individual faculty member's term appointment. The guidelines for all evaluations shall be consistent with and fully incorporate the guidelines in the Faculty Roles and Rewards Policy.

### **3.5 Honorary Titles**

The president and/or board of visitors may designate the rank of university professor, commonwealth professor, or emeritus professor as deemed appropriate. The voting privileges

of faculty holding honorary titles shall be specified in the guidelines of the units where they are appointed.

### **3.6 Administrative Titles**

Faculty members may be assigned administrative titles designating administrative responsibilities held in addition to any tenured/tenure-eligible or term (non-tenure) faculty rank concurrently held.

Administrative titles and compensation for administrative responsibilities are held independent of any concurrently held faculty rank. Periodic reviews of a faculty member's performance as an administrator are separate and independent of academic reviews conducted for faculty promotion and/or tenure under this document.

Administrative titles and responsibilities are held for specific terms or at the discretion of a superior administrative officer. Removal from an administrative position does not impair any rights the administrator held as a faculty member.

It is not possible for an administrator to hold tenure in an administrative title, but administrators may earn and hold tenure under concurrently held faculty titles.

### **3.7 Notice of Appointments**

Every faculty appointment or change of status shall be specified in a written notice of appointment issued by or on behalf of the president and/or board of visitors to the faculty member.

The notice shall include the following information: rank, academic unit(s) in which the appointment is made, type of appointment (tenured, tenure eligible, term (non-tenure), or adjunct), period of appointment, whether it is part or full time, and salary. If it is a tenure eligible position, the notice of appointment shall also include the length of the probationary period and the tenure review date.

Except for increases in rank or salary, and except for action expressly authorized by these regulations, changes in any of the items listed in 3.8 are not permitted during the term of an appointment except with the agreement of the faculty member and the board of visitors or its authorized delegate.

### **3.8 Joint Appointments with Non-University Agencies**

A joint appointment for a faculty member with a non-university agency does not in any way fiscally obligate the university for salary or benefits supplied by the non-university agency in the event of a change in the relationship between the faculty member and the non-university agency or between the agency and the university.

Joint appointments with a non-university agency shall require a letter of approval from the university and non-university administrative units involved in the appointment. Such letters shall specify the privileges granted to the faculty member by each unit and the responsibilities and obligations of the faculty member to that unit during the appointment.

## **4.0 University Promotion and Tenure Policy Review Committee**

### **4.1 Committee Composition**

- a. The University Promotion and Tenure Policy Review Committee shall consist of a minimum of one tenured faculty member from each school, none of whom hold administrative titles at the level of departmental chair or above. No school shall have more than three members serving on the committee at any given time.
- b. To fill a vacancy, the President of Virginia Commonwealth University shall appoint committee members from a list composed of three names jointly recommended by the President of the Faculty Senate and the dean of the school with the vacancy. The president shall designate the chair of the committee.



- c. The members of the committee shall serve staggered three-year terms. In case of vacancies the president shall make appointments to fill uncompleted terms. Persons who have served a complete three-year term are ineligible for reappointment for three years.
- d. Members of the University Promotion and Tenure Policy Review Committee shall not be eligible for concurrent service on a departmental or school promotion and tenure committee while serving on the University Promotion and Tenure Policy Review Committee.

#### **4.2 Committee Duties**

The Committee shall:

- a. Formulate and, with the president's approval, issue such general instructions and schedules as may be necessary to coordinate the promotion and tenure process throughout the university.
- b. Receive the written guidelines for promotion and tenure from each unit where academic personnel actions are initiated and from all units that participate in the academic review process in that school. The University Promotion and Tenure Policy Review Committee shall review the guidelines for clarity and conformity with this document and either approve or propose modification of the guidelines.
- c. Perform an in-depth review of all steps of the promotion and tenure process in each school every third year on a rotating basis. This review shall include at least one member of the Promotion and Tenure Policy Review Committee attending, as an observer, at least one meeting of each step of the review process in that school and examining a random sample of promotion and tenure files of faculty being reviewed. The review of the school shall also include a written notification to the faculty of the unit under review and invite oral or written comments regarding the

application of the guidelines and/or procedures used in the school for appointment, promotion and tenure. The findings concerning the review of each school's promotion and tenure process shall be reported in writing to the president with copies both to the dean and to the promotion and tenure panel of that school.

- d. Report annually to the president and to the faculty on the operation of the promotion and tenure system, including the number of candidates and the outcomes of their candidacy.

## **5.0 School Promotion and Tenure Committee**

### **5.1 Committee Election and Term of Office**

Each school shall elect a school promotion and tenure committee as provided by the guidelines of the school. The school guidelines may allow the dean to appoint additional committee members following the election of the committee. Only full-time faculty members shall be eligible to vote.

The committee shall consist of no fewer than three faculty members all of whom shall be tenured. None of the committee members shall hold an administrative title at the level of departmental chair or above.

Members of the school promotion and tenure committee shall serve staggered three-year terms. Those who have served three consecutive years are ineligible to serve again for one year. In the event committee vacancies should occur, an interim election shall be held to fill the incomplete term. Each year the committee shall elect a chairperson from its members.

## **6.0 University Appeal Committee**

### **6.1 Committee Composition**

- a. The University Appeal Committee shall consist of at least one tenured faculty member from each school, none of whom hold administrative titles at the level of

departmental chair or above. No school shall have more than three members serving on the committee at any given time.

- b. To fill a vacancy, the President of Virginia Commonwealth University shall appoint each committee member from a list composed of three names jointly recommended by the President of the Faculty Senate and the dean of that school with the current committee vacancy. The president shall designate the chair of the committee.
- c. The members of the committee shall serve staggered three-year terms. In case of vacancies the president shall make appointments to fill uncompleted terms. Persons who have served a complete three-year term are ineligible for reappointment for three years.
- d. Members of the University Appeal Committee shall not be eligible for concurrent service on a departmental or school promotion and tenure committee.

## **6.2 Committee Duties**

The Committee shall review all faculty appeals as specified in 10.0 of this document.

The University Appeal Committee shall hold hearings regarding any proposed dismissal for cause of a tenured faculty member as specified in 12.0 of this document.

## **6.3 Committee Training**

The Office of the Provost shall arrange training for newly appointed members of the Appeals Committee about the appeals process and procedure. Newly appointed members of the Appeals Committee are required to attend this training before participating in committee decisions.

## **7.0 Academic Review Procedures for Promotion and Tenure for Tenured, Tenure-eligible and Term (non-tenure) faculty members**

Sections 7.1 to 7.1.3 - Apply only to those units where budgetary and signature authority for Personnel Action Forms has been delegated to the departments of a school.

Sections 7.2 to 7.2.2 - Apply only to those units where budgetary and signature authority for Personnel Action Forms is retained at the school level.

### **7.1 Promotion and Tenure Initiated at the Departmental Level**

Recommendations for promotion and tenure are initiated at the departmental level in those schools with departments having budgetary and signature authority for initiating Personnel Action Forms.

In those units where recommendations for academic personnel actions are initiated at the departmental level, the review process begins at the department. The candidate, with the departmental chair, shall develop a file following the guidelines established by the department. The completed file shall be forwarded to the peer committee to conduct a substantive evaluation of the candidate's record and performance.

#### **7.1.1 Peer Evaluation**

The department chair shall form a peer committee following procedures described in the departmental guidelines. For tenure and tenure-eligible faculty members, the peer committee shall be composed of tenured faculty only, with a majority from the department. There must also be at least one tenured faculty member from outside the department on the committee. For term (non-tenure) faculty members, the committee must have a majority of tenured faculty members, including at least one from outside the department, and at least one term (non-tenure) faculty member.

In the event that there is an inadequate number of tenured faculty from within a department to meet this criteria, or term (non-tenure) if applicable, school guidelines will specify the procedures to be followed.

In addition, student representation is required on the peer committees for both tenure-eligible and term (non-tenure) appointed faculty members. The voting status for student members shall be specified in the departmental guidelines.

The peer committee shall conduct a substantive evaluation of the candidate's record and performance, including individualized work plans developed in accordance with the Faculty Roles and Rewards Policy, prior reviews and written internal and external evaluations. Only the peer committee shall solicit and receive external evaluations. External reviewers must be individuals with expertise in the candidate's field or a related scholarly field, be from outside of VCU, and be an individual who can provide an independent review of the candidate's work. Persons who have co-authored publications, collaborated on research, or been institutional colleagues or academic mentors/advisors of the applicant normally should be excluded from consideration as outside evaluators. Reviewers for external evaluations must be solicited both from persons suggested by the candidate and persons suggested by the committee. The file shall list all persons solicited for external review letters, identify each reviewer as either named by the candidate or named by the committee, and identify the relationship of the external reviewer to the candidate. The external evaluator must describe the nature of his/her relationship with the candidate in the review letter. A minimum of 3 external letters must be received for review. All solicited letters received must be included in the file. Each department's guidelines shall specify the details of the use of external evaluations in that unit's academic review process.

All letters from external evaluators will be confidential unless disclosure is required by law. This policy will be conveyed to external reviewers when letters are solicited.

The peer committee shall add a written report to the candidate's file which shall include the numerical results of a secret ballot for or against recommending promotion and/or tenure and the rationale for the recommendation. The peer committee shall forward the file to the chair of the department.

### **7.1.2 Department Chair**

After receiving the file from the peer committee, the chair of the department shall review the file using the department guidelines as a reference, request supplementary material as needed, add a written recommendation and forward the recommendation, the file, and the peer committee report to the school promotion and tenure committee.

### **7.1.3 School Promotion and Tenure Committee Evaluation**

The school promotion and tenure committee shall receive the file from the chair of the department and review the file using the guidelines of the school as a reference. The committee shall review prior recommendations and enter a written report of its proceedings including the results of a secret ballot for or against recommending promotion and/or tenure and the rationale for the recommendation. The file shall be forwarded to the dean of the school.

## **7.2 Promotion and Tenure Initiated at the School Level**

Recommendations for promotion and tenure are initiated at the school level in those schools having budgetary and signature authority for initiating Personnel Action Forms.

In those units where recommendations for promotion and tenure are initiated at the school level, the review process begins at the school level. The candidate, with the dean, shall develop a file following the guidelines established by the school. The completed file shall be forwarded to the peer committee to conduct a substantive evaluation of the candidate's record and performance.

### **7.2.1 Peer Evaluation**

When applications for promotion and tenure are initiated at the school level, the school promotion and tenure committee shall form a peer review committee following procedures described in the school's guidelines. School guidelines shall specify whether the peer committee is the same as the school committee or whether someone can serve on both the school and peer committee. For tenure-eligible faculty members, the peer committee shall be composed of

tenured faculty only, with a majority from the department. There must also be at least one tenured faculty member from outside the department on the committee. For term (non-tenure) faculty member, the committee must have a majority of tenured faculty members, including at least one from outside the department, and at least one term (non-tenure) faculty member.

In the event that there are an inadequate number of tenured faculty members from within a department to meet these criteria, or term (non-tenure) faculty members if applicable, school guidelines will specify the procedures to be followed.

In addition, student representation is required on the peer committees for both tenure-eligible and term (non-tenure) appointed faculty members. The voting status for student members shall be specified in the departmental guidelines.

The peer committee shall conduct a substantive evaluation of the candidate's record and performance, including individualized work plans developed in accordance with the Faculty Roles and Rewards Policy, prior reviews and written internal and external evaluations. Only the peer committee shall solicit and receive external evaluations. External reviewers must be individuals with expertise in the candidate's field or a related scholarly field, be from outside of VCU, and be an individual who can provide an independent review of the candidate's work. Persons who have co-authored publications, collaborated on research, or been institutional colleagues, or academic mentors/advisors of the applicant normally should be excluded from consideration as outside evaluators. Reviewers for external evaluations must be solicited both from persons suggested by the candidate and persons suggested by the committee. The file shall list all persons solicited for external review letters, identify each reviewer as either named by the candidate or named by the committee, and identify the relationship of the external reviewer to the candidate. The external evaluator must describe the nature of his/her relationship with the candidate in the review letter. A minimum of 3 external letters must be received for review. All solicited letters received must be included in the file. Each department's guidelines shall specify the details of the use of external evaluations in that unit's academic review process.

All letters from external evaluators will be confidential unless disclosure is required by law. This policy will be conveyed to external reviewers when letters are solicited.

The peer committee shall add a written report to the candidate's file which shall include the numerical results of a secret ballot for or against recommending promotion and/or tenure and the rationale for the recommendation. The peer committee shall forward the file to the chair of the department.

### **7.2.2 School Promotion and Tenure Committee Evaluation**

The school promotion and tenure committee shall receive the file from the peer committee and review the file using the guidelines of the school as a reference. The committee shall review all prior recommendations and enter a written report of its proceedings including the numerical results of a secret vote for or against recommending promotion and/or tenure and the rationale for the recommendation. The file shall be forwarded to the dean.

## **8.0 Administrative Review Procedures for Academic Personnel Actions**

### **8.1 The Dean**

After receiving a file, the dean shall review the file and add a recommendation addressing the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed academic personnel action on the school and forward the original file to the provost or vice president for health sciences. A copy of the file, completes with all recommendations, but excluding the letters from the external reviewers, shall be given to the candidate.

If the recommendation is not supported by either the peer committee, the chair of the department, or the school tenure and promotion committee, then the dean has the option of returning the file, no more than once, to those review bodies that did not support the proposed personnel action and request reconsideration.

When promotion and/or tenure is not recommended, the dean shall inform the candidate of this decision. At this time the dean shall also give the candidate a copy of the file, without the



letters from the external reviewers unless disclosure of these letters is required by law, and notify the candidate of the right to add a written statement to be included in the file. The candidate has 10 working days after notification by the dean to add a statement to the file.

The dean shall forward the original file, containing the candidate's written response and all recommendations and letters to the appropriate vice president.

## **8.2 The Provost and the Vice President for Health Sciences**

Either the provost or the vice president for health sciences shall receive and review files and add a recommendation addressing the University fiscal and long range planning impact of the proposed academic personnel action.

If the administrative review of the provost or vice-president for health sciences supports promotion and/or tenure, the provost or the vice-president for health sciences shall forward the original complete file to the president with that recommendation.

If the administrative review of the provost or the vice-president for health sciences does not support promotion and/or tenure, the provost or the vice-president for health sciences shall inform the candidate of the decision in writing and notify the candidate of his or her right to appeal to the University Appeal Committee. The candidate has 15 working days from notification to appeal the decision of the provost or the vice-president for health sciences. The candidate initiates an appeal by sending a letter to the University Appeal Committee indicating where and how he/she believes the review process has erred.

## **9.0 Appeal Process**

### **9.1 Grounds for Appeal**

A decision to deny tenure and/or promotion may be appealed by the candidate only on the following grounds:

1. The proper procedures, as specified in this document, School/Unit Guidelines, and Department Guidelines were not followed.

2. Factually incorrect information was provided by someone other than the candidate, and utilized in the peer review or administrative review process.
3. Inadequate consideration of unit criteria or use of impermissible criteria.

## **9.2 Appeal Process**

The University Appeal Committee shall receive all appeals. The candidate must provide a written request to appeal a decision to deny tenure and/or promotion to the chair of the Appeal Committee. The request must specify how proper procedures were not followed, and/or the information that is factually incorrect and/or inadequate consideration of unit criteria or use of impermissible criteria. The Appeal Committee will review the documents in question and decide if grounds for an appeal exist.

If the Appeal Committee decides that adequate grounds for an appeal exist, then it shall contact those review bodies identified in the denial and extend to them the opportunity to respond to the appeal in writing and/or at a scheduled meeting of the Appeal Committee. The Appeal Committee should provide a copy of the appeal to the review bodies and request a written response to the appeal and/or extend an opportunity to attend the hearing to respond to the appeal.

The candidate shall have the right to address the Appeal Committee at a time convenient for both candidate and committee members. Such presentations shall be limited in scope to the specific grounds for appeal alleged in the written appeal request. New subject areas not addressed in the appeal may not be introduced. The candidate may be accompanied by one nonparticipating advisor. The candidate may suggest to the Appeal Committee the names of additional witnesses to speak at the hearing. The Appeal Committee may decide that it needs limited additional information or testimony and may call appropriate witnesses for a hearing or contact those individuals or review bodies identified in the denial for additional information. It shall confine any such hearings to those questions or issues specified in the appeal.

After reviewing the record and hearing testimony, the University Appeal Committee shall take one of the following actions.

- a. Vote to support the appellant. When the Appeal Committee votes to support the appellant, the Committee shall forward the file to the president with a letter describing their recommendation with copies to the appellant, the provost or vice-president for health sciences and the dean. The letter shall include a rationale for the decision and the number of committee members voting for and against the decision.
- b. Vote to deny the appeal. When the Appeal Committee votes to deny any appeal, the Committee shall forward the file to the president with a letter describing their recommendation with copies to the appellant, the provost, the vice-president for health sciences and the dean. The letter shall include a rationale for the decision and the number of committee members voting for and against the decision. In the event of a tie vote the appeal is considered denied.
- c. Decide that the candidate's file should be reconsidered at a prior level of review for remand to the dean for reconsideration and forward this recommendation to the president. The Appeal Committee may direct the formation of a new peer committee using the processes specified in section 7.1.1 or 7.2.1. When a new peer committee is ordered or when the addition or deletion of material has altered the file, the file shall go through all previous review steps including new internal letters from all review bodies. New material may be added to the file only by this option.

#### **10.0 The President and Board of Visitors**

The president is authorized to recommend faculty promotions and conferral of tenure to the board of visitors. Promotion and tenure of the faculty are made under the ultimate authority and with the final approval of the board of visitors (1.4).

When the president does not support the recommendation of a faculty member for promotion and/or tenure, the president shall notify the board of visitors, the candidate, the provost or vice

president for health sciences, and the dean of this decision in writing. If the president does not support a recommendation for promotion and/or tenure, no further appeal exists within the university.

If the president recommends a faculty member for promotion and/or tenure to the board of visitors and the board does not support the recommendation, the president shall notify the candidate, the provost or the vice president health sciences and the dean of this decision in writing. If the board does not support the recommendation of a faculty member for promotion and/or tenure, no further appeals exist within the university.

## **11.0 Procedure for Termination of Employment of Tenured Faculty Members**

### **11.1 Reasons for Dismissal**

Tenure is designed to protect the academic freedom of individual faculty members who have established themselves during probationary periods. Tenured faculty members are expected to continue to strive for excellence in all of their academic and scholarly tasks. Adequate reason for dismissal of a tenured faculty member may be established by a demonstration of any of the following:

- a. Neglect, inability or failure to do the normal and expected satisfactory teaching, research and other services within the areas of presumed professional competence.
- b. Professional incompetence which includes failure to continue scholarly development within the individual's discipline and failure to fulfill University assignments.
- c. Moral turpitude.
- d. Violation of academic or professional ethics.
- e. Unprofessional conduct that significantly adversely affects the functioning of the department, school or university.

- f. Violation of the VCU Rules and Procedures, as adopted by the board of visitors, provided the faculty member has been found guilty of an offense and a penalty for separation has been assessed pursuant to the Rules and Procedures.
- g. Bona fide financial emergency in a department or school, or reorganization or termination of programs as defined by established university policies and procedures.

## **11.2 Post-Tenure Review**

In accordance with 3.4 above, all tenured faculty members, including administrative faculty, are evaluated annually, using the established guidelines of their school and/or department. The annual evaluation examines the faculty member's performance in light of his or her expected contribution to the unit as established previously using the university's Roles and Rewards Policy. The annual evaluation is the core of the university's ongoing post-tenure review process, and it should contain a summary rating of excellent, very good, satisfactory, needs improvement or unsatisfactory. On this scale, the appropriate rating for a tenured faculty member whose overall performance in previous years has been 'satisfactory' or better, but whose current overall performance is not satisfactory, is 'needs improvement.' If a faculty member's previous overall performance was rated 'needs improvement' and the current overall performance has not met the conditions for improvement, the appropriate rating is 'unsatisfactory.'

### **11.2.1 Post-Tenure Review Panel**

Post tenure review is not a process whereby faculty members are being re-tenured. When a tenured faculty member receives one over-all unsatisfactory annual evaluation, a review panel will be appointed in the following way: Within 15 working days of notification of a need for a panel review, the faculty member and the chair of the department (or the dean where annual review is conducted at the school level) shall each submit lists of five possible panel members to the school's promotion and tenure committee, which will appoint the panel. The panel shall consist of five tenured faculty members. When possible, at least two of the panel members should be from the faculty member's department and at least one should be affiliated with

another department. The chair of the school promotion and tenure committee will notify in writing the faculty member, the chair of the department and the dean of the proposed panel. Both the faculty member and the department chair (or the dean when annual evaluations are conducted at the school level) shall have the right to challenge any member of the panel for cause. Such challenges must be made in writing to the chair of the school promotion and tenure committee within 5 working days following notification of the proposed panel. The school promotion and tenure committee shall make the final decision on panel composition.

The University will emphasize faculty development as the reason for carrying out post-tenure reviews and will commit the resources necessary to carry this out.

#### **11.2.2 Assessment of Annual Evaluation**

The panel first evaluates the faculty member's performance in light of his or her role in the department. If the panel finds that the faculty member's performance was, in fact, satisfactory during the period in question, it shall issue a report to the chair and the dean delineating the reasons for its conclusion. The review is thus concluded. The dean shall monitor the chair's annual evaluations of the faculty member for the next two years and the panel's report will be used in the dean's evaluation of the chair's performance. Where the annual evaluation is conducted by the dean, the dean's annual evaluations of the faculty member will be monitored by the appropriate vice president and the panel's report will be used by the vice president in evaluations of the dean's performance.

#### **11.2.3 Improvement Plan**

If the panel concludes that the faculty member's performance was unsatisfactory during the period in question, the panel, in conjunction with the chair and/or dean and the faculty member will elaborate a two-year improvement plan intended to aid the faculty member to return to a satisfactory level of performance.

#### **11.2.4 Assessing the Improvement Plan**

At the end of the first year of the improvement plan, the panel will either recommend continuation of the plan through the second year, modification of the plan, or if it is evident that no progress has been made toward improvement, it shall recommend to the chair and/or dean that they initiate dismissal for cause.

At the end of the two-year plan, the panel will reconvene and again conduct a review of the faculty member's performance, using the provisions of the improvement plan and all information pertinent to the faculty member's performance during the period of the plan. If it finds that the faculty member's performance has been satisfactory, it reports its findings to the chair and the dean, and the review is complete. If the panel finds that the faculty member's performance has been unsatisfactory, it shall recommend to the chair and/or dean that they initiate proceedings for dismissal based on causes (a) or (b) as detailed in Section 11.1

#### **11.3 Dismissal for Cause Procedures**

To initiate the termination of a tenured faculty member for just cause, the dean shall inform the faculty member and the provost or vice president for health sciences in writing of the proposed termination, the specific reasons for it and the effective date of termination. The dean must also inform the faculty member that a request for a hearing of the case by the University Appeal Committee must be initiated within 45 working days. In the absence of such a request the dean's action becomes final.

The University Appeal Committee shall begin all requested hearings within 30 working days following receipt of a faculty member's request. At least two-thirds of the Committee must be present at each meeting.

The faculty member shall have the opportunity to attend all meetings of the committee where evidence is received or witnesses are heard. The faculty member shall have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses, to present evidence and may be accompanied by one nonparticipating advisor.

A complete record of the hearing shall be maintained and available to the parties involved. The hearing shall be closed to the public, except upon mutual agreement by the faculty member, the dean and the vice president.

The University Appeal Committee shall submit a completed written report to the provost or vice president for health sciences within 30 working days after conclusion of the hearings. If two or more Committee members dissent with the majority report, they must submit a written minority report concurrently.

The provost or the vice-president for health sciences shall review the University Appeal Committee's findings and recommendations and convey a decision with a rationale in writing to the faculty member and to the University Appeal Committee within 10 working days. If the decision is for dismissal, they shall also inform the president.

The president upon written request shall review a decision for dismissal of the faculty member. However, unless the request is made within 15 working days after the provost or the vice-president for health sciences has rendered a decision, the provost's or vice-president's decision shall be final and not subject to further appeal or review.

If a review by the president is requested within the 15 working day period, the president shall review the full record of the University Appeal Committee hearing, the Committee's findings and recommendations and provosts or the vice-president's decision and rationale before rendering a decision. The president's decision is final and not subject to review within the University further.

#### **11.4 Dismissal for Financial Emergency, Reorganization and Termination of Programs**

The termination of a tenured faculty appointment because of financial emergency or reorganization or termination of programs must follow established university policies and procedures. Such procedures shall protect the tenure rights of the individual faculty member and must include due process and faculty participation.



### **11.5 Compensation**

Tenured faculty members who are terminated according to policies and procedures governing financial emergency, reorganization, and termination of programs have the right to receive their contractual university salaries for one year from the date of notification of dismissal, except that compensation ends upon commencement of full-time employment elsewhere. If the one-year period expires during an academic semester, the vice president may extend the employment to the end of the semester. Faculty members receiving compensation under these provisions may be required to perform for the university their regular services or services other than those which they have ordinarily performed so long as these services are professional in nature and appropriate to their educational experience and background.

### **12.0 Procedures for Review and Amendment of this Document**

Changes in the Faculty Promotion and Tenure Policies and Procedures may be initiated at the request of the president, the Faculty Senate, the University Council or upon petition by 20% of the tenured and tenure-eligible faculty. Upon such a request, the president shall appoint an ad hoc faculty committee to review issues and recommendations regarding appointment, promotion and tenure policies and procedures and, if necessary, to recommend modifications.

Any members of the university community may raise issues or recommend review of these policies and procedures. They should address such requests to the University president who shall refer them to the Faculty Senate and University Council. Any changes in the Faculty Promotion and Tenure Policies and Procedures of VCU shall take effect only after review through the university governance system.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'school' will be used throughout the document to refer to school, college, or major academic unit such as the library or Life Sciences.

<sup>2</sup> Faculty Roles and Rewards Policy, approved by the Board of Visitors, November 1993.

### **Documents Used in the Revisions**

Colbeck, C. & Michael, P. (2006). The public scholarship: Reintegrating Boyer's four domains. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, Issue 129, 7-19.

Northern Kentucky University. Engaged Scholarship document.

Quest for Distinction, Executive Summary, 2011.

University of Virginia, Promotion and Tenure Policy, 2011.

VCU Council on Community Engagement – definition from this group regarding Community Engagement Scholarship (3-1-2012)

### **Forms**

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There are no forms associated with this policy and procedures.

### **Related Documents**

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There are no related documents associated with this policy and procedures.

### **Revision History**

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This policy supersedes the following archived policies:

Approved by the Board of Visitors: September 24, 1981

Effective Date: September 24, 1981.

Revision approved by Board of Visitors: January 17, 1985.

Revision approved by Board of Visitors: November 19, 1987

Effective Date: July 1, 1988.

Revision approved by Board of Visitors: January 20, 1993

Effective Date: July 1, 1993.

Revision approved by Board of Visitors: September 19, 1996

Effective Date: July 1, 1997

Revision approved by Board of Visitors: May 16, 2003

Effective Date: May 16, 2003

Revision approved by Board of Visitors: November 11, 2004

Effective Date: November 11, 2004

Revision approved by Board of Visitors: May 19, 2006

Effective Date: May 19, 2006

Revision approved by Board of Visitors: May 10, 2013

Effective Date: Faculty members who have been at VCU for more than three years prior to approval of this document, will have the choice of being reviewed under the old (2006) or new (2013) policy; and those being at VCU less than 3 years will automatically be reviewed under the new policy.

Minor revision made on February 28, 2017. Corrected "Policy Type" to Board of Visitors.

## **FAQs**

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There are no FAQs associated with this policy and procedures.