

To: Tenured, Tenure-Track, Research Faculty  
From: Patrick Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Diversity  
Date: May 25, 2023  
Subject: West Lafayette Campus Promotion Policy – Research Faculty

This memorandum has been prepared for the purpose of informing the members of the Research Faculty of Purdue University, and their promotion committees, of the policies and procedures that are followed in recommending them for promotion to higher academic rank. We continue to operate under the policies and procedures for Research Faculty that were approved in 2012 (see links at bottom). Faculty are encouraged to carefully read the policy and procedures on [Research Faculty Appointment and Promotion \(VI.F.8\)](#).

## SECTION I GENERAL CRITERIA FOR PROMOTION

Purdue University values creative endeavor and scholarly activity in many forms. To be considered for promotion, a research faculty member should have demonstrated excellence in discovery and its scholarship. As described in the University and unit promotion criteria documents, performance in this area should be evaluated not on the basis of any single indicator, but rather by considering multiple elements as part of a holistic assessment. Many examples of excellence in faculty research activities across missions exist and must be recognized by members of the successive committees on promotion.

## THE FACULTY REVIEW SYSTEM

The promotion requirements are intended to guide all academic units of the University. Throughout the entire promotion process, Primary, Area, and Campus Promotion Committee members respond to each promotion nomination individually, interpreting achievements described in the nominating documents in the light of standards and criteria appropriate for the nominee's discipline and the college and University's criteria for promotion. In the course of these evaluations, the give-and-take of full and confidential discussion is a critical element to informing each committee member of the candidate's accomplishments. To this end, and with the unanimous support of the University Senate Faculty Affairs Committee, only those promotion committee members present for the entire discussion of a candidate's record shall be extended the privilege of voting (Faculty Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes, March 2, 1998). Additional information about Purdue's promotion process is included in Section III of this document and at the link to the Promotion and Tenure website, provided below.

Faculty growth, productivity, and success require that Primary Committee chairs actively and annually convey, to each colleague who is not a full professor, what levels of performance and achievement are viewed favorably by the Primary and Area Committees. To facilitate this communication, all colleges must have written promotion criteria available to their faculty. Area Committee chairs, who have an active role on the Campus Promotions Committee (Panel C), have corresponding obligations to convey university expectations to the members of their Area Committees.

Since 2021, in response to the broad and varied effects of the pandemic on faculty work, candidates for promotion will have the option of including in their promotion document a Professional COVID Impact

Statement. The guidelines for composing and interpreting the Statement, and language to provide to external referees, are found in the Guidelines document circulated to faculty, Heads, and Deans on March 8, 2021, and also found here: [Assessment of Productivity During The COVID Pandemic](#).

## SECTION II PROMOTION TO DIFFERENT RANKS

### Research Faculty

#### Promotion to Research Associate Professor

A successful candidate should have a significant record of accomplishment as a research faculty member and show promise of continued professional growth and recognition.

#### Promotion to Research Professor

Successful candidates should be recognized as authorities in their fields of specialization by external colleagues – national and/or international as may be appropriate in their academic disciplines – and be valued for their intramural contributions as faculty members.

## SECTION III GENERAL PROCEDURE

Before or during the first semester of each academic year, the head of each school, division, or department shall convene the Primary Committee, the composition of which is described below. The department head shall act as chair of the Primary Committee.

Research Faculty members may be nominated for promotion by any member of the Primary Committee. Those faculty members whose nominations are seconded shall be voted on by the committee. Research Faculty must be evaluated for promotion or retention in rank every five years.

A Nomination for Promotion – [Form 36](#) – must be submitted for all Research Faculty who are nominated for promotion to Research Associate Professor or to Professor and receive a majority affirmative Area Committee vote... For more detail on completion of Form 36; the promotion policy, procedures and criteria; and accompanying documentation, see the web-site below:  
<https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/index.html>

A candidate should be given the opportunity to help create and review their promotion documentation and may receive a copy of any document (with confidential statements omitted) that will be submitted to the Primary, Area, and/or Campus committee(s). It is the right of the candidate to have included in his/her promotion document whatever the candidate chooses to add, including the candidate's own brief (one page) comments about excellence, creative activity, and scholarship in discovery. The candidate should also include documentation of mentoring within document where appropriate. Candidates and units are encouraged to keep documents to a maximum length of 100 pages (or less). If needed, additional supporting material may be linked to the promotion document.

External letters are desirable for promotions of Research Faculty. However, a combination of internal and external letters is acceptable and may be more appropriate, depending on the duties of the position. A minimum of 3 letters is expected. External letters should be sought from peer or aspirational peer universities. Examples of the peer and aspirational peers include members of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and leading international institutions. Letters may also be sought from faculty members at top academic programs from other institutions, and from preeminent experts at other

institutions, although justification in the form of expertise credentials is expected in all cases. Documentation should be included stating whether a letter writer was suggested by the candidate or by the department/school. Deans should certify that the lists of letter-writers meet these expectations for each case going forward in their college.

It is essential to obtain unbiased external evaluations, so the letters should come from distinguished scholars who are not: the candidate's thesis advisor (MS or PhD) or postdoctoral advisor; a business or professional partner; any family relation such as a spouse, sibling, parent, or relative; a collaborator on a substantive project, book, article, paper, or report within the last 24 months. An exception to the latter would be a letter from a collaborator, clearly identified, who can help to define and evaluate the candidate's role in major collaborative work, as per section IV.B.6 of the [Procedures for Granting Academic Tenure and Promotion](#) document.

It should be noted to external reviewers, under Purdue University policies, that their reply will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. The following statement should be included in all external review letter requests:

*Candidates may request a summary of all evaluations in their file, however, sources remain confidential. We cannot guarantee that at some future time a court or government agency will not require the disclosure of the source of confidential evaluations. Purdue University will endeavor to protect the identity of authors of letters of evaluations to the fullest extent allowable under law.*

Finally, tracking the number of solicited external referees who decline or fail to provide letters and/or recording their stated reasons for not writing does not provide relevant, useful information about the quality of the candidate's case. Thus, such information should not be part of the document.

Research Faculty at the rank of full professor selected in accordance with college/school procedures will be voting members for all Research Faculty being considered for promotion.

[Primary Committees](#) are chaired by the school, division, or department head/chair, who serves as a non-voting member unless the number of members on the committee is less than seven. Membership is comprised of all Tenured Professors in the respective administrative unit (see note below). The committee must consist of at least five Tenured Faculty members for cases of promotion to associate professor, and five Tenured Professors for voting on cases of promotion to professor. When this minimum number is not available in the candidate's department additional Tenured Professors are appointed by the chair of the Area Committee to which the Primary Committee reports, following consultation with the appropriate department head. The Provost, dean of the Graduate School, dean of Libraries, and the academic deans may not be voting members of any Primary Committee.

In addition to the above composition requirements, at least one Research Faculty member at the professor level will discuss and vote on all research faculty being considered for promotion to the Research Professor level at the Primary Committees. At least one Research Professor or associate professor will discuss and vote upon promotion up to and including the research associate professor level at the Primary Committee. The committee chair may choose, or the college guidelines may specify, that more than one, or all, qualified research faculty member(s) join the primary committee when it considers research faculty promotion cases. These ad hoc members are entitled to participate in the discussions, and to vote on these cases.

Department heads with faculty members who have joint appointments should follow college guidelines for evaluating joint-appointed faculty. Units that lack college guidelines for this process should consult with the Office of the Provost on these cases.

Each college's [Area Committee](#) is chaired by its dean, who serves as a non-voting member. Membership is comprised of: 1) one tenured faculty member at the rank of professor from each school or department appointed by the dean, and 2) Tenured Faculty members at the rank of professor elected by the voting faculty of the applicable college/school in accordance with procedures established by that faculty. If specified by college/school by-laws, Area Committees may include associate deans as ex-officio (non-voting) members only. At least a third of the membership of each Area Committee consists of Tenured Faculty members without administrative responsibilities. In no case may the number of faculty members without administrative responsibilities be fewer than two. In addition to the above composition requirements, at least one Research Faculty member at the Professor level, chosen as per college guidelines, must sit on the Area Committee when Research Faculty are considered for promotion. The membership of the Area Committee of the Libraries and School of Information Studies will have a different composition due to its unique academic role.

The Campus Promotions Committee for review of Research cases (Panel C) shall consist of the Provost as chair, the Executive Vice President for Research (ex officio), two academic deans or associate deans from colleges/schools that employ Research Faculty, three faculty members appointed by the Provost from the University Promotions Committee, and three research professors appointed by the Provost. For more information on the updated policy and procedures for promoting Research Faculty, see the policy and procedures on [Research Faculty Appointment and Promotion \(VI.F.8\)](#).

It is in the best interest of the University and faculty that full and frank discussions occur during the deliberations of Promotion Committees. The confidentiality of remarks made at such meetings should, therefore, be carefully preserved. Recommendations against promotion may be discussed with the faculty member affected, as per Procedures, in a discreet manner and without undue delay, by the appropriate department head or dean. Faculty will be advised of their promotion progress by their department head after the Primary Committee and by their dean or their designee after the Area Committee and University Promotions Committee meetings. Official notice will be sent to promoted faculty members after the President and the Board of Trustees approve the promotions.

Attendance requirements and the specific rules governing the meaning of participation for the members of the Primary, Area, and Campus Promotions Committees are determined by the committee chair or an academic officer with authority commensurate with or higher than the committee level, in consultation with committee members.

Substantive changes should not be made to the promotion documents once they have been submitted to the Primary Committee for review. New substantive information that is available before the Area Committee meeting, such as newly published works, new funding, and new recognition should be discussed by the head at the Area Committee, or by the dean if new information becomes available prior to University Panel C as appropriate.

Starting this year, all promotion cases considered at the Primary Committee, whether they received a positive review or not, must be passed along to the Area Committee for review. For cases that were not supported by the Primary Committee, the Area Committee may either concur with that judgement, or vote to advance them, based upon their standard review criteria.

### **Relevant Policies, Procedures and Criteria**

Research Faculty Policy and Procedures <http://www.purdue.edu/policies/human-resources/vif8.html>

Structure of Promotion Committees for Purdue West Lafayette:

<https://www.purdue.edu/provost/faculty/promotion/promotion-committee-structure.html>

