

**Department of Political Science**  
**Guidelines for Promotion to Professor**  
**Approved August 11, 2020**

This document articulates the Political Science Department's established standards and expectations for recommending promotion to the rank of Professor and the principles that the Department follows in helping associate professors to achieve that goal. We hope this clarifies the process and provides useful guidance for associate professors about how to demonstrate excellence and create records of scholarly achievement worthy of a positive Departmental recommendation. These standards and expectations reflect University and Dietrich School criteria as well as the norms of our discipline.

**University and Dietrich School Criteria**

Standards for promotion and tenure are described in broad terms by the University and by the Dietrich School. Tenured and tenure-stream faculty should familiarize themselves with the policies regarding appointments and tenure set forth at the University level, which can be found in Article II of the Faculty Handbook (with Chapter IV describing criteria for the different ranks in the tenure stream).<sup>1</sup> The relevant criteria for promotion to the rank of professor at the University level are as follows:

The rank of professor recognizes the attainment of authoritative knowledge and reputation in a recognized field of learning and the achievement of effective teaching skill. The professor should have attained superior stature in his or her field through research, writing, professional practice, or leadership in professional and learned organizations, as well as having exceeded the standards described for [the rank of associate professor].

While the Dietrich School doesn't have a specific statement about promotion to full, it does use the following language in the templates used to request external evaluations:

It may be helpful for you to know that the Bylaws of the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences set the criteria for promotion to professor as "... *the attainment of authoritative knowledge and reputation in a recognized field of learning and the achievement of effective teaching skill. The professor should have attained superior stature in his or her field through research, writing, professional practice, or leadership in professional and learned organizations...*" In judging authoritative knowledge in research we place great weight on the candidate's accomplishments to date, the intellectual power and originality that are revealed by those accomplishments, and the impact that these accomplishments have had on the discipline. And for those candidates whose work is interdisciplinary, collaborative, multidisciplinary or translational in character, or whose intellectual contributions and innovation are registered in part through significant societal impact, we

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.provost.pitt.edu/faculty-handbook/ch2\\_appt\\_tenure](https://www.provost.pitt.edu/faculty-handbook/ch2_appt_tenure)

ask that special care be taken to establish achievement. We are, of course, keenly interested in the candidate's promise of future growth and productivity.

An alternate version of the template uses this language (following immediately after the full text of the University criteria above):

In applying these criteria with respect to scholarship, we place particular weight on the substantive impact of one's work in their discipline. With this in mind, your specific assessment of the candidate's most significant contributions would be greatly appreciated.

### **Departmental Criteria**

Promotion to Full Professor recognizes that the promise of tenure has been fulfilled. Accordingly, the recommendation for promotion to the rank of professor is a qualitative judgment of the full professors in the Department that is informed by the judgment of eminent scholars in the field, and it takes into consideration that evaluation of the candidate's record will differ in certain respects from the evaluation at the time a candidate stands for tenure. Consistent with University and Dietrich School guidelines, we emphasize that while authoritative knowledge and reputation can be demonstrated in numerous ways, special consideration is given to intellectual power and originality as revealed in a candidate's scholarly accomplishments and their impact on the discipline.

Successful candidates for promotion to professor in the Department of Political Science will have continued to demonstrate excellence in their teaching and research as set forth in the Department's guidelines for promotion to associate professor, and in exceeding those standards to have demonstrated attainment of authoritative knowledge and reputation through

- a substantial body of research that makes significant contributions, in the candidate's career to date and beyond the record at the time of tenure;
- evidence that the candidate is providing intellectual leadership and has had, and continues to have, a significant impact on the field;
- evidence of continued teaching excellence and significant experience mentoring and advising students; and
- a record of significant and continuing leadership and service across the Department, the University, and the profession at large.

Tenure affords scholars the freedom to take greater risks in their scholarship, and we expect to see that those risks have paid off – in publications, grants received, awards and honors won, and so on. Thus, it is important to stress that, more so than in the case of criteria for promotion to the rank of associate professor and the awarding of tenure, the time and trajectory to full professor is expected to vary among candidates.

## Department Responsibilities

1. Annual Review
  - a. Since promotion evaluations require the collective judgment of the full professors, full professors will meet annually to generate feedback for all associate professors on their progress toward promotion.
  - b. The full professors' feedback will be conveyed to each associate professor in the annual evaluation letter, as recommended in the Provost's guidelines for faculty evaluations (<https://www.provost.pitt.edu/annual-review-faculty>).
2. Each associate professor will be assigned a mentor by the Chair (which may be the same mentor assigned to the faculty member as an assistant professor). This person will offer advice on expectations for promotion to full professor.
  - a. Mentors should meet formally at least once per semester with associate professors.
  - b. Mentors should, with the Chair, clearly and faithfully convey the results of annual departmental evaluations to associate professors.
  - c. Mentors will, ideally, come from the same subfield as mentees, though this is not required.
  - d. Any associate professor may request a change of mentor from the Chair without explanation.
  - e. Associate professors are encouraged to find informal mentors in other departments, within and beyond Pitt.
3. Associate professors are expected to play an active role in departmental governance and program building.
  - a. Tenure carries with it greater expectations for leadership and service, and we expect and count on associate professors to show creativity and initiative in contributing to common goods within and beyond the department.
  - b. We expect all faculty members (of all ranks) to treat one another with respect.
  - c. Full professors judge promotion cases on the merits, and all full professors have a responsibility to uphold this norm in our discussions and deliberations and to hold others to it.
  - d. In no instance should diversity of committee membership be invoked to justify a disproportionate service expectation on the part of any faculty member of any rank.