

*Tenure, Promotion, and Reappointment Review Guidelines for Biological Sciences  
Adopted August 19, 2008*

**Promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure**

In reviewing candidates for tenure, the Department of Biological Sciences complies on the standards for the award of tenure that are set forth in the *Faculty Manual* (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/facman/>) for the three areas of research, teaching, and service.

**Research:** As stated in the manual, candidates “must have completed and made available research, scholarship, criticism, or artistic production of such high quality as to gain favorable recognition within their discipline and at a national level. Also stated in the manual are indicators of excellence, including “originality, logical rigor, distinctiveness of ideas, creativity of expression, independence of thought in identifying projects and framing issues for analysis, advancement of a theoretical viewpoint or a perceptive and balanced criticism of such a viewpoint, and significant and important intellectual impact.”

In Biological Sciences, research and scholarship are best indicated by peer-reviewed publications and grant proposals. By the time of the tenure review, several significant publications must be published in prominent scientific journals as well as a firm indication of success in obtaining peer-reviewed external research funding (see below). In addition, there should be clear indications of steady future productivity. It is recognized that publications differ greatly in merit and therefore must be judged individually based on the quality and significance of the body of work, rather than by a simple tally of publication number. Quality and significance is determined by a combination of the following criteria: expert opinion within the Department; discussion/citation of the candidate’s work in reviews or other journal articles; invitations to speak at peer institutions or at national and international meetings; successful peer reviewed grant proposals; being asked to provide editorial services or peer-reviews of submitted manuscripts; serving as a peer reviewer for granting agencies; and the receipt of honors for scientific achievements. External reviewers also provide an assessment of quality and impact of the candidate’s work. Their judgment is of great importance not only in determining the significance of already accomplished research but also on the promise for future research and productivity. The assessment of the external reviewers along with the other means listed for establishing quality also are critical in determining the level of national recognition and the reputation of the candidate held by his/her peers at other institutions.

Scholarship in the biological sciences depends on funding research activities. Hence, it is imperative that the candidate establish a record of funding from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, or other governmental and private, peer-reviewed granting agencies. By the time of the tenure review, the expectation is that the candidate has served or is serving as the principal investigator of major grants from

these agencies. Evidence of an ability to sustain funding over the long term is an important criterion for tenure. However, as grants are multi-year entities, timing is often an issue and “funding in hand” or lack thereof at the specific time of tenure review may not be the best indicator of the candidate’s ability to sustainable research funding. Grant resources fluctuate, and there are periods of time when research funds are scarce and difficult to obtain. For instance, there are times when the NIH and the NSF are able to fund less than 10% of proposals. Thus, due consideration must be given to the funding climate during the period of tenure review. Strong peer reviews of proposals will be viewed as evidence of significance in research and of productivity and likely future success, and will therefore be judged positively even though immediate funding was not obtained.

**Teaching:** Demonstration of a high level of teaching effectiveness is assessed in several ways. To conform to the College assessment, the faculty review considers student evaluations as one measure of teaching effectiveness. This input is judged in light of the nature of the course (introductory or advanced, required or elective, large or small enrollment, etc.) and how the course contributes to the department’s undergraduate and/or graduate curriculum. In addition to student evaluations, assessments by senior faculty that have attended the candidate’s classes and have reviewed his/her course materials are particularly useful. In addition to formal classroom lecturing, the candidate must demonstrate the ability to mentor and teach within their own laboratory. This critical teaching service includes sponsoring and supervising undergraduates in independent research, mentoring graduate students and/or postdoctoral fellows, and serving on thesis committees for undergraduate and graduate students in other labs and departments. The performances of the mentored students on their reports and oral presentations reflect in part the quality of instruction given by the candidate. Senior faculty who coordinate research courses or who serve along with the candidate on honors and Ph. D. committees provide insight into the candidate’s commitment and skills as a teacher in the research setting. Undergraduate and graduate students whose work is recognized by research awards or peer-reviewed fellowships, who serve as co-authors on peer-reviewed publications and who present abstracts, research talks and/or posters at important scientific conferences reflect positively on the mentoring/teaching skills of the candidate.

**Service:** The candidate is expected to participate in various departmental functions and provide clear evidence of service within the department. Evidence of participation and departmental service includes attending departmental seminars, inviting and hosting seminar speakers, participating in graduate student and faculty recruiting efforts, attending presentations by undergraduate and graduate students, serving as a major advisor for undergraduates, serving on undergraduate Honors and Ph. D. committees, and participating in the departmental retreat. The candidate is expected to perform a proportional level of departmental committee service, supporting the research and/or the teaching missions of the department.

## **Promotion to Professor**

In reviewing candidates for promotion to Professor, the Department of Biological Sciences complies with the standards for the promotion to Professor as set forth in the *Faculty Manual*.

The *Faculty Manual* sets out the following standards. “Vanderbilt expects the level and quality of achievement in (1) research, scholarship, or creative expression; (2) teaching; and (3) service to be equivalent to that required of Professors in leading departments and schools of other major research universities. The candidate must have attained national or international recognition among leading scholars in his or her discipline for sustained and excellent research, must have taught the courses requested by the department or school at a consistently high level of effectiveness, and must have demonstrated a well developed and recognized record of service both to the University and his or her discipline.”

Biological Sciences uses the same criteria for promotion to Professor as for the tenure review, as presented above. The highest priority for promotion is the significance and impact of the body of published scientific research the candidate has performed since tenure. Sustained productivity, with regard both to publications and to external grant support, is required for promotion. Evidence supporting the continuation of such productivity should be apparent using the criteria from above. The candidate is expected to be a recognized national or international leader in his/her subject area. External reviews by full-professor peers will be used to judge presence and placement among the leading scientists in the candidate’s area of research.

For promotion, the candidate must demonstrate continued effective classroom teaching. In addition, the candidate is expected to have demonstrated effective teaching and mentoring in the laboratory setting for undergraduates, graduate students, and/or postdoctoral fellows and research staff.

A candidate is expected to have made substantial and significant contributions to departmental, college, or University service activities. It is expected that he/she consistently participates in departmental activities, as outlined above, and has provided a leadership role in one or more of such activities. Providing significant service to the profession and scientific or general community at large will provide additional favorable influence on promotion.

## **Review for Reappointment**

The criteria used in the review processes are stated in the *Faculty Manual*: “Tenure-track faculty members should be recommended for reappointment only if their performance provides a reasonable basis on which to project continued progress that could ultimately enable them to qualify for tenure. The evidence needed becomes more weighty with continued time in rank. Some degree of evidence is needed at each renewal period.”

The “second year” review:

For retention, evidence is needed that an independent research program is being established. We expect candidates to have set up an independent research laboratory, both physically and with sufficient personnel that a research program is initiated. By the time of the second year review, it is critical that the candidate have submitted applications for funding from major granting agencies, such as the NIH and the NSF, as appropriate for the field of research. It is desirable that the candidate has attracted interest from graduate students as revealed by rotations or commitments to doing research in candidate’s lab.

Teaching at this point will have been minimal. Evidence of a reasonable start and working towards improving teaching skills through peer mentoring or assistance from the Center For Teaching is expected.

The candidate is expected to have begun showing that he/she is an active and responsible departmental citizen through participation in various departmental activities, such as attendance at departmental faculty meetings, departmental seminars, the departmental retreat, student research presentations, etc

The “fourth year” review:

Criteria for reappointment are more stringent for this review. For retention, evidence must be available that allows one to reasonably conclude that the candidate will meet the standards of tenure within the normal timeframe if he/she continues on his/her current trajectory. An independent research program must have been established and ongoing. It is important for the candidate to be the principal investigator of a significant grant by the time of this review. There is an expectation of having published one or more scientific papers in quality journals or hard evidence that such publications are imminent. There should be a clear upward trajectory of research productivity and progress.

The candidate should have established a teaching portfolio that demonstrates quality and effective teaching both in the classroom and in the laboratory setting. For the latter,

instruction and mentoring of both undergraduates and graduate students generally is expected.

The candidate should be regularly participating in departmental activities as described above (under second year review) and be contributing to departmental service needs, which may include membership on a departmental committee, advising undergraduate students, serving on Honors and Ph. D. thesis committees, or serving as a departmental representative in one of the many settings in which the department has such a need.