Amendments to the Promotion & Tenure Guidelines of the College of Humanities and Sciences

At the close of the 2017-18 academic year, the College received a request from the Provost’s office to ensure that our Promotion & Tenure Guidelines covered all promotion paths available to faculty. She observed, in particular, that our current guidelines were silent on term promotions from Instructor to the Assistant Professor. In light of a large number of term applications of this sort, the lack of specific criteria was problematic legally as well as with respect to integrity of the P&T process.

In late August, 2018, a Task Force formed to review and propose amendments to the College’s P&T Guidelines. The Task Force was comprised of a blend of Term and Research Faculty of all ranks from units across the College. The work of the Task Force concluded in mid-January, when it voted to endorse a series of amendments aimed at strengthening the Guidelines, with particular attention paid to the concerns of the Provost. The amended Guidelines was then forwarded to the College’s P&T Committee, which endorsed the amendments with a few recommendations. The Faculty Council subsequently undertook a review of the amendments, while soliciting feedback from faculty.
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On April 20th, 2019, the Faculty Council approved the following package of amendments, and we are now able to move forward with a vote. For amendments to carry, they will need the support of a majority of the voting Faculty. Once the window to cast ballots has closed, the Faculty Council will compile the votes and notify the Faculty as to the results.

We have created this packet to help you prepare. The following pages detail each amendment or block of amendments, while often providing the rationale given by the Task Force. The online vote will follow the same order and will employ the same language. We hope this will enable you to complete your ballot easily and efficiently.

We thank you for your time and attention throughout the process.

- The Faculty Council of the College of Humanities and Sciences
Amendment #1: Introduction to the P&T Guidelines

Proposed: Insert the following introduction to the P&T Guidelines,

- The College Promotion and Tenure Guidelines (and departmental guidelines) at the candidate’s time of hire will be used to evaluate faculty for tenure and/or promotion to assistant or associate professor; the faculty member may elect to be reviewed under more recently approved guidelines, if such guidelines exist. A faculty member seeking promotion to professor may choose to be reviewed under current guidelines or those immediately preceding them. Faculty choices should be in writing and included in the peer committee report.

Justification:

- This section makes slight editorial modifications and simplifies the treatment of which version of the guidelines must be used in the P&T process. The section that referred to the 2014 Guidelines has been replaced by a general paragraph; and, a final sentence has been added to ensure the inclusion of faculty choices in peer committee P&T reports.

Amendment #2: 1.3 Relationship of the College and its Departments to University Promotion and Tenure Policy

Proposed: Insert the following at the end of the second paragraph, section 1.3,

- The department chair, in consultation with the dean, should determine the makeup of the peer committee. The dean should formally charge all peer committees by May 15. Since the process of identifying and soliciting outside reviewers is critical, this work should be initiated by late spring or early summer. The peer committee chair is responsible for organizing this matter according to all applicable guidelines.

Justification:

- This section clarifies that the peer committee chair, not the department chair, conducts the external review process. That point was unclear in the 2014 Guidelines. Committee charging is moved to spring, so that the committee is operating when external reviews are solicited.
Proposed: Insert the following under the description of Faculty Members

- The criteria defined in section 2.2 of this document provide general guidance for evaluating candidates for promotion within the College of Humanities and Sciences. For tenured and tenure-eligible faculty, specific guidelines are provided. For term (non-tenure) faculty, the criteria for promotion focus upon the candidate’s mix of duties. Departmental guidelines must further define specific criteria for the ratings of Excellent, Very Good, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory in each category of professional activity and will determine whether specific contributions be regarded as teaching, scholarship, or service since there can be overlap among these areas.

Justification:

- The proposed language emphasizes that departmental guidelines “must” define specific criteria for ratings. Currently, specificity of criteria varies substantially across departments, and the intent of the amendment is to mandate some degree of specificity at the department level.
Amendment #4:

2.1.2 Application of Criteria and Criteria Ratings for Promotion for Term (non-tenure) Faculty

Proposed: Insert the following at the end of the first paragraph under 2.1.2,

- Promotion materials must define how faculty efforts have been partitioned among teaching, research, and service.

Justification:

- This is will ensure clarity with respect to the description of the distribution of responsibilities for term faculty within promotion materials.

___ Approve  ___ Reject

Amendment #5:

2.1.2.1 Instructor to Assistant Professor, Term

Proposed: Create section 2.1.2.1, Instructor to Assistant Professor, Term. (See Appendix A.)

Justification:

- This section develops a promotion process for term instructors that does not involve detailed review by a peer committee or the College P&T Committee. Departments have the flexibility to set appropriate academic credentials to be considered for promotion. This is important, because some departments hire term faculty without terminal degrees at the instructor level, but do not want to promote these faculty to the assistant level. Departments also have flexibility with regard to participation of the faculty in the process. The chair's report goes directly to the dean without going through the College P&T Committee, which will substantially lessen the burden on that committee. The process also sets rating standards while recognizing that term faculty have varying areas of responsibility.

___ Approve  ___ Reject
Amendment #6:

2.1.2.2 Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, Term

Proposed: Create section 2.1.2.2 Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, Term. (See Appendix B.)

Justification:

- Though term faculty do not have probationary periods, the timelines and review processes set in this and later sections correspond as much as possible to those of tenure-track faculty.

___ Approve
___ Reject

Amendment #7:

2.1.2.3 Associate Professor to Professor, Term

Proposed: Create section 2.1.2.3 Associate Professor to Professor, Term, as follows,

For promotion from the rank of associate professor to professor, term faculty must follow the same review procedures as specified for tenured and tenure-track faculty with the exception that external review is required only if research is designated as the primary responsibility. Areas of responsibility in teaching, research, and service are designated by reported percentages of effort devoted to each. Successful candidates for promotion to the rank of professor must be rated Excellent in their primary area of responsibility and at least Very Good in a secondary area, and at least Very Good in a third area, if applicable.

Justification:

- The Task Force concluded that term faculty with just one area of responsibility should be eligible for promotion to assistant and later to associate professor, but that promotion to full professor should involve wider areas of academic work - i.e., in at least two of the traditional areas of professional responsibility.
Proposed:

(a) Insert the following after the list of indicators of effective teaching:

- A rating of Excellent for promotion to assistant professor requires evidence of high-quality performance in areas one through three, reflecting success in teaching, and evidence of commitment to improving educational practices. Candidates achieving a rating of Very Good in this category shall have a sustained record of effective teaching performance as indicated by items one through three above. Candidates achieving a rating of Satisfactory in this category shall have demonstrated competent and professional performance of their teaching responsibilities. Candidates whose teaching does not meet any of the standards above will receive a rating of Unsatisfactory.

(b) Insert ‘evidence of’ into the description of Excellent and ‘effective’ into the description of Very Good for promotion to associate professor:

- A rating of Excellent for promotion to associate professor requires evidence of high-quality performance...
- ...Candidates achieving a rating of Very Good in this category shall have a sustained record of effective teaching performance...

Justification:

- Criteria for rankings were added to each of the three areas of professional responsibility for promotion to assistant professor. The criteria are somewhat less difficult to achieve than for the two higher promotion levels. For example, promotion to associate professor with a rating of Excellent requires "additional contributions" in items 4-11, but promotion to assistant professor does not. This principle was also followed for Scholarship and Service sections.
Proposed: Insert the following after the list of indicators of effective scholarship, regarding excellence in scholarship for promotion to assistant professor.

- To receive an *Excellent* rating in scholarship, a candidate for promotion to assistant professor should show a pattern of accomplishment that indicates progress toward a national and/or international reputation. A rating of *Very Good* requires a pattern of ongoing scholarly activity, contributions to scholarship in the candidate’s field, and the potential to attain a national and/or international reputation. A rating of *Satisfactory* requires demonstrated professional competence and contributions to scholarship in the candidate’s field. A candidate whose scholarship does not meet any of the standards above will receive a rating of *Unsatisfactory*. 
Proposed:

(a) Insert the following after the list of indicators of effective service, regarding excellence in service for promotion to assistant professor:

- To receive an Excellent rating in service, a candidate for promotion to assistant professor must provide evidence of sustained, high-quality service that is significant and substantive in one or more of the above categories. To receive a rating of Very Good, the candidate must provide evidence of effective and significant contributions in one or more of the above categories. To receive a rating of Satisfactory, the candidate must present a record of service reflecting a commitment to the goals of the department. A candidate whose service does not meet any of the standards above will receive a rating of Unsatisfactory.

(b) Replace the language regarding excellence in service for promotion to associate professor with the following:

- To receive an Excellent rating in service, a candidate for promotion to associate professor must have a record of sustained, high-quality service that is significant and substantive in at least two of the above categories.

(c) Replace the initial language regarding excellence in service for promotion to full professor with the following:

- To receive an Excellent rating in service, a candidate for promotion to professor must possess a superior record of departmental, college, university, or professional service.
Amendment #11:

3.2.3 Evaluation of Probation for Tenure-Eligible Faculty

Proposed: Insert the following language

- The department chair will then write the chair evaluation of the faculty member’s progress toward tenure in the areas of teaching, scholarship and service.

Justification:

- This change clarifies the nature of the written report from the chair.

Amendment #12:

3.2.3.1 Pre-Promotion Review for Term Faculty

Proposed: Create section 3.2.3.1 Pre-Promotion Review for Term Faculty. (See Appendix C.)

Justification:

- Currently, there is no specified requirement or procedure for term faculty to have a review prior to being considered for promotion to associate professor. The Task Force agreed that term faculty should receive some structured guidance beyond the annual reviews about what they should be doing to be successful. As much as possible, this section reflects the procedures of the third-year review for tenure-track faculty. The timing of the review represents a compromise between having faculty wait an unreasonable amount of time before promotion, yet allowing sufficient time to allow them to make any suggested changes before the promotion review.
Amendment #13(a):

7.1.1.1 Peer Evaluation

Proposed (a): Replace the language of 7.1.1.1 with the following (new language in red)

1. Each candidate will be reviewed by a peer committee. All faculty members of peer committees for tenured or tenure-eligible candidates shall be tenured. Peer committees for term faculty must include at least one tenured and one term faculty member.

Justification:

- 7.1.1.1 specifies that there should be at least one term faculty member on a term faculty peer committee. The Task Force thought it would be desirable to specify a requirement for more than one term faculty member. However, current university guidelines specify that term faculty peer committees must have a majority of tenured faculty members. Assuming one student member, for a five-person committee, three tenured faculty would be needed, leaving room for only one term faculty member. University guidelines are currently being reviewed, so the requirement for a majority of tenured faculty may change. If it changes in the direction of requiring, say, only two tenured faculty, College committees could have two tenured faculty, two term faculty, and one student member.

- Nevertheless, at this time, the number of term faculty on a peer committee cannot be increased under University guidelines without either eliminating the student or increasing the total number of members to seven. The proposed language allows for flexibility to add more term faculty to peer committees if university guidelines change. This rationale also informs the proposed amendment to 7.1.1.1.a (below).

*** There will be a single vote for Amendment 13. You will not vote on parts a-d individually.***
For tenure-eligible faculty, the department chair, in consultation with the dean, will appoint a committee of at least five members, of which at least three will be full time faculty members of the candidate's primary department. There will be at least one student member and one faculty member from another department, both of whom also shall have full voting rights. For term faculty, the department chair, in consultation with the dean, will appoint a committee of at least four members. At least two will be full time faculty members of the candidate's primary department at or above the rank to which promotion is sought, including at least one tenured faculty member and at least one term faculty member. There will be at least one student member and one faculty member from another department, both of whom also shall have full voting rights. In all cases, if there is an insufficient number of individuals within the department to fulfill these requirements, individuals from a similar department either within the university or from an external institution may be selected. The department chair will identify the peer evaluation committee members in a letter to the candidate, and will send copies to the committee members, one of whom will be named as chair of the peer committee. Along with this letter the department chair will send copies of the university, college, and department documents concerning tenure and promotion.
Proposed (c): Replace 7.1.1.1.c, with the following,
For tenure-eligible assistant professors, candidates in their sixth year must be evaluated simultaneously for tenure and for promotion to associate professor. A faculty member may be considered for tenure at most once prior to the mandatory tenure review. For term faculty, unsuccessful candidates for promotion to the rank of associate professor must wait at least two years from the time of decision before reapplying. For tenured or term faculty, unsuccessful candidates for promotion to the rank of professor must wait at least two years from the time of decision before reapplying.

Justification:

• This amendment specifies a waiting period for term faculty, in the event of an unsuccessful application for promotion to associate professor, before they are eligible to reapply. It also addresses a waiting period for term faculty in the event of an unsuccessful application for full professor.

Proposed: Replace “him or her” with “them” in the first sentence of 7.1.1.1.d, as follows,
Candidates will have the right to challenge for cause any member of the peer committee evaluating and reviewing them for promotion, tenure, or promotion and tenure.
Amendment #14:

12.0 Amending the College Promotion and Tenure Guidelines

___ Approve
___ Reject

Proposed: Amend the language of 12.0 with the following (new language in red),

Amendments to these guidelines and suggestions for technical changes may be requested by any faculty member in writing or at a regularly scheduled Faculty Council meeting, by the dean, or by the College Promotion and Tenure Committee.

Amendments will take effect only after this sequential procedure has been followed:
  a. review and approval by the College Promotion and Tenure Committee;
  b. announcement of the proposed changes to the college faculty followed by a commentary period, coordinated by the Faculty Council;
  c. review and approval by the Faculty Council;
  d. a vote by ballot of the full-time faculty, coordinated by the Faculty Council, requiring approval by a majority of those voting for adoption.

Technical changes to these guidelines, including changes intended for clarification or consistency with university promotion and tenure policies and procedures, will take effect only after this sequential procedure has been followed:
  a. review and approval by the College Promotion and Tenure Committee;
  b. review and approval by the Faculty Council;
  c. announcement of the proposed changes to the college faculty followed by a two-week commentary period, coordinated by the Faculty Council;
  d. if at least ten percent of the full-time faculty object during the commentary period to a change designated as technical, the change(s) will be put to a vote of the entire faculty, coordinated by the Faculty Council.
Amendment #14:

12.0 Amending the College Promotion and Tenure Guidelines (cont’d)

Justification:

• The current guidelines attempt to describe both amendments to the guidelines and suggestions for technical changes in one listing of procedures. This arrangement could result in confusion, so this amendment separates the two processes. This amendment also clarifies that Faculty Council will conduct the H&S faculty vote.
Appendix A: 2.1.2.1, Instructor to Assistant Professor, Term

For promotion from the rank of instructor to assistant professor, term faculty members must hold appropriate credentials as specified in departmental guidelines. Term faculty members hired at the instructor level will typically be eligible to be considered for promotion after three years of full-time faculty experience at VCU. Exceptions may be granted by the department chair, in consultation with the dean, based on such considerations as prior service at another academic institution, receipt of a terminal degree, or exceptional performance.

To be promoted to assistant professor, the candidate is expected to have performed all required academic duties. The departmental guidelines shall determine the role of departmental faculty in the review process. The chair, in accordance with departmental guidelines, will submit the unit’s recommendation directly to the dean, who will make a recommendation to the provost; the College Promotion and Tenure Committee will not participate in the process.

Successful candidates for promotion to the rank of assistant professor must excel in their primary area of responsibility. Promotion to the rank of assistant professor requires an evaluation of Excellent in the area of primary responsibility, and at least Satisfactory in the remaining two areas, if applicable, as defined in departmental guidelines.
Appendix B: 2.1.2.2 Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, Term

Term assistant professors will typically be eligible to be considered for promotion after five years of full-time experience in rank. Exceptions may be granted by the department chair, in consultation with the dean, based on such considerations as prior service at another academic institution or exceptional performance in keeping with the University guidelines, as agreed upon at the point of hire. Term faculty at the assistant professor rank seeking promotion must undergo a pre-promotion review by a peer committee during a spring semester at least two years prior to promotion review, following the guidelines specified in section 3.2.3.1. For promotion from the rank of assistant professor to associate professor, term faculty must follow the same review procedures as specified in section 7.0 with the exception that external review is required only if research is designated as the primary responsibility. Areas of responsibility in teaching, research, and service are designated by reported percentages of effort devoted to each.

Successful candidates for promotion to the rank of associate professor must excel in their primary area of responsibility. Promotion to the rank of associate professor requires an evaluation of Excellent in the area of primary responsibility; Very Good or above in an area of secondary responsibility, if applicable; and Satisfactory or above in an area of tertiary responsibility, if applicable.
Appendix C: 3.2.3.1 Pre-Promotion Review for Term Faculty

It is the policy of the college to review term assistant professors at least two years prior to promotion review. The purpose of this pre-promotion review is to provide a timely assessment of the faculty member’s performance and constructive suggestions for improvement. The review should also ensure appropriate documentation of performance in the specified area(s) of responsibility. This review is more comprehensive than and separate from the annual review by the department, but less elaborate and formal than the full review by a peer committee for promotion. The timing of this review is intended to evaluate progress toward eventual promotion or whether this outcome seems unlikely. The pre-promotion review is conducted primarily at the department level and consists of reports prepared by a review committee and by the chair. The review committee shall be appointed by the chair and consist of at least three full-time faculty members in the department at or above the rank to which promotion is sought, including at least one tenured faculty member and at least one term faculty member. If there is an insufficient number of individuals within the department to fulfill these requirements, individuals from a similar department may be selected. The faculty member under review will prepare and submit a dossier with information relevant to the specified area(s) of responsibility (see section 2.2) during a spring semester at least two years prior to promotion review. The committee will then evaluate the progress of the faculty member toward meeting the criteria for promotion in the department, guided by the faculty member’s work plans developed in accordance with the Faculty Roles and Rewards Policy. The review committee will submit a signed report evaluating progress in the specified area(s) of responsibility to the department chair. If the committee finds the faculty member’s progress to be unsatisfactory, then it should state its concern in the report and make recommendations. The department chair will then write the chair evaluation of the faculty member’s progress toward promotion. The faculty member will receive these reports and discuss them with the chair as to perceived strengths and weaknesses and plans for improving performance in the specified area(s) of responsibility. Both reports will then be forwarded to the dean.