

*A Guide to Preparing for  
Promotion and Tenure  
in the College of Basic Sciences*

***Forward***

When junior faculty members ask me about promotion and tenure, my advice is “it’s not complicated, but that doesn’t mean that it’s easy”. When we hire tenure-track faculty in the College of Basic Sciences, we do so with the hope and expectation that they will be successful, and that they will enjoy long and prosperous careers at LSU. Toward that end, we strive to provide new faculty with appropriate resources (e.g., set-up packages, infrastructure, and guidance) that will allow them to be successful. Although the process of promotion and tenure is not intended to be so, it can seem to be a mysterious process, especially to the uninitiated. This document is intended to demystify and provide clarity as to how the P&T process works at LSU, and provide insight into expectations for successful tenure and promotion.

This document is derived from a similar one that was prepared by Dean Peter Rabideau in the early 1990’s. Unfortunately, I cannot blame him for any errors in style or content that may be found in the following pages.

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***Dean***

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## **General Comments**

Promotion and tenure is a very serious matter, and proper attention to rules and regulations is essential. While the College of Basic Sciences and departments have certain latitude in determining their policies regarding promotion and tenure, all college and departmental policies must be consistent with the policies and procedures outlined in *Policy Statement 36 – Tenure Track and Tenured Faculty appointments, Reappointment, Promotions, Advancement to Tenure, Annual Reviews, and Enhancement of Job Performance (07/01/1997 2005 Revision* -[http://appl003.lsu.edu/ups.nsf/\\$Reference/PS-36](http://appl003.lsu.edu/ups.nsf/$Reference/PS-36)]. Thus, the present document is intended to complement but not supersede PS-36. At the time this document was prepared, a revision of PS-36 was approaching completion. Although the new PS-36 document will be a significantly more readable document, it will not significantly alter the way we do P&T. Regardless, until the new PS-36 is formally approved, we will continue to operate under the 1997 version.

Our goal is to hire outstanding faculty with the explicit hope and expectation that they will have long and distinguished careers at LSU. Toward that end, the college and departments are committed to providing financial support, administrative infrastructure, and mentoring that will facilitate achievement of the desired outcome.

## **I - Administrative Policy**

### ***Mentoring Committees***

All untenured, tenure-track faculty members should be assigned a mentoring committee within their first semester of residence. The purpose of the committee is to provide guidance, support, and ‘tough love’ when needed toward the ultimate goal of obtaining tenure. The department chair is responsible for appointing the committee. The committee should consist of three tenured faculty members. At least two members of the committee should come from the candidate’s home department (the department in which tenure will reside). In the case of joint appointments, one of the committee members should come from the department in which the junior faculty member has a minority (< 50%) appointment. Faculty members that have joint appointments with the Center for Computational Technology (CCT) should have one committee member from CCT. The goal is to appoint a committee whose scientific interests complement those of the junior faculty member; the junior faculty member should feel free to recommend particular faculty members as potential members of their committee.

As the name implies, the charge of the mentoring committee is to provide guidance to the junior faculty member in all aspects of his/her professional development. The following are some examples of what a junior faculty member should expect from a mentoring committee: (1) review drafts of grant proposals and manuscripts and discuss reviews of declined grant proposals and manuscripts, (2) advise on matters such as appropriate levels of service commitments to university and professional organizations, and faculty relations, and (3) advise on teaching methodologies and student relations.

The committee is expected to be available to provide advice as needed. The junior faculty member should keep their mentoring committee well updated on relevant activities, such as submission/acceptance of papers and grant proposals; student evaluations of teaching should also be forwarded to the mentoring committee ASAP.

At least once per semester, a member of the mentoring committee should attend a lecture of the junior faculty member and provide constructive criticism. If student evaluations indicate that teaching methods need to be improved, the committee should immediately discuss the situation with the junior faculty member and attempt to resolve the problem.

Early in the spring semester of each year, the junior faculty member should submit his/her annual report to the mentoring committee, along with an updated c.v. The committee should meet with the junior faculty member and discuss her/his progress and any areas of concern. The chair of the mentoring committee should prepare a memo summarizing the points of discussion and send it to the department chair (a copy of the memo should be given to the junior faculty member); the memo will be included in the junior faculty member's permanent file. Most department chairs find these reports to be useful as they prepare their annual evaluations.

### ***Procedures***

**3<sup>rd</sup>-year review.** New tenure-track faculty assistant professors are initially given a 3-year appointment. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the appointment, typically in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, tenured faculty members are obligated to review progress by the untenured faculty member and make a recommendation to the dean regarding reappointment. In the case of an assistant professor, the tenured faculty can recommend one of three options: (1) An additional 3-year appointment. Such an appointment would carry the assistant professor through the time when mandatory P&T review is required; (2) A reappointment for 1 year. Such a recommendation would occur when tenured faculty members have significant concerns about the progress of an assistant professor. This recommendation would require another review the following year; (3) Non-renewal of appointment. If the tenured faculty concludes that there is sufficient evidence to indicate that an assistant professor would not be successful at obtaining tenure, they can recommend that the appointment not be renewed. Further, in the case of option 2 (1-year reappointment), the faculty has the option of recommending non-renewal of an appointment at any time prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> year of appointment. P&T review is mandatory in the 6<sup>th</sup> year. The dean makes the final decision regarding reappointment of assistant professors.

The initial appointment of an untenured associate or full professor is for  $\leq 5$  years, and they must be considered for tenure no later than their 4<sup>th</sup> year of residence.<sup>1</sup> If a reappointment is necessary, the final decision rests with the provost (to whom the dean submits a recommendation).

**Promotion & tenure review.** The P&T process typically<sup>2</sup> begins in the spring semester prior to the academic year in which the evaluation will occur. Early in the spring semester, department chairs will be given a list of faculty members who will be up for mandatory review in the coming academic year. Chairs will also be asked to identify any other individuals who wish to be considered for promotion (i.e., an early tenure decision or promotion to full professor). In the case of accelerated reviews, a vote of approval from the eligible faculty is required in order to proceed with a full review of the case. The following reviews are considered to be

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<sup>1</sup> The current version of PS-36 states that initial appointments must be for  $\leq 4$  years, with mandatory review in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. However, a Board of Supervisors document entitled "Bylaws and Regulations" [<http://appl003.ocs.lsu.edu/ups.nsf/e74cb75741c3eafc86256bf9006c3bfb/69ea48637fda226586256fea005b6b51?OpenDocument>] overrides the PS-36 statement, and makes the 4<sup>th</sup> year of appointment the time for mandatory review. In the proposed revision of PS-36, the initial appointment of untenured associate and full professors can be 3-5 years, and they must be considered for promotion no later than their 4<sup>th</sup> year of residence

<sup>2</sup> In the case of individuals who began their appointment in January, the process begins in the fall semester preceding mandatory review

“accelerated” unless some specific agreement has been negotiated to the contrary:

Assistant to Associate with tenure prior to 6<sup>th</sup> year of appointment  
Untenured to tenured Associate or Full prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> year of appointment  
Tenured Associate to Full prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> year of appointment

Following the procedures described below, the department identifies a list of reviewers for each candidate that is being considered for promotion and/or tenure. The department chair presents the list of potential reviewers to the dean for approval. Prior to the end of the spring semester, all reviewers should be contacted to verify their willingness to review the package. Reviewers will be informed that they will receive the complete promotion package on September 1 and that evaluations will need to be returned by the end of the second week in October (further details about selection of reviewers are provided below).

Departmental promotion and tenure documents must be submitted to the dean's office by a pre-announced date, usually in the first week of November.

The College has two promotion and tenure committees that are advisory to the dean (see below), and both of these committees meet shortly after departments have completed their deliberations and chairs have made their recommendations.

Final recommendations from the dean are generally due to Academic Affairs in November, prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Formal, recorded recommendations on the promotion and tenure forms to the LSU Board of Supervisors are made by the following units or individuals:

- (1) The departmental faculty (i.e., the departmental vote is reported)
- (2) The Chair of the department
- (3) The Dean
- (4) The Provost
- (5) The Chancellor

Additional input is advisory only:

- (1) The Basic Sciences P&T committee
- (2) The Basic Sciences chair committee
- (3) The Dean of the Graduate School (advised by Campus Review Committee)
- (4) The Provost's advisory committee

The College of Basic Sciences P&T Committee consists of one elected full professor from each of the 5 departments. An additional 2-3 members may be appointed to the committee by the dean.

The Provosts advisory committee consists of five members selected from among the 10-membered Graduate Council, with the Dean of the Graduate School chairing and serving as an *ex officio* member. Each of these reviewers ranks the candidates as A, B, C, D, or F. A rank of D or F is considered a vote against promotion/tenure. The rankings of this review committee are forwarded to the Provost.

**Mandatory vs. Accelerated Review.** Early tenure reviews are those submitted prior to the mandatory review period. As noted above, mandatory tenure reviews are conducted in the 6<sup>th</sup> year for assistant professors and in the 4<sup>th</sup> year for tenure-track associate and full professors. Earlier reviews are sometimes appropriate due to credit for prior service elsewhere or exceptional accomplishments. Assistant professors may not be reappointed after seven years of

service without tenure, and associate and full professors may not be reappointed after four years of service without tenure, unless explicit permission to do so has been granted (see below). The College is willing to consider early decisions, but they must involve truly exemplary performance. Further, early tenure reviews should only be considered when an applicant has unambiguously demonstrated excellence in all areas (research, teaching, and service).

Tenured associate professors are not required to be considered for promotion to full professor, and thus there is no 'mandatory' review. However, promotion from associate to full professor prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> year of appointment at the associate level is also considered 'accelerated' and subject to the conditions noted above.

**Tenure-clock extensions.** Situations may arise in which it is appropriate to delay a mandatory tenure decision. A serious illness or birth of a child are examples of circumstances that might justify an extension. It is important to emphasize, however, that tenure-clock extensions must be requested by the untenured faculty member (i.e., there is no situation under which the tenure clock is automatically extended). Requests for an extended tenure clock should be in the form of a memo from the faculty member, addressed to the Provost, and routed through the chair and dean. Requests for an extended tenure clock should be submitted as soon as possible; last-minute requests are less likely to be approved

**Reconsideration of a negative tenure decision.** "Applicants who have undergone a mandatory review and received a negative decision may apply for re-review in those extremely rare circumstances in which substantially new, relevant information comes about. Upon agreement by the applicant's department to do so, the procedure outlined in PS-36 for non-mandatory review ("early" review) for tenure will be followed."

### ***Review Committees***

**Department Level.** PS-36 discusses the role of 'promotion and tenure committees', a term that causes considerable confusion. Technically, all departments have a P&T committee. For some departments the P&T committee is a representative subset of the tenured faculty that is responsible for organizing P&T packages and making recommendations to the full faculty. For other departments the P&T committee is comprised of all tenured faculty members holding a rank above the faculty member in question. For example, all tenured faculty members with the rank of associate or full professor are eligible to serve on a departmental promotion and tenure committee considering promotions from assistant to associate professor. For consideration of promotions to full professor, only tenured full professors are eligible.

While the College strongly encourages all eligible faculty members to vote on promotion and tenure issues, it is recognized that some faculty may be out of the country for extended periods or may need to recuse themselves because of a conflict of interest (e.g., a spouse). It is College policy that faculty members on sabbatical leave or leaves of absences not vote since they cannot participate in discussion. Thus the department chairs constitute the departmental committees from eligible faculty who are able to vote. Chairs must account for the all eligible faculty members when preparing their reports, and are required to provide a brief explanation for any faculty member that did not vote.

Departments may use subcommittees to gather information, organize outside letters and help prepare documentation. The subcommittee may provide the results of its activities to the full faculty committee, but should not vote prior to the full committee meeting. All

subcommittee presentations should be factual and objective. Candidates should be apprised of any such committees and their memberships.

**College Level.** Two College committees serve in an advisory capacity to the dean. They are (1) the department chairs of the College, and (2) a committee of faculty members at the rank of full professor. The latter committee consists of one representative elected from each department by vote of all of the tenure-track faculty, plus three additional faculty members appointed by the dean. The chair of the College P&T committee is appointed by the dean. According to university policy, the recommendations and vote from these committees do not constitute part of the formal record, except as they may be incorporated into the comments and recommendations by the dean. Normally, the dean includes information from these committees—including the vote—in the dean's comments.

Individuals such as Institute Directors or Directors of Schools or Centers may also provide recommendations to the dean when faculty members belong to Institutes, Schools, or Centers. This recommendation will not be part of the formal record except that it may be incorporated into the comments and recommendation of the dean.

**University Level.** As mentioned above, a Campus Review Committee consists of members selected from the Graduate Council. This committee makes a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School, who in turn forwards a formal recommendation to the Provost .

### ***Outside Letters***

The opinions of outside reviewers play an extremely important role in the promotion and tenure process, and thus attention to proper procedures is of utmost importance. The candidate is allowed to suggest names of potential reviewers, and may also submit names of potential reviewers that the candidate feels should not be used (any such list should be very short). It is recommended that the candidate submit a list of 5 or 6 potential reviewers. The candidate should bear in mind that half or more of the reviewers will come from individuals *not* on the candidate's list. The reason for this is to avoid selecting a set of reviewers that are strongly biased in favor of the candidate. Therefore, the candidate should think carefully about how many reviewers to put on the list, and who to include. For example, if the candidate lists the top 20 people in their field, the committee may have relatively few choices to draw upon for additional reviewers.

The department chair and the appropriate P&T committee are responsible for choosing evaluators. Approval of outside reviewers by the dean is required, but the dean expects to follow the recommendations of the chair and P&T committee provided that the guidelines outlined below are followed. PS-36 requires a minimum of 3 outside letters; however, our goal is to have at least 5 letters, and we recommend soliciting 7 or 8 letters, 3 or 4 of which will come from the candidate's list. As noted above, the appropriate departmental representative should contact potential letter writers before the end of the spring semester and obtain a verbal commitment that the review will be received by the second Monday of October. All letters received must be included in the promotion package. An example copy of letters sent to reviewers must also be included in the package that is reviewed by the faculty and forwarded to the dean. [A standard solicitation letter is available from the College. Any substantial changes to this standard letter should be approved by the dean.]

The following guidelines for selection of reviewers should be followed:

- Reviewers below the rank of full professor are not acceptable for candidates being considered for the rank of full professor, and should be avoided, where possible, even for candidates being considered for promotion to associate professor (and then, no more than one associate professor should be used).
- At least half of the reviewers should not know the candidate personally.
- Reviewers should generally be at institutions with a research stature that is comparable or superior to LSU.
- Reviewers with potential conflicts of interest should be avoided. Exclude former thesis advisors, former post-doctoral mentors, co-authors on papers, and collaborators on grants.
- Avoid reviewers at institutions where the candidate has earned a degree, performed postdoctoral research, or had any other official appointment, regardless of whether the reviewer's appointment at the institution overlapped with that of the candidate.
- Do not solicit letters from more than one individual at a single institution.

## **II - Criteria for Promotion and Tenure**

As outlined in PS-36, faculty considered for promotion and tenure will be judged on their performance in the areas of teaching, research, and service. However, PS-36 recognizes that different departments and colleges may well have different expectations, and the relative emphasis among these three areas might vary significantly. The College of Basic Sciences is the premier research unit at a Research Extensive university, and, as a consequence, considerable emphasis is placed on research for most faculty members. Accordingly, the quality of the letters written by external reviewers plays a very important role in promotion and tenure deliberations. Ordinarily, these reviewers are in a position to comment primarily on the research record, secondarily on the service record, and very little, if at all, on the teaching record.

The above comments on research notwithstanding, demonstration of quality teaching is absolutely essential to successful promotion. Although most everyone will agree that the quality of teaching is important to all universities – including those with Research Extensive status – there has always been a problem in how good teaching is judged and evaluated. Student evaluation of instruction is controversial, although most of the literature on the subject suggests that this method does provide a reasonably good indication of the quality of teaching, especially when the common perturbations are understood. However, the need for additional methods to evaluate teaching performance has been widely recognized, and this has led to the development of the Teaching Portfolio. This approach is described in greater detail below.

### ***Research Record***

The research record is normally of critical importance for promotion and tenure consideration. It would be convenient if we could simply require some specified number of papers in refereed journals, and a dollar figure in grants and contracts. However, each candidate is an individual case; no simple numerically based formula can (or should) be applied, and it would be foolish to try to describe minimum requirements in these terms.

**Publications.** The most desirable publication record is one that is steady (publications every year), prolific (lots of papers), and high quality (high-impact papers in quality peer-reviewed journals). For example, a record of no or minimal publications for several years followed by a sudden burst of papers in the last year may be viewed with skepticism, particularly if those papers appear in marginal journals. Consistent publication in leading journals is

preferred to similar or even greater publication rates in low-impact journals. Papers containing original research generally carry greater weight than review or methods papers.

The c.v. should clearly indicate papers that have been published since coming to LSU, or since the last promotion. It should clearly differentiate peer-reviewed from non-peer-reviewed publications. Highlight any papers that involve student authors, and indicate whether the student was a graduate or undergraduate. Indicate the corresponding author for each publication. Published papers, papers in press, and papers currently under review should be clearly differentiated. In general, there is little to be gained by including papers that are “in preparation”, but any such listing should be clearly distinguished from papers that have been published or submitted for review.

**Funding.** In general, faculty members are expected to successfully compete for funding from major federal agencies (e.g., NSF, NIH, DOE, ONR, NOAA, USDA, EPA, NASA). In addition to providing the financial resources necessary to maintain a successful research program, federal funding typically requires rigorous peer review by leading researchers across the nation. Thus, the ability to attract funding from federal agencies is an important endorsement of a respected research program. The emphasis on federal funding should not be interpreted to mean that funding from other sources is undesirable. Indeed, faculty members are encouraged to pursue any funding opportunities that will facilitate their research programs. In particular, LEQSF is a very nice source of support for many beginning faculty, and is an important means of attracting funds for various equipment purchases. Industrial support, pass-through programs, and private philanthropic organizations may also provide funding opportunities. All of these sources of support are potentially very valuable, and can significantly facilitate the ability to attract major federal funding. While young faculty members are encouraged to pursue all sources of funding that will allow them to establish their programs, they should not delay in submitting to federal agencies. Funding is difficult to get, and rarely does one get it on the first try.

In the c.v., the candidate should clearly indicate his/her role in funded projects. Were you the sole PI? If it was a collaborative proposal, were you PI or Co-PI? For how many years is the project funded? What is the dollar value of the grant? What is your share of funds in a collaborative project?

**Collaborative Research.** There is an increasing trend to bring a variety of tools to bear on the solution of science questions. In addition, current tight funding, together with a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary research by most funding agencies, encourages collaborative research. We strongly support and encourage interdisciplinary research. It is also important that untenured faculty demonstrate their ability to do independent work, and the faculty member’s independence and creativity should be evident. For example, if a faculty member’s first few “independent” papers represent collaborations with former mentors who then appear as co-authors, questions are always asked about relative contributions. Outside reviewers and committee members can be very tough on this issue, and many will discount all such publications. It is important that one’s own contribution be easily recognizable, and if one is publishing with a senior researcher in a long-standing area of the senior researcher’s research, this point is sometimes hard to make. Similarly, if an individual is one of a number of co-PIs on a grant to a more senior investigator, that individual’s contribution may be questioned, especially in the case of a young researcher. However, in the case of collaboration on a program project,

for example, where each contribution is evaluated and funded separately, these issues ordinarily would not be raised.

We emphasize again that collaborative, interdisciplinary research is encouraged and strongly supported by the College. Those junior faculty members who are engaged in interdisciplinary research need to demonstrate that they are contributing substantially and tangibly to collaborative research, and that the success of their research program is not entirely dependent on the success of other researchers. Demonstration of the ability to lead interdisciplinary research is a particularly desirable trait.

### ***Teaching Record***

As a university, education is our primary business. Within the College of Basic Sciences, education includes classroom teaching, instruction in both the teaching and research laboratories, and graduate and undergraduate student mentoring. The College values quality teaching and we should not hire individuals who likely will not be good classroom teachers. All faculty members are expected to take their teaching obligations seriously. The College recommends that the number of new courses taught by untenured faculty should be kept to a minimum (no more than 3 throughout their appointment as assistant professor).

Although the evaluation of good teaching is challenging, all faculty should be encouraged to develop and maintain a **Teaching Portfolio**. The portfolio should include Student Evaluations, Peer Evaluations (e.g., from members of the mentoring committee), Self-Assessments, Course Outlines and Syllabi, Ancillary Materials (handouts, overheads, etc.), Documentation on Activities Outside the Classroom (field trips, exhibits, etc.), Multimedia Material, Student Projects, a Statement of Teaching Philosophy, and Records of Advising Activities. The meaning of numerical student evaluation scores should be clearly described (i.e., question 1-8, question 9, question 10) and all scores should be included. Also, verbally or graphically indicate how your scores compare to departmental and college averages and standard deviations for comparable classes [Introductory (1\*\*\*-2\*\*\*), Upper undergraduate (3\*\*\*-4\*\*\*), and Graduate (7\*\*\*)].

### ***Service Record***

The departments, colleges and university expect some service activity from each of its faculty members. Moreover, the question of good departmental citizenship often arises for promotion consideration at the departmental level. Nonetheless, departments are encouraged to keep service activity to a minimum for untenured faculty members. This is often difficult because young people bring new ideas that are always badly needed. Nonetheless, service beyond the satisfactory level is not likely to have much impact on a promotion document unless it has national or international impact. Examples of the latter would include journal editor or society officer, but such opportunities are uncommon for untenured faculty.

## **P&T package checklist**

*To be provided by the candidate:*

- (1) A standard (non-LSU) format c.v., as well as an LSU-format c.v.\*.
  - a. Clearly indicate papers published since coming to LSU and since last promotion.
  - b. Indicate papers with student coauthors.
  - c. Indicate corresponding author.
  - d. Indicate your role in funded projects (e.g., PI, Co-PI, or other capacity).
  - e. Indicate the duration of funded projects.
  - f. Indicate the amount of funding, and your share of that funding.
- (2) A Statement of Research Objectives.
- (3) A Teaching Portfolio, which should include:
  - a. A Statement of Teaching Philosophy.
  - b. The most recent syllabus for each course taught.
  - c. Report of student evaluations that is clearly defined. All three metrics (average 1-8, question 9, and question 10) need to be presented. Means and standard deviations for comparable courses (i.e., lower level, upper level, or graduate) in the department and the college should be indicated (see attached table as a guideline).
  - d. Any additional material of direct relevance to teaching performance.
- (4) A collection of all reprints published since the previous promotion, or, for faculty being promoted for the first time at LSU, all reprints that list LSU as the address for the candidate.

The P&T package that will be forward to outside reviewers will include the standard (non-LSU) version of the c.v., and all other materials listed above.

*The P&T package that is reviewed by the department will include all of the above as well as:*

- (1) Letters from external reviewers.
- (2) Qualifications of external reviewers, summarized in a succinct, 1-short-paragraph description (see attached example).
- (3) Names and addresses of everybody from who letters were formally solicited.
- (4) Sample letter used to request evaluations.
- (5) The LSU-format c.v.
- (6) Annual evaluations (copies of official evaluations that have been signed by both the candidate and the chair). *Do NOT include annual reports submitted by faculty.*

*The package that is forwarded to the College will also include all of the above as well as:*

- (1) The Chair's recommendation.
- (2) Faculty reports
- (3) The faculty member's written response, if there is one (see PS-36).

\*Be certain that the non-LSU and LSU c.v. s contain the same essential information.