Policy on Retention, Tenure, and Promotion  
Department of English Language and Literature  
Approved by Provost January 2009  

Preamble  

Academic Senate Policy SO7-241 indicates University criteria for retention, tenure, and promotion. This policy of the Department of English Language and Literature expands the University criteria and at points makes more explicit their application to the disciplines of English language and literature. To be responsive to the various avenues for faculty accomplishment, this departmental policy indicates how normally expected and exceptional levels of achievement in each category can be documented.  

The department’s personnel actions (hiring, retention, tenure, and promotion) are aimed at recruiting, retaining, and rewarding faculty members with varied but complementary strengths, so as to represent the evolving academic fields in the department’s curriculum and to serve our diverse student body. Similarly, the standards of performance we expect faculty members to satisfy can be met in a number of different ways. We intend this departmental policy to heighten the collective performance of the department’s faculty by establishing high standards for individuals without imposing homogeneity on our faculty members’ approaches to teaching, scholarship, and professional and community service. The RTP committee may indicate in its report how the candidate fits into the future needs of the department.1  

I. Documentation  

Probationary faculty will prepare a curriculum vitae and submit supplementary information for the RTP committee to review and evaluate each probationary year (except for those faculty who need only submit a curriculum vitae for second-, fourth-, and sixth-year retention). Ordinarily, a faculty member is reviewed for tenure and for promotion to associate professor at the same time and need submit just one set of materials. Faculty who are candidates for promotion to the rank of professor will prepare similar documents. The supplementary information should include evidence of the candidate’s teaching, professional development, and campus and community service as listed in sections III-V. The RTP committee and department chair will be available to provide assistance and examples of materials as needed. The emphasis should be on noteworthy achievement in each category, clearly documented support, and evaluative rather than summative comment; there is no need for bulk. (See Academic Senate Policy S07-241 for information regarding the responsibilities of candidates, department personnel committees, and department chairs.)  

II. Teaching Effectiveness  

1In years when there are several candidates to review, the department may elect two committees (RT and P or R and TP).
The primary mission of San Francisco State University is teaching. The English Department takes this mission very seriously, particularly since we aim not only to prepare undergraduates to negotiate the reading and writing tasks assigned to them, but also, in many instances, to educate future secondary and post-secondary teachers who will be working with students who have diverse learning styles and ethnolinguistically diverse backgrounds. To be considered for tenure or promotion, our faculty must meet a standard of excellence in teaching (scholarly level of instruction, high academic and pedagogical standards, providing guidance for students and motivating them), regardless of their qualifications in other categories.

Evidence of accomplishment in teaching includes the following:

- **Range and Breadth of Courses.** Faculty are expected to teach a variety of courses, from undergraduate composition or General Education courses to graduate seminars.

- **Course Materials.** Syllabi, bibliographies, reading lists, class projects and assignments, and examinations may serve as evidence of course and class organization, the level at which the course is taught, and the expectations the faculty member sets for student learning.

- **Reports of Peer Class Visits.** Visits by fellow faculty members are vital for assessing the level of the faculty member’s presentation and expectations and the faculty member’s style of engagement with students. These visits also serve as a check on student evaluations. Probationary faculty receive at least two visits each year, including one from an RTP committee member or designee; probationary faculty members are encouraged to invite colleagues of their choice to make additional visits each year. Candidates for promotion to the rank of professor should arrange for a visit from an RTP committee member or other colleague each year. A written report will be submitted to the faculty member and to the departmental secretary for placement in the file after completion of classroom visits.

- **Student Evaluations.** Probationary faculty members and faculty members eligible for promotion are required to submit evaluation questionnaires to students in two courses each semester. The RTP committee regards the survey results and the accompanying unsigned written comments as important because they provide a representative sample of student reactions. Scores above the departmental mean or the mean for similar courses, and especially scores of 2.0 or higher, may suggest a need for improvement. How often the faculty member has taught the course, the size of the class, and whether the class is a General Education component, a major requirement, or an elective may be taken into account. Signed comments from students are taken seriously, but with the understanding that they may represent a smaller sample of student opinion than questionnaires. In this category the RTP committee values primarily signed and dated letters addressed to the committee or department chair. Additionally, and without wishing to impose a policy concerning grading,
the department supports faculty in assigning an appropriate range of grades and resisting grade inflation

- **Curriculum Development.** Because scholarship evolves, the department expects that courses will integrate the past and present, whether in material assigned or in intellectual and instructional approaches. Designing new courses or taking new approaches to existing courses enables the faculty member, and therefore the department as well, to keep abreast of significant changes in the field. In addition, a faculty member could contribute to curriculum development through designing innovative pedagogies and/or applications of instructional technologies. Documentation of curriculum development might include course materials, attendance at seminars and workshops, and the candidate’s self-statement.

- **Supervision.** The department values supervision of M.A. theses as a first, second, or third reader and supervision of Culminating Experience projects and master’s examinations; independent study supervision; supervision of new teachers (where relevant). Faculty members should include at least a short descriptive list of their supervisions.

- **Advising and Mentoring.** The candidate must be effective in advising and willing to confer with students, whether during office hours or through program advising duties. The department values faculty members’ mentoring of students—in their general intellectual growth, their disciplinary and professional development, and their development as teachers. Documentation might include letters from students and colleagues.

For probationary faculty who are inexperienced in teaching or who are having difficulties with their teaching, the RTP committee, in consultation with the chair, will appoint a peer mentor to provide assistance.

Evidence of exceptional teaching effectiveness may include, but is not limited to, a record of extraordinary student evaluations, success of mentored students in competitive programs (such as essay competitions, publication of student papers, or admission to selective programs), or supervision of outstanding M.A. theses. The focus here is on documented student learning.

**III. Professional Achievement and Growth**

Members of the Department of English Language and Literature are expected to be engaged in scholarly research and to participate in the larger community of scholars in their particular discipline. We believe that teaching and scholarship complement each other: the ability to teach in a particular discipline is enhanced by a variety of professional and scholarly activities. It is vital that students be taught by faculty members for whom the study of literature and language is a vocation, and that students get a sense of how work is done in these disciplines, from first ideas and initial research to development of the final lecture or essay or book.
Because of the variation in disciplinary practices and publishing opportunities for the disciplines included in the department, this policy does not specify a particular profile for either regularly expected or extraordinary accomplishment in professional achievement, although there clearly are ways that exemplary achievement may be demonstrated.

Evidence of professional achievement and growth may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- publishing a scholarly book, journal articles (both peer reviewed and invited), chapters in books, reference articles, a textbook, whether in print or through certain online venues and new media, appropriately refereed or reviewed
- editing of a collection of essays or a special issue of a journal
- serving as general editor of a journal
- translating a scholarly or literary work.

Evidence of engagement in and recognition of scholarly activity may also include

- award of prizes
- funded research or funded projects
- invitation to write book reviews
- conference presentation or presentation of a workshop (the text or outline of the presentation should be included)
- published reviews, citations, or other marks of the influence of a candidate’s scholarship.

The RTP committee will also consider readers’ reports for accepted articles and unpublished manuscripts that have been reviewed by appropriate objective experts. Evidence of research in progress may include travel to libraries and archives, data collected, and other such materials. Other areas of professional development are creative work such as fiction, poetry, and essays published in book form, in journals and magazines, or in peer-edited websites as well as innovations in curriculum for the department, College, or University. The department also values the development of new areas of expertise, whether through individual study or participation in seminars, institutes, and courses.

A candidate for tenure or promotion should arrange for the chair to solicit a few reviews of the candidate’s publications and/or work in progress from external experts.

**IV. Contributions to Campus and Community**

Faculty of the Department of English are expected to make contributions to the department and the College or University, as well as to the discipline of English and/or the larger local, national, or international community. The forms and distribution of service will differ depending on departmental needs and on each faculty member’s strengths and opportunities.
We understand “collegiality” as the ability to work well with colleagues and a willingness not only to participate actively in the life of the department and the University, but also to share the burden of administrative and committee tasks. It is vital to the educational mission of the department that faculty members do their share.

Contributions to the department include, but are not limited to, service on program and departmental committees (such as undergraduate curriculum, graduate admissions, and graduate examination committees); participation in hiring, assessment, program review; training and supervising graduate teaching assistants; sponsoring student organizations; making presentations to student organizations; and arranging for guest lectures and similar programs that add to the intellectual life of the department. Service to the department also includes hiring, training, and supervising teachers for the University’s required lower- and upper-division writing courses.

Extraordinary service may be demonstrated by excellent execution of important departmental activities. Examples are organizing and managing an effective advising program at the undergraduate or graduate level, supporting and guiding a vigorous student organization, taking the initiative to renew a program or to develop a new program, taking the main burden of work in drafting required departmental documents and reports, creating an exciting program of lectures, taking a leadership role in making intellectual connections to other departments and programs. Extraordinary service may also include excellent execution of the role of program coordinator or of the role of chair of an important committee.

Service to the College and the University includes, but is not limited to, contributing to interdisciplinary programs such as General Education, Liberal Studies, Women Studies, American Studies, or Special Majors; collaborating with other departments and programs regarding writing instruction; service on College, University, and CSU committees. Extraordinary service may be demonstrated by documenting that the candidate has exercised leadership or executed crucial responsibilities to make substantial contributions to important College or University activities.

Contributions to the community include, but are not limited to, giving talks for or consulting with community colleges, schools, community organizations, and/or other education-related organizations; giving talks for or consulting with community organizations on subjects related to the faculty member’s field or to higher education; being interviewed by or writing for the media for a general audience on topics connected to the faculty member’s field; service on educational councils and boards; outreach activities that attract students to the University, or that make the University better known to the community, or that bring the resources of the University to the community. Extraordinary contributions may be demonstrated by documenting that the faculty member has exercised leadership or executed crucial responsibilities to make substantial contributions to important community activities.

Professional contributions include, but are not limited to, organizing conferences, workshops, and conference sessions; chairing or moderating conference sessions or
giving a formal response to papers on a conference panel; serving on committees of professional organizations; serving as an officer or board member of a scholarly or professional organization; serving on an editorial board; reading manuscripts for academic journals and presses. Extraordinary service may be demonstrated by documenting that the candidate has exercised leadership or executed crucial responsibilities to make substantial contributions to important professional projects, organizations or collective activities.

V. Criteria for Retention

For retention after the first year, the department expects strong performance in teaching and at least one of the two other categories and, overall, steady progress toward satisfying expectations for tenure.

VI. Criteria for Tenure

The candidate must demonstrate strong performance in teaching and clear, commendable achievement in each of the other two categories and show evidence of striving for extraordinary achievement (and promise of attaining it in later years) in at least one of the three categories.

VII. Criteria for Promotion to Associate Professor and to Professor

The recommendation for promotion should be based on a record of achievement that establishes the probability the candidate will continue performing, at an increasing level of sophistication or with an increasing display of leadership, at the next rank. Again, teaching is the primary category. In addition, promotion requires evidence of an ongoing research program. The candidate should have presented a body of work (such as a significant manuscript or published book or set of essays published or accepted for publication, and some conference presentations or scholarly reviews). Because opportunities for publication and forms of presenting research vary widely within the disciplines encompassed by the English Department, we wish to emphasize quality rather than quantity of work and thus will not set a quota of publications and presentations necessary for promotion. In the area of contributions to campus and community, candidates for promotion to Associate Professor should have a profile of service to the department at the minimum. For promotion to Professor, it is expected that the candidate’s contributions include areas of service beyond the department and that the candidate shall have demonstrated leadership or successfully undertaken important responsibilities in one or more areas of service.²

² Some of the language of this policy has been adapted from the retention, tenure, and promotion policies of the Department of History and the Department of Philosophy.