

Physics and Astronomy Department San Francisco State University

Approved by the Provost September 2008

Expectations for Retention, Tenure, and Promotion

This document details the expectations for retention, tenure, and promotion of the Physics and Astronomy Department, consistent with Revised Academic Senate Policy #F06-241.

The criteria for retention, tenure, and promotion are divided into three areas: (a) teaching effectiveness, (b) professional achievement and growth, and (c) contributions to campus and community. Candidates for retention, tenure, and promotion shall be evaluated on all criteria as described below. In addition, each new tenure-track faculty member will be given an individualized statement of expectations; the candidate's success in meeting those expectations will be considered in the evaluation of that faculty member for tenure. This individualized statement shall be made a part of the candidate's Working Personnel Action File (WPAF).

Within the Department, there are two independent levels of review for retention, tenure, and promotion. First, the RTP Committee reviews and analyzes the evidence in the candidate's WPAF, prepares a report, and submits the report and a recommendation to the Department Chair. The Chair in turn reviews and analyzes the evidence in the WPAF and the RTP committee report and makes an independent recommendation to the Dean of the College.

The Department's RTP committee conducts an annual review of probationary faculty. The purpose of the annual review is to determine if candidates for retention are making sufficient progress toward tenure. If the committee decides a candidate is not making sufficient progress, but the situation is not sufficiently serious to recommend non-retention, the candidate shall meet with the committee and the Chair of the Department to devise a plan for improving the candidate's performance to the level required for progress toward tenure. The plan must include a timeline and specific goals. The committee conducts a comprehensive evaluation of probationary faculty during the second, fourth, and sixth probationary years.

Successful candidates for tenure or promotion must meet the standard of excellence normally expected of faculty. A candidate's activities while in his or her current rank are of primary relevance to promotion considerations. Candidates for promotion are advised that the Department has higher expectations for promotion to Professor than for promotion to Associate Professor.

Candidates for retention, tenure, and promotion are responsible for providing the committee with an up-to-date Working Personnel Action File (WPAF) by the closing date as determined by the University RTP Deadline Calendar. The WPAF consists of a candidate's curriculum vitae, an index of supplementary materials, and supplementary materials that represent the candidate's accomplishments in teaching effectiveness, professional achievement and growth, and contributions to campus and community.

Candidates for retention, tenure, and promotion should include in the WPAF a self-statement in each of the areas of (a) teaching effectiveness, (b) professional achievement and growth, and (c) contributions to campus and community, that summarizes the candidate's accomplishments. In cases where an activity may be considered in more than one area, candidates should make a selection in consultation with the committee.

A candidate for tenure or promotion shall submit to the Committee the names of at least three potential external reviewers. In addition to the reviewers named by the candidate, the Committee may solicit assessments from other external reviewers. The WPAF of candidates for tenure or promotion shall include letters from external reviewers solicited by the Committee that assess the quality of the candidate's activities.

Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

Effective teaching is central to the Department's mission. The committee will consider, but is not limited to, the criteria described below to evaluate a candidate's teaching effectiveness. For example, a candidate who contributes across a wide range of curricular needs or at different levels of instruction will receive favorable consideration, as would a candidate who excels at filling a particular need.

1. Classroom teaching. Candidates are expected to be excellent classroom teachers. Evaluation of a candidate's performance in this area will be based on the following:

a. Student evaluations of teaching. Students evaluate most instructors each semester using a standard College of Science and Engineering survey. The committee will review these student evaluations as they provide some indication of the quality of a candidate's classroom teaching. The committee will also review written comments made by students on the survey. The committee will take into account the fact that student evaluations of teaching can sometimes be influenced by factors other than the instructor's teaching effectiveness.

b. Peer evaluations of teaching. The committee will review letters of evaluation from Department faculty who have observed a candidate's classroom teaching. Candidates will be evaluated at least once per year by a faculty member of higher rank than the candidate's.

c. Letters from students and colleagues. The committee will consider other letters, either solicited or unsolicited, that address a candidate's teaching effectiveness. However, the committee will not consider anonymous letters.

Candidates may submit explanations of or rebuttals to any negative comments in a, b, or c above.

2. Directing theses, student research, and independent study. Connecting students with current research is vital for attracting students to the discipline and enhances both the graduate and undergraduate experience. In addition, preparing students for a thesis, professional career, or doctoral program often requires study beyond the regular course offerings of the Department.

Thus, candidates who direct theses, sponsor student research activities or projects (e.g. through Astr 697, Phys 697, Phys 897, or Phys 898), teach research-oriented seminar courses [e.g. Astr 490 seminar], or direct independent study [Phys 699 or 899] make a significant contribution to our students' education. The Department places a high value on these types of activities. Candidates who successfully direct the physics or astronomy portions of an interdisciplinary thesis or project are also demonstrating teaching effectiveness.

3. Curricular innovations. The committee may consider curricular innovations such as the development of original academic programs or courses, new and effective pedagogical approaches, or instructional applications of new technologies as evidence of a candidate's teaching effectiveness. Activities in this area may also be evaluated under professional achievement and growth or contributions to campus and community, depending on the nature of the activity.

4. Presentations at professional conferences. Professional conferences often address issues in physics and astronomy education such as appropriate course content, new teaching methods, or alternative assessment practices. The committee may consider presentations at professional conferences or active participation in workshops related to physics or astronomy education as evidence of a candidate's dedication to teaching effectiveness. Research presentations at professional conferences may also be evaluated under professional achievement and growth.

Evaluation of Professional Achievement and Growth

Candidates are expected to engage in activities that enhance their professional achievement and growth. However, evaluation of professional activities should be sensitive to standards appropriate to a candidate's area of expertise. For example, researchers in physics or astronomy could demonstrate professional achievement by publishing papers in refereed journals, while specialists in physics or astronomy education could demonstrate professional achievement by successful grant funding of educational research. The committee will consider, but is not limited to, the criteria described below to evaluate a candidate's professional achievement and growth.

1. Research and publications. Candidates are expected to have an active research program. The committee considers papers published or accepted for publication in refereed research journals or monographs as primary evidence of a candidate's professional achievement and growth. Lower ranking is given to publication of non-refereed papers and technical reports, and to unpublished manuscripts. Other evidence of a candidate's professional achievement and growth could include patents and research grant final reports.

The committee may also consider presentations of current research at professional conferences as evidence of a candidate's professional achievement and growth. For example, the most important activity within this area would be as an invited speaker at a national or international symposium or conference.

2. Grant funding. The Department encourages candidates to apply for funding of their research activities. Since grant proposals for external funding of research are often very competitive and

typically receive extensive outside peer review, the committee considers successful external grant funding as strong evidence of a candidate's professional achievement and growth. A candidate's obtaining of major research equipment donations from industry or government laboratories shows respect for the candidate's research on the part of external evaluators and is thus also evidence of professional achievement and growth. Grant funding of non-research projects may be evaluated under teaching effectiveness or contributions to campus and community, depending on the nature of the project.

3. Curricular innovations. The committee may consider curricular innovations such as the development of original academic programs or courses, new and effective pedagogical approaches, or instructional applications of new technologies as evidence of a candidate's professional achievement and growth in the area of science education, provided the activities receive sufficient recognition outside the Department. Activities in this area may also be evaluated under teaching effectiveness or contributions to campus and community, depending on the nature of the activity.

Evaluation of Contributions to Campus and Community

Candidates are expected to contribute to the smooth functioning of the Department by serving on committees, advising students, and the like. Expectations in this area will be higher for candidates for promotion to full Professor than for candidates for tenure or promotion to Associate Professor. The committee will consider, but is not limited to, the criteria described below to evaluate a candidate's contributions to campus and community.

1. Service to the profession. Candidates are expected to participate in professional organizations. The committee may consider activities such as election to offices in professional organizations, honors and recognition by professional societies, participation on editorial boards, organization of conferences or symposia, or selection as a referee for manuscripts and grants as evidence of a candidate's service to the profession.

2. Service to the University. The committee may consider activities such as supervision of oral comprehensive exams and diagnostic exams, administrative assignments, faculty governance, committee work, special advising assignments, program development, obtaining of donations (including equipment and material donations), sponsorship of student organizations, or direction of non-instructional projects as evidence of a candidate's service to the University.

3. Service to the community. The committee may consider activities in which candidates use their professional expertise to enhance the relations between the community at large and the University or profession as evidence of a candidate's service to the community.