

School of the Environment (SotE)

Retention, Tenure and Promotion Criteria

Approved by the Office of Faculty Affairs & Professional Development, effective Fall 2024

PREAMBLE

This document provides guidelines for retention, tenure, and promotion in the School of the Environment (SotE). Approved under special circumstance to ensure a RTP criteria for our incoming faculty, this policy will expire on May 31st, 2025. It is understood that SotE will continue to enhance the policy's effectiveness over the 2024/2025 Academic Year with input from the new School hire, and ensure its alignment with the School's commitment to inclusion and equity.

SotE was established in Fall 2023 by merging three programs: Department of Earth and Climate Science, Department of Geography and Environment, and Environmental Studies program in the School of Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (PACE). The school offers undergraduate and graduate degrees. School faculty study earth environment using various approaches ranging from physical process and geospatial techniques to social science and humanistic frameworks. The school recognizes that the professional circumstances of each candidate are unique, therefore it is necessary to have flexibility in the evaluation process to accommodate the variation in sub-discipline culture, opportunity, and standard operations.

The purpose of this document is to clarify the basic requirements for retention, tenure, and promotion for tenure-track and tenured faculty members in SotE and to provide clear expectations to guide candidates in demonstrating how they may meet these requirements. This document was developed in 2024 after a decision by SotE founding faculty to have one set of criteria across all programs, rather than to continue with the legacy policies from former programs. It is designed in consistency with SFSU Academic Senate Policy #F22-241: Revision of F19-241 Retention, Tenure, and Promotion Policy, and #F21-287: Revision to Temporary Modification of Academic Senate Policy #S20-241 Policy Resolution on Retention, Tenure and Promotion.

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. For teaching faculty, excellence in teaching is required. For faculty whose primary assignment is other than teaching, excellence in the primary assignment is required. To merit tenure and/or promotion all candidates must meet the standard of excellence normally expected of faculty and required by the University.

DOCUMENTATION FOR RTP EVALUATION

Candidates for retention, tenure, and promotion are responsible for providing an up-to-date Working Personnel Action File (WPAF) by the closing date as determined by the University RTP Deadline Calendar. The WPAF should consist of an up-to-date *Curriculum Vitae* using the curriculum vitae format provided by the Office of Faculty Affairs in its handbook *Preparing for Tenure and Promotion*, and an indexed set of supplementary materials that represent the candidate's accomplishments in the three areas of RTP review. In cases where an activity may be considered in more than one area, candidates should make a selection in consultation with the Committee.

Candidates for retention, tenure, and promotion should include in the WPAF an evaluative and reflective self-statement, recommended not to exceed 750 words, for each area (Teaching Effectiveness, Professional Achievement and Growth, and Contributions to Campus and Community.) The goal of the self-statement is to provide a context for understanding the candidate's accomplishments within each area.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR RTP EVALUATION

The School of the Environment has the overall expectation that a typical school faculty will be an excellent teacher, an active researcher, and an engaged participant in service and shared governance. These general principles apply throughout the RTP process. For teaching faculty, excellence in teaching is required. For faculty whose primary assignment is other than teaching, excellence in the primary assignment is required. To merit tenure and/or promotion all candidates must meet the standard of excellence normally expected of faculty and required by this RTP criteria.

For promotion, candidates' activities while in current rank (i.e., since submission of their WPAF materials for their most recent successful promotion application) are of primary relevance to promotion considerations. All activities at the rank of tenure-track Assistant Professor apply toward promotion to Associate, regardless of the institution at which they were performed; Similarly, all activities at the tenure-track Associate level apply toward promotion to Professor. However, activities undertaken at San Francisco State University will be given greater consideration.

According to Senate Policy F22-241, promotion to Professor requires more rigorous standards than promotion to Associate Professor. Candidates for promotion to Professor are expected to explain the ways in which their file provides evidence of continued growth. Specific examples of ways that candidates may illustrate this growth are provided in each of the three areas of evaluation below.

After a new revision of the SotE RTP policy has been approved, probationary faculty entering employment within SotE under the old policy may make a one-time, non-reversible choice as to which policy they follow.

In times of significant disruptions recognized and officially declared by the University which substantially disrupt the normal workload of a faculty member, the RTP Committee will consider the extent of the crisis in preparing their review. Candidates are responsible for clearly outlining the impact of the crisis on their teaching, research, or service due to the crisis.

EVALUATION OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

Candidates for tenure and/or promotion are expected to develop a teaching portfolio that demonstrates growth and innovation as an educator. Contributions to a wide range of the School's curricular needs or levels of instruction, or outstanding fulfillment of a particular need, would receive favorable consideration.

The School regards teaching to be a professional activity amenable to improvement over time. Because effective teaching is central to the University's mission, the School expects a candidate's overall pattern of teaching evaluations to indicate they are effective educators. The Committee will consider, but are not limited to, the criteria described below to evaluate a candidate's teaching effectiveness and efforts to improve student learning.

1. Course materials. Course materials are required in the WPAF and must include the most recent syllabus for each course taught. Other materials may include additional syllabi, reading lists, guidebooks, film lists, lab exercises, assignments, examinations, the structure of online courses, videos, or other media developed for use in a class, and printouts of course websites.

Candidates who have created course materials widely adopted by other instructors are encouraged to elaborate on this achievement. For team-taught courses, candidates are recommended to describe their individual contributions to collaborative materials.

2. 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 effectiveness

Quantitative and qualitative Student Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness (SETEs) for all courses taught are required. Candidates are expected to provide a summary table of courses taught, SETE ratings for those courses, the number of students enrolled in each class, the number of responses, and program mean scores for each semester. A template for the SETE summary table is available through Faculty Affairs (<https://facaffairs.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Sample-Summary-Table.pdf>).

Qualitative student evaluations are analyzed for themes and recurring issues in faculty teaching and provide an opportunity for candidates to respond and to adjust pedagogical goals accordingly. RTP reviewers are not concerned with an outlier comment in the qualitative reviews, but rather, should use qualitative reviews to get a fuller picture of the reasons for a particular quantitative score.

Scores should be judged in the context of the subject matter – recognizing that some subjects can sometimes result in less favorable evaluations than others. Any required shifts due to documented extensive illness, any crisis demanding faculty to move quickly to new modes of instruction or faculty efforts at curricular innovation merit special consideration. In addition, the size and nature of the class will be considered.

The School recognizes that SETEs are an imperfect evaluation tool that can disadvantage members of certain demographic categories, in particular; and for that reason, acknowledges the limitations and biases in student evaluations. Longitudinal patterns, which track changes over time, are considered more relevant than lateral comparisons, which compare a candidate with other instructors at a single point in time.

To the extent that the standard survey might not adequately assess some aspects of the candidate's teaching (for example, if the candidate adopts a nontraditional or experimental pedagogical approach), the Committee may also consider information from alternative, appropriately designed student evaluations.

b. Peer evaluation of teaching

The Committee will review letters of evaluation and peer evaluation forms from senior faculty who have observed a candidate's classroom teaching. Probationary candidates will be evaluated at least once per semester, and the evaluation will be coordinated by the School. Associate Professors seeking promotion may submit review letters to strengthen their cases. Peer evaluations should be done by faculty members 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.

3. Student involvement in Research. Connecting and mentoring students in research can attract students to the discipline and enhance graduate and undergraduate educational experiences. Examples of involving students in research include, but are not limited to, serving in thesis and/or research project committees, recruiting and/or mentoring students as research assistants, and advising students' independent research projects.

The candidate should provide a list of students advised as primary research advisor and thesis committee chair, and as a thesis committee member. The interdisciplinary character of SotE research often necessitates a collaborative approach to thesis advising. Members of a thesis committee are encouraged to discuss their contributions to thesis advising. The candidate should also provide a list of students mentored as research assistants (and for what project) and any student-led independent research projects and describe associated deliverables.

4. Curricular Improvements and Innovations. The RTP Committee may consider curricular improvements and innovations such as the development of original academic programs or

courses, new and effective pedagogical approaches, or instructional applications of new technologies, particularly if these activities are funded by grants acquired by the candidate, as evidence of a candidate's teaching effectiveness.

As evidence of commitment to high academic and pedagogical standards, the Committee may consider activities undertaken by candidates to enhance their instructional skills and mentoring students. Such activities might include, but are not limited to, attending training workshops on effective pedagogical methods or methods of assessing student learning, especially if the candidate successfully adopts those methods; participation in and contribution to communities of scholars and/or practitioners of teaching that promote effective teaching practices; active participation in communities of scholars or practitioners dedicated to advancing teaching practices, engaging in action research to assess the candidate's own teaching, particularly if it leads to improvements in the candidate's teaching; co-teaching with an experienced instructor to learn pedagogical approaches new to the candidate, and maintaining a reflective journal to document the evolution of the candidate's thinking about teaching and learning.

Some activities in this area may also be evaluated under Professional Achievement and Growth. Candidates will make a selection in consultation with the Committee.

5. Scholarly works on pedagogy. Publications and presentations at professional conferences and workshops addressing pedagogy, such as innovative teaching approaches, alternative assessment practices, and revisions to curricula to address new developments in the discipline are evidence of candidates' scholarly level of instruction. Peer-reviewed publications are valued particularly highly. These activities may also be evaluated under Professional Achievement and Growth. Candidates will select either the Teaching Effectiveness section or the Professional Achievement & Growth section of their WPAF for inclusion of such scholarly works on pedagogy in consultation with the Committee.

Teaching effectiveness for promotion from Associate Professor to Professor. Candidates for promotion to Professor are expected to demonstrate continued achievement and pedagogical growth. Further, they are expected to provide curriculum leadership or to engage in mentoring activities to enhance the teaching activities of junior faculty. Curriculum leadership roles might include, but are not limited to, curricular or pedagogical innovations; promoting accessibility, equity, and inclusivity in the learning environment; as well as impactful teaching campus-wide and beyond.

EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND GROWTH

SotE expects all candidates to engage in activities that enhance their Professional Achievement and Growth. Candidates are expected to develop and sustain an active research program at San Francisco State University. We expect strong evidence of Professional Achievement and Growth appropriate to the candidate's professional areas of expertise.

SotE recognizes that Professional Achievement and Growth can be demonstrated in a variety of ways such as publications and/or scholarly writings, grant funding, and curricular innovations.

The Committee will consider, but are not limited to, the criteria below to evaluate a candidate's Professional Achievement and Growth.

1. Publications. The School of the Environment expects candidates for tenure and promotion to publish on issues related to their fields and to maintain a robust research agenda. The Committee considers papers published or accepted for publication in refereed research journals or scholarly books published in established academic presses as primary evidence of a candidate's Professional Achievement and Growth, both lead authorship and co-authorship. The Committee gives less weight to book reviews and non-refereed publications.

Comparable scholarly activities may also be similar in significance to journal articles, if the candidate can document that these activities carry the same professional weight as traditional peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books. Such activities may include, but are not limited to, (a) editing a book or journal symposia where the candidate has taken a leadership and scholarly role in shaping the outcome of the publication. Situations in which the candidate has contributed primarily editing activities, and not scholarly outputs, should be considered professional service;(b) authoring textbooks; (c) invited publications with a peer review process;(d) authoring for other reputable outlets such as for governmental agencies (e.g., contracted technical reports), research centers, NGOs, professional publications, foundations, or non-peer-reviewed journals; and (5) book chapters and essays in edited volumes. SoE values comparable scholarly activities. However, comparable scholarly activities shall not entirely take the place of traditional peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly book publications. Conference proceedings, white papers, or working papers using rigorous research methods, community-engaged research reports, applied research report, application of research through advisory capacity are scholarly activities but they are not considered with the same weight as peer-reviewed publications or comparable scholarly activities.

In all cases of professional activities comparable to traditional peer-reviewed publications or scholarly books, candidates are expected to document: (a) how the peer review and publication process worked for the activities, (b) how the activities' scholarship is communicated and disseminated to the research community, and (c) contributions of the activities to moving the field forward. This evidence should articulate the ways in which the activities meet the criteria to be considered equivalent to a traditional peer reviewed process.

Candidates should include a copy of each publication and manuscript written since their most recent successful application for promotion, clearly indicating its status (published [by indicating the year], "in press", "under review", "submitted for publication", or "in draft manuscript form"). Manuscripts not yet fully accepted are useful for retention decisions but are not generally considered in promotion/tenure decisions.

Candidates are expected to explain the scholarly contribution of each publication. In publications of multiple authorship, candidates should communicate clearly (a) their specific contributions to the research reported (e.g., ownership of the project or paper idea, research design, data collection and analysis, writing the content, etc.), (b) which authors are students (if any), and (c) the rationale for the order of authors. Work co-authored with students will be looked on highly

favorably; note whether students are at the undergraduate or graduate level. Candidates shall provide a numerical estimate of their proportional contribution when possible.

2. Grant funding. Candidates are encouraged to apply for extramural funding of their research. Because 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. Leadership roles, such as serving as the principal investigator, will be looked on highly favorably. The candidate is expected to list all their grant proposals and the status (funded, pending, non-funded); positive reviews of unfunded proposals can be helpful. The Committee also considers funded intramural grants as evidence of active effort in developing a research program. The candidate is expected to articulate the impact of each grant on their research program. In grants with multiple investigators, a candidate is expected to communicate clearly to the committee their specific contribution to the grant including developing and writing the proposal.

3. Presentations. The RTP Committee may also consider presentations of research at professional conferences as evidence of a candidate's Professional Achievement and Growth. The candidate is expected to articulate the impact of their participation at the meeting. The most important activity within this area is the presentation of an invited talk at a symposium or plenary session; second in importance is the presentation of research papers at an annual meeting of a national or international research society within the candidate's field; third in importance is the presentation of papers at local colloquia or invited seminars to other departments (on- or off-campus). Presentations coauthored with students will be looked on favorably; note whether students are at the undergraduate or graduate level. Presentations of research at virtual conferences or virtual conference sessions are seen as equally scholarly to face-to-face presentations.

4. Pedagogical Research. The RTP Committee may consider new and effective pedagogical approaches or instructional applications of new technologies as evidence of a candidate's professional achievement and growth provided the activities receive sufficient recognition outside the department.

Presentations addressing discipline-based education at professional conferences may serve as evidence of Professional Achievement and Growth. Candidate is expected to document the nature of the presentations such as refereed and non-refereed conference presentations, identify the nature of the specific contributions of the candidate, and provide information that indicates the impact of that presentation on the field or on the participants.

Pedagogical research may also be appropriate under Teaching Effectiveness or Contributions to Campus and Community, depending on the nature of the activity. Candidate should specify the area in which such activities are to be evaluated.

5. External review letters. The WPAF of candidates seeking tenure or promotion to Associate Professor or Professor should include letters from external reviewers who can assess the candidate's Professional Achievement and Growth. Obtaining external review letters is the

responsibility of the RTP Committee. Whenever feasible, the Committee will strive to collect letters from a minimum of three external reviewers.

External reviewers will be identified by the RTP Committee in consultation with the candidate. A candidate should name at least five potential external reviewers in order to provide a good chance of getting a minimum number of three responses and round out the academic profiles or institutions those external letters will come from. In addition to the reviewers named by the candidate, the RTP Committee may solicit assessments from other external reviewers. The RTP committee will be responsible for contacting the external reviewers.

External reviewers should not be close colleagues or collaborators with the candidate, and will be asked to state any potential conflicts of interest in doing the review. The external reviewers should hold a terminal degree, have senior standing in the professional field of the candidate, be a current faculty member at a comparable, or higher, institution, and be recognized experts in the candidate's discipline as demonstrated by their outstanding achievements. External reviewers from industry or government research agencies are acceptable provided they possess the appropriate academic credentials and professional reputation.

Candidates must notify the RTP Committee by the beginning of the spring semester prior to the year seeking tenure and promotion to facilitate the external review process. External reviewers must be given enough time to meet the WPAF deadline. Reviewers will be informed of the closing date of the candidate's WPAF, and the CSU policy allowing the candidate to read and respond to all letters placed in the WPAF. Invitations for external reviews are ideally sent out no later than the month of May before the Fall semester in which the candidate's file is due.

Professional Achievement and Growth for promotion from Associate Professor to Professor. Candidates for promotion to Professor are expected to continue their professional growth in the discipline, showcase recognition of their scholarly achievements by other scholars, and demonstrate their broader impact on their research field. Evidence for growth in research may include, but is not limited to, the extent to which candidate's work is cited, including outside of academia, awards and recognitions received by the candidate related to their research accomplishments, being principal investigator on grants or grant applications, leadership in interdisciplinary collaborations, significant efforts with students such as co-authoring contributions or grants focusing on funding student research. Candidates are expected to articulate in their file the ways in which they have elevated their professional achievements since their promotion to Associate Professor.

EVALUATION OF CONTRIBUTION TO CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

SotE expects all faculty to contribute to the School by serving on committees, advising students, and other activities critical to normal School operation. The School expects the most service from Professors, somewhat less from Associate Professors, and the least from Assistant Professors.

Contributions can be documented in a range of ways, including chairing committees, helping to develop novel or innovative university initiatives, leading departmental initiatives, etc. Letters from other participants, particularly organizational leaders, detailing specific contributions, their quality, and the impact of the candidate in these activities shall be used to evaluate university, community, and professional service.

The RTP Committee will consider, but is not limited to, the criteria described below to evaluate a candidate's Contributions to Campus and Community. For all service-related activities, the candidate is expected to include a statement or table that indicates the time and effort expended in each service activity and, where applicable, the results or outcomes achieved.

1. **Service to the School.** The RTP Committee considers School service to be a regular and important part of faculty duties. Leadership roles merit additional recognition. Activities may include but are not limited to:

- Serving in a special advising role (for example, lead program advisor, Graduate Advisor).
- Serving on a departmental committee (for example, Curriculum Review, Hiring Committee).

2. **Service to the college and university.** Campus service may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Administrative assignments such as coordinating, chairing, or directing a department/school, program, center, or other division of the University or CSU (these are often compensated assignments that are often, but not always, part of one's primary assignment).
- Mentoring faculty colleagues.
- Serving on an active University or College or CSU-wide committee.
- Supporting ad hoc College activities, e.g. Student Showcase Judge, College scholarships review or grant application review committees
- Sponsoring or mentoring a student organization recognized by the University or College.

3. **Service to the community.** The RTP Committee may consider activities in which candidates use their professional expertise to serve the community beyond SF State and/or enhance the relations between the community at large and the university or profession as evidence of a candidate's service to the community. Activities may include but are not limited to:

- Service to federal, regional, state, or local governments, agencies, and organizations.
- Professional engagement with community organizations, advocacy organizations, NGOs, or private sector agencies, including consulting, writing grants, providing workshops or presentations.
- Contributions to the media, including newspapers, radio, podcasts, video, documentary, and TV.
- Significant activities in support of K-12 education within one's field of academic expertise, including workshops, field experiences and presentations.
- Consulting within one's field of academic expertise.

4. **Service to the profession.** The RTP Committee expects service within one's field of academic expertise. Professional service may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Service to professional committees, boards, or other units of professional associations, including holding offices in professional societies.
- Service as a discussant or session chair.
- Serving on editorial boards of academic presses and/or journals.
- Refereeing manuscripts and grant proposals for professional journals, presses, or funding agencies.

The RTP committee will make assess service contributions based on the evaluation of the above factors.

Contributions to Campus and Community for Promotion from Associate Professor to Professor. Candidates for the rank of Professor must have served on departmental and college- or university-wide committees (including Academic Senate or CSU-wide special groups). Candidates for Professor are also expected to have moved into leadership roles in at least some of their service activities. The candidate should provide evaluative evidence of these contributions – with emphases on the quality and impact of their service – relying, wherever possible, on third party assessments.

Early Tenure and Promotion from Assistant to Associate Professor

Probationary faculty shall generally be considered for tenure and promotion in the final year of their probationary period. In rare cases, candidates may elect to apply for early tenure/or promotion. Substantially accelerated progress in all three areas of RTP evaluation is required. Candidates are advised to consult with the AVP of Faculty Affairs, Dean of the College of Science and Engineering, Director of the School, and the School RTP committee in making this determination.

If a candidate is not granted early tenure and promotion, they may apply again in their sixth year. They may not apply more than twice, unless there were documented procedural irregularities in their earlier reviews.

Early Promotion from Associate to Full Professor

While evaluation of an application for promotion from associate to full professor may be made at the beginning of the sixth year after promotion to associate, exceptions can be made for (1) exceptional achievements in Contributions to Campus and Community and/or (2) exceptional achievements in Professional Achievement and Growth.

Exceptional achievements in Contributions to Campus and Community can be demonstrated by, but are not limited to:

- Extraordinary community engagement by developing and leading community engagement programs that address local needs;
- Serving in leadership roles within service-oriented organizations, and driving impactful projects and initiatives that benefit the community;
- Leading in international service projects aimed at addressing global challenges;
- Receiving recognition and awards for outstanding service contributions; or
- Contributing to policy development and advocacy efforts at local, national, or international level.

Exceptional Professional Achievement and Growth can be demonstrated by, but not limited to:

- Consistent exemplary research outputs that demonstrate originality and rigor, and have a significant impact on their field, influencing the direction of research, shaping scholarly discourse, or contributing to practical applications or solutions to real-world problems.
- A track record of successfully securing prestigious research grants, funding, and awards to support their research endeavors; or
- Leadership in fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and contributing to the development of their research community.

Candidates are expected to provide citations, recognition, and acclaim from peers and experts in their fields to facilitate the evaluation.