Rank and Promotion

UNIVERSITY POLICY #217

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SECTION 1: Introduction and General Principles

1.1 In accordance with West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission Series 9, "Academic Freedom, Professional Responsibility, Promotion, and Tenure," West Liberty University establishes the following policy to govern the eligibility for and award of promotion to faculty.

1.2 Consistent with this document, colleges and departments shall supplement these guidelines with more detailed descriptions and interpretations of the criteria and standards that, when approved by the Provost, will apply to faculty members in the particular unit.

1.3 Annual evaluation, promotion in rank, and the granting of tenure are acts of critical importance both to members of the academic community and for the welfare of the university. While these three processes are distinct, they also are inextricably linked. The annual evaluation process contributes to the improvement of faculty members and the university and is both evaluative and developmental. Retention, tenure, and promotion decisions reward individual achievement and also shape the university for decades.

1.4 Responsibility for faculty evaluation for promotion and tenure is shared by members of the university community. Primary responsibility for the quality and presentation of an individual's work within the faculty personnel file lies with the particular faculty member. Faculty colleagues participate in review for promotion and tenure through membership on college committees. Independent reviews at the college and institutional levels assure fairness and integrity in the application of appropriate standards and procedures among departments and colleges. The needs and circumstances of the department, college, and university also enter into the determination of academic personnel decisions.

1.5 Promotion in rank recognizes exemplary performance of a faculty member. The evaluation for promotion in rank provides the opportunity to assess a faculty member's growth and performance since the initial appointment or since the last promotion. Details related to faculty promotion are found in this policy.

SECTION 2: Definitions, Criteria, and Standards

2.1 Faculty members are expected to contribute to the missions of specific programs, departments, and colleges and are to be judged accordingly. Consequently, the evaluation of faculty is to occur in relation to the faculty member's particular roles at the institution. Accomplishments of the faculty member are judged in the context of these roles.

2.2 In a Letter of Appointment, established per WLU Policy 208, the responsible university administrator (usually the dean) shall define the general terms of the faculty member's major responsibilities in the areas of teaching, professional activity, and service. The determination of whether the faculty member's degree is terminal and in the appropriate field for promotion purposes shall be made at the time of initial hiring by the Provost in consultation with the appropriate academic administrator.

2.3 All tenure-track and tenured faculty members must do scholarly, creative, or professional work that informs their teaching and must engage in service.

2.4 Each program, department, or college shall refine the definitions and standards related to the areas of contribution (teaching, professional activity, and service) in ways that reflect the unit's disciplines and mission, as they support the University's mission. The criteria shall be applied to all faculty members in ways that equitably reflect the particular responsibilities and assignments of each. How the unit criteria apply to a faculty member's own set of duties shall be made clear in the Appointment Letter and reviewed in the annual evaluation. The annual evaluation criteria define what that particular program or department means by teaching, professional activity, and service, and therefore annual evaluations will be considered in the promotion evaluation process. Merit rankings, however, as they are relative measurements, will not be considered. Department evaluation criteria shall be approved by the dean and the Provost and may be modified from time to time as necessary. Copies of departmental and/or college criteria shall be available to all participants in the review process (i.e., committee members, department chair/program director, dean, Provost, and President).

2.5 Teaching, professional activity, and service constitute the heart of the mission of West Liberty University. Faculty responsibilities are defined in terms of activities undertaken in each of the three areas of contribution; therefore, faculty evaluation is based primarily upon a review of performance in these areas. Scholarship is an important indication of activity in each of the three areas; it occurs in a variety of forms and is not restricted to the professional activity area. The extent to which scholarship is recognized depends upon the faculty member's expected contribution in each area as specified in the LoA. Depending upon one's discipline and the unit's guidelines, publication of

scholarly findings could be appropriate in any or all areas. Faculty members are expected to keep current in their fields.

2.6 **Criteria Definitions.** The university faculty is a community of scholars whose scholarship is manifest in a variety of ways. These manifestations are commonly grouped into three areas of contribution: teaching, professional activity, and service. It is expected that for most faculty members there will be responsibilities established in all three areas.

2.6.1 **Teaching.** Successful teaching is an expectation for all faculty members. Teaching involves the dissemination of knowledge, the stimulation of critical thinking, and the development of artistic expression. Teaching includes not only traditional modes of instruction such as the classroom lecture, but also modes such as clinical, laboratory, and practicum instruction; thesis direction; evaluation and critique of student performance; various forms of continuing education and nontraditional instruction; and advising, which is a special dimension of teaching, the success of which is essential to the educational process.

2.6.1.1 The prime requisites of any effective teacher are intellectual competence, integrity, independence, a spirit of scholarly inquiry, a dedication to improving methods of presenting material, the ability to transfer knowledge, respect for differences and diversity, and, above all, the ability to stimulate and cultivate the intellectual interest and enthusiasm of students. Supporting documentation for the evaluation of performance in teaching will include evidence drawn from such sources as the collective judgment of students, including student course evaluations, and of colleagues or administrators who have visited the faculty member's classes. It might also include analyses of course content, evaluation of products related to teaching, the development or use of instructional technology, performance-based student assessment results, pedagogical scholarship in refereed publications and media of high quality, studies of success rates of students taught, course enrollments, or other evidence deemed appropriate and proper by the department and college.

2.6.2 **Professional Activity.** Professional activity involves the creation and synthesis of knowledge, the creation of new approaches to understanding and explaining phenomena, the development of new insights, the critical appraisal of the past, artistic creation and performance, and the application of knowledge and expertise to address needs in society and in the faculty member's field of expertise.

2.6.2.1 Professional activity is a critical component of the mission of the university, contributing to the general body of knowledge and thus

infusing instruction and public service with rigor and relevance. It validates the concept of the teacher-scholar. Although often discipline-focused and individual, these activities may also be interdisciplinary and collaborative. Examples of professional activity include refereed publications (print or electronic), publications in other academic sources of high quality and other academically relevant media, and original contributions of a creative nature relevant to one or more disciplines, which may be as significant as the publication of a scholarly book or article. Quality is considered more important than mere quantity. Evidence of significant scholarly activity may be either a single work of considerable importance or a series of works constituting a program of worthwhile activity. Faculty members are expected to undertake a continuing program of appropriate studies, investigations, creative works and/or professional practice.

2.6.3 **Service.** Service activities involve the application of the benefits and products of teaching and research to address the needs of society and the profession. Service to the university includes contributions to the efficiency and effectiveness of the faculty member's department and college. The university is committed to the performance and recognition of service activities on the part of its faculty as essential components of its mission. Enlightened perspectives, technical competence, and professional skills are indispensable resources in coping with the complexities of modern civilization.

2.6.3.1 The evaluation of service should include assessments of the degree to which the service yields important benefits to the university, society, or the profession. Especially relevant is the extent to which the service induces positive change, improves performance, or has significant impact on university or societal problems or issues. Important examples of service to the university are faculty participation in the governance system and university–level committees. Service contributions considered for evaluation are those within a person's professional expertise as a faculty member and performed with one's university affiliation identified.

2.7 **Promotion Criteria and Consideration.**

2.7.1 Recommendations and decisions regarding promotion are to be based on both quantitative and qualitative evidence. The primary evidence to be weighed must be contained in the faculty member's personnel file. To it are added professional judgments as to the quality of the faculty member's teaching, professional activity, and service, as applicable.

2.7.2 In order to be recommended for promotion, a faculty member normally will be expected to demonstrate appropriate contributions in teaching in the classroom or other settings and in professional activity and service as specified in the Letter of Appointment and any subsequent modifications.

2.7.3 Evaluations and recommendations for a faculty member's first promotion will be based primarily on their contributions since appointment at West Liberty University but may be based in part on work elsewhere for which years of potential credit have been identified in the Letter of Appointment. In the latter case, evidence of one's performance during the established years of credit should be included in the personnel file.

2.7.4 Promotions after the first promotion will be based on achievement since the previous promotion. Promotion shall not be granted automatically or merely for years of service.

2.8 **Academic Ranks.** Individuals may be hired at any of the following ranks if the department chair, dean, and Provost agree that they possess all of the qualifications for that rank.

2.8.1 **Lecturer.** A master's degree is preferred for the rank of lecturer but is not required. A bachelor's degree is required except in exceptional cases specified by the hiring department chair and confirmed in writing by the dean and Provost. Teaching experience is preferred but is not required for appointment to the rank of lecturer. The rank of lecturer is non-tenure only and is outside the probationary status of full-time faculty ranks given below. Appointment to this rank generally may not exceed six (6) years. Lectureships are subject to annual renewal and do not imply any presumption of a right to reappointment or to appointment as a probationary or tenured faculty member.

2.8.2 **Instructor.** A master's degree is required for the rank of instructor except in certain fields specified by the hiring department chair and confirmed in writing by the dean and Provost. Teaching experience is preferred but is not required for appointment or promotion to the rank of instructor. The rank of Instructor is not tenure-track. Tenure will not be granted to a person holding this rank.

2.8.3 **Assistant Professor.** A master's degree plus fifteen (15) hours of graduate study beyond the master's degree in his/her field are required for the rank of assistant professor, unless the master's degree is considered terminal for the field. In addition, any persons being considered for appointment or promotion to this rank must satisfy the following criteria:

2.8.3.1 Documented significant contributions in teaching;

2.8.3.2 Documented adherence to WLU professional conduct statement;

2.8.3.3 Three (3) years of full-time college teaching experience at a regionally accredited institute of higher learning. This requirement will be waived for persons who hold an earned doctorate/terminal degree at the time of initial employment as a full-time faculty member at West Liberty University.

2.8.4 **Associate Professor.** Six (6) years of full-time college teaching experience at a regionally accredited institute of higher learning are required before a person may apply for promotion from assistant to associate professor. For those who are hired with a doctorate or the terminal degree in an appropriate field completed, the six-year experience requirement is reduced to four (4) years. In addition, the following criteria must be met:

2.8.4.1 Documented significant contributions in teaching;

2.8.4.2 Documented adherence to WLU professional conduct statement;

2.8.4.3 Documented significant contributions in professional activity or service to the academic community, as established by the letter of appointment or subsequent documents, beyond those cited at the time of promotion to assistant professor;

2.8.4.4 Completion of the terminal degree in the field, or ABD status towards the doctorate or completion of 30 semester hours of graduate credit beyond the master's degree in an appropriate field of study. ABD status in a doctoral program is defined as satisfactory completion of comprehensive qualifying examinations and documented permission of the candidate's graduate program to proceed to the dissertation stage of the doctoral program.

2.8.5 **Professor.** An earned terminal degree in an appropriate field is required for the rank of full professor, but this rank will not be awarded simply for longevity of employment or completion of the terminal degree. Sophistication in teaching, significant career professional and/or service achievements, and significant contributions to the academic community must be documented. In addition, any person being considered for promotion to this rank must satisfy the following criteria:

2.8.5.1 Documented significant contributions in teaching;

2.8.5.2 Documented adherence to the WLU professional conduct statement;

2.8.5.3 Ten (10) years of full-time college teaching experience at a regionally accredited institute of higher learning;

2.8.5.4 Documented significant contributions in professional activity or service to the academic community, as established by the letter of appointment or subsequent documents, beyond those cited at the time of promotion to associate professor.

2.9 **Modification of Assignment and Expectations**. A full-time or part-time assignment to an administrative position or to a unit other than the one in which the faculty member holds or seeks tenure does not carry with it an automatic modification of criteria for tenure. A faculty member who accepts such an assignment, and who seeks tenure, should have a written agreement concerning both status and expectations within the department in which the locus of tenure resides. Such an agreement must be approved by the Provost with a copy of the agreement placed in the personnel file.

2.10 **Changing Areas of Contribution**. The criteria in the Letter of Appointment may be modified on an individual basis in accordance with WLU Policy 208.

SECTION 3: Evaluation Process and Timeline for Promotion

3.1 Evaluations of the credentials of faculty, as contained in the faculty personnel file, are carried out at four levels of university organization: department, college, Provost, and President. When appropriate, a judgment is made at each of these levels by the administrative officer of the unit and, at the college level, by a faculty committee. Faculty members should neither initiate nor participate in institutional decisions involving a direct benefit (initial appointment, retention, annual evaluation, promotion, salary, leave of absence, etc.) to themselves or members of their immediate family or household. Any deadline in this process that falls on a weekend or university holiday will be extended to the next regular workday of the university.

3.2 **Department and College Levels**

3.2.1 Application for promotion in rank must be submitted in writing to the appropriate department chair, with copies to the dean and the Provost, no later than **September 1** of the academic year in which the application will be considered. No application for promotion received after this date will be considered during that academic year, and the applicant must reapply.

3.2.2 The personnel file is closed to further updates **at close of business on September 30 of the review year**. Only documents generated as part of the review process will be added to the personnel file during the review process.

3.2.3 Each college shall have a faculty promotion and tenure committee, normally consisting of a minimum of five members, at least three of whom shall be tenured. If at all possible, each committee should include a range of academic disciplines representative of the college. The method of selection of members is left to the discretion of the dean. Department chairs and program directors shall not be members of the committee. A person who is under consideration for promotion shall not serve on the committee reviewing his/her personnel file. If the college has an insufficient number of eligible tenured faculty members to serve on its committee, the dean, in consultation with the department chairs, program director(s), and faculty being reviewed for tenure, will appoint additional tenured faculty from outside the college as necessary. Service on a promotion and tenure committee is required of a faculty member when this appointment is made. A faculty member may decline appointment to a promotion and tenure committee only if a credible claim of conflict of interest can be made. Such a claim must be presented in writing to the dean making the appointment, who will rule on the request and respond in writing within five (5) working days of receipt of the request. The college committee will prepare a written evaluation for each faculty member, together with an unequivocal recommendation for or against the award of promotion. The written evaluation must include a detailed evaluation of the faculty member's qualifications in each of the criteria listed for the rank for which they are applying and must be signed by all members of the committee. The total number of positive and negative votes must be recorded. Committee members may include minority statements in the recommendation. The recommendation must be dated and forwarded to the department chair/program director, with copies to the appropriate dean and the Provost, no later than **December 1**. The department chair/program director will notify the candidate of the committee recommendation no later than **December 6**, and the candidate will have the opportunity to provide an unrebutted response to the department chair/program director no later than **December 20**.

3.2.4 The department chair/program director will review the committee's evaluation and recommendation, along with any rebuttal, and make an assessment and recommendation to the dean, with a copy to the Provost, in writing, with unequivocal recommendations for or against the award of promotion no later than **January 22**. The department chair/program director will notify the candidate of his/her recommendation by **January 22**, and the candidate will have the opportunity to provide an unrebutted response to the dean no later than **February 5**. Copies of all written statements shall be placed in the faculty member's personnel file.

3.2.5 The dean will review evaluations and recommendations from the college committee and department chair/program director and make an assessment and recommendation to the Provost, in writing, including copies of all recommendation letters, with unequivocal recommendations for or against the award of promotion no later than **February 28**. Deans have the responsibility for determining whether committee evaluations have been conducted fairly within the college and for assuring that comparable norms are applied in like units. The faculty member shall be informed, in writing, by the dean of his/her evaluation and recommendation no later than **February 28**. Copies of all written statements shall be placed in the faculty member's personnel file. The faculty member may include a rebuttal to the dean's recommendation against promotion for review by the Provost. The rebuttal must be forwarded to the Provost no later than **March 14**.

3.3 **Provost Level**

3.3.1 The Provost will submit his/her formal recommendation, in writing, to the President no later than **April 1**.

3.3.2 The Provost will notify the candidate of his/her recommendation no later than **April 1**. The candidate will have the opportunity to provide an unrebutted response to the President no later than **April 15**. The applicant's response will be added to the faculty member's personnel file.

3.4 **President Level**

3.4.1 Decisions on promotion will be made by the President after review of all recommendations.

3.4.2 The faculty member, the appropriate department chair/program director, the appropriate dean, and the Provost will be notified in writing of the decision rendered no later than **May 1**.

3.4.3 When promotion is awarded, the new academic rank will take effect, along with any associated benefit(s), on the first contract day of the academic year following that in which the review was conducted.

3.5 **Negative Decisions**

3.5.1 A faculty member whose application for promotion is unsuccessful must wait at least one full year after the decision is rendered before submitting another application. For example, a faculty member learning the decision in Spring 2020 that s/he was turned down for promotion must wait until after the Spring of 2021 to apply again.

3.5.2 A faculty member desiring to appeal a decision on promotion or other personnel decisions not included above may appeal by using W.Va. Code §6C-2, as described in HEPC Title 133 Series 9. The appeal should reach the office of the President's designee within fifteen (15) working days after receipt of the written decision. HEPC Title 133 Series 9 and W.Va. Code §6C-2 are accessible on-line at https://www.wvhepc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/133-9final.pdf and http://pegboard.state.wv.us/. Faculty may wish to check with the Office of Human Resources to ensure they have access to the most recent copy of the procedures.