Commentary on the Criteria for Promotion and Tenure
MISSOURI S&T Department of Psychological Science

The following commentary amplifies on the written procedures and criteria used in promotion and tenure decisions. It embodies past criteria used by the departmental promotion and tenure committee and chair, and includes expectations of future candidates given current campus and departmental resources. It is also consistent with the mission of a psychology department on a technological research university campus like Missouri S&T. These criteria reflect those stated in the promotion and tenure policies of the University of Missouri, as described in Missouri S&T Policy Memorandum II-10 (October 1, 1990) also known as Executive Order No. 6A.

The evaluation criteria include consideration of the three areas of faculty responsibility: teaching, research, and service. The obligation to show evidence of performance is mainly that of the candidate. If there is an absence of evidence in a given area, inadequate performance is assumed.

Teaching

Teaching includes classroom and laboratory instruction and many activities that require professional knowledge and that directly contribute to the academic advancement of students; for example: academic advising, distance education, development of new courses, creative redesign of courses, liaison with teachers outside of the university, off-campus teaching, and preparation of teaching materials. The typical teaching assignment in our department is 75% time and effort relative to one’s scholarship time and effort; hence, clear evidence of competency as a teacher is essential for tenure and promotion.

Teaching performance is evaluated each semester by means of student ratings and comments. It also is recommended that peer evaluations of in-class performance and teaching materials and self-evaluations are conducted. These and other kinds of evidence (e.g., collaborative work with students or the development of educational materials) are considered by the department chair and department promotion-and-tenure committee in assessing the quality of a faculty member’s teaching.

Besides the measurements of teaching quality, the quantity of student credit hours handled by the individual is also weighed in interpreting the other measurements. Teaching more students, and/or more courses than is typical in the department, merits more positive recognition in the promotion and tenure decision. Similarly, effectiveness in developing distance courses and adding new courses to the curriculum are a clear plus for candidates.

The department expects faculty to receive student ratings of overall teaching effectiveness that fall reasonably near or above the campus average. Furthermore, faculty are expected to receive favorable comments regarding effectiveness from students, peers, and the department chair. Less favorable ratings and comments must be offset by other clear indicators of outstanding teaching quality (e.g., collaborative research with students,
involvement in distance education, public recognition for teaching, advising of student organizations, recognition for extension work, curriculum innovation, publication of articles on teaching, or development of educational software). Those with evaluation records that consistently reflect poor teaching, taking into account all forms of evidence, will not be recommended for promotion at either the associate or full professor level.

Research

The university expects faculty members to be engaged in scholarly or creative activities appropriate to their disciplines. Recommendations for promotion and tenure involving cases in which such activities are not at a high level will be approved only in rare cases where the documented evidence for teaching (including extension and/or distance education) and/or service contributions are exceptionally compelling.

Because the Department of Psychological Science offers only undergraduate degrees, the typical appointment involves only 25% of time and effort devoted to research relative to teaching time and effort. The emphasis in our evaluation of scholarship is on publications, presentations, and grant and/or contract expenditures. Three (3) to five (5) publications in refereed journals and/or invited chapters in edited books recognized by departmental colleagues and external reviewers as a contribution to the field is required for tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor. Such publications have passed a peer review process by experts in a specialized field of scholarship. Some if not most of these publications should stem from research initiated at S&T. Presentations of research findings at professional meetings, published proceedings, book reviews, and other scholarly contributions are also considered positively. Additionally, participation in grant and/or contract activities on a technological research university campus like S&T are valued and will be viewed positively. The quality as well as quantity of work will be assessed.

A recommendation for promotion and/or tenure must include evidence that the individual’s contributions have had an impact on the discipline. This is documented primarily through outside evaluations by authorities in the field, written by disinterested experts recognized for their own achievements. In order to achieve a minimum of five reference letters, six to ten evaluations are sought from potential external reviewers. “At least half of the reviewers selected should be from nominees other than those supplied by the candidate (not including reviewers nominated by both)” (Documentation for Promotion and/or Tenure Recommendations, Office of the Provost website).

Frequent citations by other scholars also provide evidence of good research. Extensive citation of publications by an assistant professor is not required, but it is viewed positively. At the level of promotion to full professor, it is necessary to document that scholarly activities have had significant impact on the field. Citation analysis, invitations to present research and review the scholarly work of peers, and strong outside evaluations are ways of doing so.
Promotion to professor requires associate professor qualifications and, at a minimum, a developing national reputation. Meeting the minimum “does not automatically qualify one for promotion” (Policy Memorandum II-10, first paragraph).

Service

The expected distribution of teaching to scholarship is 75% to 25%; however, service also is expected. Opportunities for service contributions abound and can take many forms. Service may occur within a discipline, through national, regional, and state organizations, or in the community at large; it may also occur in an administrative unit, such as the home department or the campus. Evidence of some participation in the life of the campus is expected for promotion to the rank of associate professor with tenure. However, the service emphasis for junior faculty will be on departmental advising, recruiting, committee work, meetings, and other departmental events. Our successful recruitment and retention of students in the department hinge on the efforts of junior as well as senior faculty.

For promotion to professor, the candidate must demonstrate involvement in the profession at a national level (e.g., reviewing for journals or external funding agencies) as well as involvement in all levels of campus life, beginning but not ending at the department level. Campus and university wide committees, service to the community and state through distance education or extension, and work on graduate thesis committees as out-of-department members are examples of such involvement. Evidence that the individual’s efforts and judgment are held in high regard by colleagues on campus and off is expected for promotion to professor. Evidence of unusual service contributions, however, cannot by itself be sufficient grounds for a recommendation for promotion and/or tenure. It must be supported by significant additional evidence of contributions in teaching and research.

Timetable for Dossier Preparation

The timetable for preparing the promotion and tenure dossier is dictated by the need to meet the typical campus deadlines. In the spring semester prior to the beginning of the candidate’s sixth year as an assistant professor, the chair and candidate need to determine the external reviewers. The candidate must then have all materials pertaining to research ready to send to the reviewers no later than April 15 and a complete dossier finished by September 1 for deliberation by the departmental promotion and tenure committee. Reviewers’ letters that arrive after October 1 may be added to the dossier as long as the case is still being deliberated at the departmental level. Following the final decision at the departmental level, the dossier is forwarded with the chair’s recommendation and the committee vote to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs’ office, usually by November 1. For early promotion and tenure cases as well as promotion to professor, the same timetable is followed in whatever year is appropriate for the candidate.