

Expectations and Guidelines for Professor of Practice Promotions College of Agriculture and Life Science (CAL S)

Approved by CAL S Governance Council 1-13-26

Promotion to a higher rank is granted to faculty members who have demonstrated excellence and innovation in instructional responsibilities and who show significant evidence of related professional growth and development. This includes an appropriate level of recognition through publication, professional activities, and service at the unit, college, university, and/or national/international levels. Consideration for promotion may be requested by the faculty member or recommended by the unit. Terms of service required for promotion are detailed on the Provost's website at provost.vt.edu/faculty_affairs/promotion_tenure.html

Overview of the Promotion Process

An application for promotion receives up to five independent reviews, in the order shown:

- Unit Committee (see "Unit Committee" on page 3 of this document)
- Unit Leader
- CAL S Instructor and Professor of Practice Promotion Committee
- Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- Provost

Any application that receives a positive recommendation from either one or both the appropriate unit committees (see "Unit Committee" on page 3 of this document) or the unit leader continues to the college level. An application that receives a positive recommendation from the dean and the Instructor and Professor of Practice Promotion Committee (IPC) continues to the provost. The provost makes the final decision on applications reaching the final level.

An applicant is provided significant, detailed written feedback if failing to advance at either the unit or college level. Applications that fail at the unit level can be appealed, but only after having been turned down in at least two separate years (details for appeals can be found in the Faculty Handbook). A negative decision at the college or provost level is final and cannot be appealed.

As stated in the Faculty Handbook, a negative recommendation on a promotion request need not translate into termination of employment. Indeed, a faculty member in the Professor of Practice Series may remain at their current rank as long as their performance warrants continued employment and serves unit needs. In CAL S, promotion and retention decisions are made separately, and being turned down for promotion does not preclude reapplying in a future year.

Specifics of the Promotion Process

The professor of practice promotion process proceeds according to a college-issued timeline, available on the last page of this document.

Contract lengths for professors of practice are three, five, and seven years respectively for appointments at the assistant, associate, and full levels. Ordinarily, professor of practice members within CAL S will not be considered for promotion any earlier than in the third year of their employment at their current rank.

A candidate for promotion prepares a dossier describing their performance and accomplishments and submits it to the unit committee. This dossier is the document on which the request for promotion is judged at each of the five steps of the process. The culmination of each step is a letter containing a recommendation for or against promotion. As with other faculty promotion processes at Virginia Tech, the format for the dossier will be prescribed by the provost. Candidates are referred to the [Provost's website](#) for the professor of practice promotion dossier template. Candidates should include the required Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) reports from courses taught during the length of the candidate's instructional career at Virginia Tech up to the application for promotion, though not to exceed five years immediately preceding the application for promotion. Each professor of practice promotion dossier must include a unit committee and unit leader letter which comments on the faculty member's peer review experience and/or contributions.

The unit committee reviews the dossier of each candidate and prepares a letter stating its recommendation for or against promotion. This letter should contain a thorough summary of the candidate's qualifications for promotion, reflecting the evaluation of the credentials by the committee with an informative, individualized assessment of the candidate's activities and contributions. In the case of a mixed vote, a minority report may be written. In the case of a negative vote, the letter will explain the basis for the negative recommendation.

The unit leader independently evaluates each dossier and the recommendation of the unit committee. Particulars of the candidate's professional assignment should be provided, including the percentage of that assignment to teaching, scholarly activities, service, and outreach. The unit leader's letter needs not repeat the information in the committee's letter but must address the candidate's performance relative to the unit's expectations for performance in the Professor of Practice Series, explaining those expectations and the procedures by which the candidate was evaluated. If the unit leader's recommendation is not in agreement with the committee's, this should be more fully explained and justified. If the unit leader concurs with a negative recommendation from the committee, then the process is ended and the dossier does not move on to the college level; the unit leader provides written feedback to the candidate should this occur.

The IPC will prepare a letter about each candidate whose application reaches the college level, stating its recommendation for or against promotion. Letters from the IPC should be detailed but succinct, as they need not repeat material well summarized at the unit level. In the case of a negative vote, the committee will explain the basis for the negative recommendation. The dean independently evaluates each dossier and the recommendations of the committee. The statement from the dean is an informative assessment of the candidate's accomplishments from the perspective of the college and the dean. The dean should provide a summary of the candidate's contributions to the unit, college, and university goals. If the dean concurs with a negative recommendation from the committee, then the process is ended; the dean provides written feedback to the candidate should this outcome occur. Otherwise, the dean writes a letter with their recommendation and forwards the dossier to the provost. If the dean does not concur with the IPC recommendation, the letter will explain the basis for the lack of concurrence. Notifications about professor of practice faculty promotion decisions are made by the provost according to a published calendar.

Unit Committee

Composition of the unit IPC and its procedures are determined by the unit within the bounds set by the provost and the faculty handbook (Sections 5.2.4 and 5.2.4.1).

Suggested Best Practice

1. Conduct a two- and four-year review to ensure progress toward promotion.
2. Include a promoted professor of practice faculty member on the committee for review of professor of practice candidates.

CALS Committee

The IPC reviews both instructor and professor of practice applications for promotion. It is the responsibility of each department and school within the college to select one of its advanced instructors or senior instructors to serve on the IPC. The selection process is at the discretion of the department or school. Committee members serve three-year terms. An instructor may choose to step off the committee at the end of a three-year term. Due to this, and due to the fact that some departments do not currently have any advanced or senior instructors, the size of the IPC may vary from year to year. Minimal membership is five, achieved by the Associate Dean and Director of Academic Programs (associate dean) appointment of collegiate faculty if necessary. The associate dean or their designee serves as a non-voting member. A faculty member serving on both the department committee and the IPC may vote at only one of these levels. Faculty members should not serve on any promotion committee evaluating a spouse or partner. It is not sufficient to leave the room while the spouse or partner is discussed.

Professors of Practice with Administrative Expectations (greater than, or equal to 35%)

The responsibilities assigned to faculty in the rank of professor of practice are varied and due consideration must be given to their assigned responsibilities. For those with responsibilities in administration the evaluation of their performance will follow the expectations for these activities within the candidate's home unit. The following provides a general guideline for the types of administrative activities undertaken by faculty with such an appointment.

Administrative Areas

Program/Unit. Program or unit administration includes directing or leading a necessary organizational activity. Examples include: (a) a degree or academic program, (b) a laboratory or physical space used by multiple stakeholders. They display leadership and initiative, are forward thinking and creative in the development of curriculum and activities, demonstrate a high level of collaborative work, and follow all required standards, policies, and procedures. Evidence of impact should be documented with program outcomes, national or regional impact, awards, etc.

Expectations for the Professor of Practice Series

- Quality instruction evidenced by such measures as student responses to supplemental questions, activities in non-classroom settings, peer reviews, and SPOT evaluations.
- Participation in unit activities related to programs of instruction, curricular development, and their relationships and integration with other programs at the university. Development of leadership within the unit on curricular issues and on evolving goals of the unit's instructional mission.
- Pedagogical innovation in terms of course development and/or methods of instructional delivery. Promoting teaching excellence within the unit.
- Proficiency at understanding and evaluating research that applies to their field and translating it to classroom settings.
- Research and professional development in alignment with the unit's expectations for the faculty member's appointment, as delivered to the employee in writing. The research program may include scholarship on teaching and learning, and/or on disciplinary topics, and must produce findings that are presented in professional venues including conferences and journal publications. There is, however, no expectation of a research program so extensive as to be appropriate for a tenure-track faculty appointment.
- Service at the unit, college, and university level.
- Adherence to the Virginia Tech Principles of Ethical Behavior and the Virginia Tech Principles of Community, as described in section 2.7 of the Faculty Handbook.

Where appropriate to their assignment, professors of practice may interact with graduate students and interns, serve on graduate committees, and chair graduate advisory committees with the approval of the academic unit and the Graduate School. They may also be expected to serve on unit, college, or university committees as contributing members of their units and the broader university community.

A faculty member in the Professor of Practice Series should work with their unit leader to clarify and detail the expectations of their position within the guidelines provided by this document. This series allows for flexibility of the emphasis placed on the various performance categories, so that positions may best be crafted to serve unit needs. It is the joint responsibility of the unit leader and the faculty member to ensure that written expectations are sufficiently clear.

Criteria for Promotion to Associate Professor of Practice

Credentials for appointment or promotion to this rank must document a record of significant instructional experience with sustained excellence and accomplishments relevant to the field and type of assignment. The strongest cases will show a pattern of these activities throughout the promotion period:

- Excellent instruction, evidenced in the dossier by reference to such items as student responses to supplemental questions, activities in a non-classroom setting, peer reviews, and SPOT evaluations.
- Professional development contributions to a growing regional or national reputation, to include participation in professional conferences and publications in venues deemed appropriate for their assignment by their unit.
- Course or curricular development or development of new pedagogies. This should include, but is not limited to, contributions to textbooks or online teaching materials available to others beyond the faculty member's own classes; increasing the availability and relevance of undergraduate research experiences; introduction of active learning or flipped

classroom models to courses previously employing older formats; and developing and/or teaching new courses.

- Substantial contributions to the unit's instructional program. This should include, but is not limited to, advising or mentoring students; for example, academic advising of undergraduate and graduate students, peer mentoring, or advising student organizations.
- Sustained service to the unit, college, and university.

Criteria for Promotion to Professor of Practice

Professor of practice is the capstone rank in this promotion series and appointment to this rank requires exemplary performance across the full range of professor of practice expectations. Promotion to this rank requires distinguished professional achievement, and regional, national, or international prominence in the field. Credentials must document a record of significant and impactful instructional experience with continued excellence. There should be significant evidence of scholarly accomplishments and recognition relevant to the field and assignment and of ongoing, valuable service within and external to the university.

- exemplary instruction, evidenced in the dossier by reference to such items as student responses to supplemental questions, activities in a non-classroom setting, peer reviews, and SPOT evaluations.
- Professional development contributions to a growing regional, national, or international reputation, to include participation in professional conferences and publications in venues deemed appropriate for their assignment by their unit.
- Continued course or curricular development or development of new pedagogies. This should include, but is not limited to, contributions to textbooks or online teaching materials available to others beyond the faculty member's own classes; increasing the availability and relevance of undergraduate research experiences; introduction of active learning or flipped classroom models to courses previously employing older formats; and developing and/or teaching new courses.
- Sustained and significant contributions to the unit's instructional program. This should include, but is not limited to, advising or mentoring students; for example, academic advising of undergraduate and graduate students, peer mentoring, or advising student organizations.
- Sustained and significant service to the unit, college, and university.

CALS Promotion Timetable – Professor of Practice Series

August 1	The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) Instructor and Professor of Practice Promotion Committee (IPC) is finalized with names of incoming members provided by the units to the dean's office. The timeline and procedures are sent to all new and returning members.
September-October	Units determine instructors or professors of practice who will be considered for promotion. Candidates assemble dossiers in format provided by the provost and with any supplementary material required by CALS.
November 15	Notify the Associate Dean and Director for Academic Programs (academic dean) with names of instructors who will be considered for promotion by the unit.
November 15	Promotion dossiers for instructors or professors of practice submitted electronically to the academic dean. All dossiers are to be submitted, regardless of the outcome at the unit level.
Before December 1	Promotion dossiers of instructors or professors of practice advancing from the unit level are distributed to the CALS IPC.
December-January	CALS meeting to be scheduled during this block. One 2-hour meeting is typically sufficient unless there are many candidates.
February	Recommendations of CALS IPC are due to the dean.
February	Dean reviews dossiers and writes their recommendations for each candidate.
March	Dossiers receiving a positive recommendation at the college level are submitted to the provost by the dean.

Introduction

Individuals appointed to one of the professor of practice ranks are expected to be successful and effective professionals in a given field. They must be effective teachers of the profession or discipline, and they are expected to be able to understand and evaluate the research that applies to their field and teach it to students. While professor of practice faculty members may conduct research and present their findings in professional venues, there are no expectations for an extensive research program as is typical of tenure-track faculty appointments.

Professor of practice faculty members are expected to remain active in their professions in ways that contribute to their assignment—teaching, consulting, or outreach, serving in technical and professional societies and associations, and similar activities.

A record of significant professional achievement is expected for appointment at the associate professor or professor level; initial appointments at such ranks require approval of the appropriate departmental or school committee and head, chair, or school director. Appointment to one of these ranks may be from one to five years and is renewable without limit.

Rank Definitions

Assistant Professor of Practice: Persons appointed at this rank have a graduate or professional degree in the discipline (or a related discipline), professional certification(s) if relevant, and/or significant professional experience. Experience and demonstrated competence in practice of the profession are expected.

Associate Professor of Practice: Persons appointed at the associate professor of practice rank have a graduate or professional degree in the discipline (or a related discipline), professional certification(s) if relevant, and/or significant professional experience. Credentials for appointment or promotion to this rank must document a record of significant professional experience and accomplishments relevant to the field and type of assignment.

Professor of Practice: Professor of practice is the capstone rank in the series. Appointment to this rank denotes distinguished professional achievement, and regional, national, or international prominence in the field. Credentials for appointment or promotion to this rank must document a record of significant professional experience and accomplishments relevant to the field and type of assignment. External validation (outside review letters) of such accomplishments and leadership in the field is expected at the time of appointment or promotion.