Academic Promotion

Original Implementation: October 19, 1978
Last Revision: January 31, 2012

Promotion is awarded according to established procedures after an appropriate period on the basis of meritorious performance in teaching, research/scholarly/creative accomplishment and service.

To be promoted to the rank of associate professor, an individual must demonstrate excellence in teaching, and excellence in either research/scholarly/creative accomplishments or in service. At least satisfactory performance must be demonstrated in the other category. Excellence in one category will not compensate for poor performance in any of the other categories.

To be promoted to the rank of professor, candidates must demonstrate excellence in all categories appropriate to promotion: teaching, research/scholarly/creative accomplishments and service.

Academic promotion shall normally be restricted to full-time faculty members who have earned the highest academic degree customarily awarded in their field of study.

In exceptional circumstances, special training in recognized institutions, e.g., conservatories or research institutes, or the attainment of nationally recognized licenses or certificates, may be judged to satisfy the requirement for advanced degrees. Practical experience and/or demonstrable expertise and performance in activities related directly to one’s faculty appointment may be judged to satisfy the requirement for advanced degrees and/or years of experience. Exceptions may be granted by the provost and vice president for academic affairs.

This policy establishes a system of procedures for promotion in all academic units of the university. Each college and its departments shall also establish written policies governing promotion decision-making procedures that are consistent with this policy.

I. General Provisions
   A. Definitions:
      1. "Promotion" means advancement based on a faculty member’s academic credentials and meritorious performance in teaching, research/scholarly/creative accomplishments, and service.
      2. “Academic unit” normally refers to a subdivision of a college, but can also refer to the library.
      3. “Academic unit chair/director” is the administrator immediately responsible for the academic unit.
4. “Promotion review portfolio” (referred to hereafter as the portfolio) is a set of verifiable materials demonstrating evidence of a candidate’s credentials and suitability for promotion. The portfolio should contain a succinct, relevant, substantive and cumulative record of a candidate’s performance during the review period at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA); for senior-level positions, the portfolio will consist of materials requested by the provost and vice president for academic affairs.

5. “Academic year” as used in this policy shall be the full nine-month period from September through May.

B. Academic Rank

1. This policy applies to the ranks of assistant professor, associate professor, and professor (see policy 7.2).

2. The ranks of both librarian and archivist I, II, III, and IV are governed by policy 7.17.

II. Promotion Policy Principles

A. Promotion is not an entitlement but must be earned by fulfilling the criteria appropriate to the rank.

B. Recommendations and decisions on promotion shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or disabled veteran status.

C. Application processes for tenure and promotion can be undertaken at the same time.

D. For purposes of calculating years of service in rank, an “academic year” shall be the approximate nine-month period from September through May. If a faculty member begins service during an academic year, the period of service from the date of appointment until the beginning of the following academic year shall not be counted toward years of service in rank, unless the inclusion of that period of service is approved by the provost and vice president for academic affairs.

1. A scholarly leave of absence (see policy 12.11) shall count as part of the service in rank unless the candidate and the provost and vice president for academic affairs agree in writing to an exception to this provision at the time the leave is granted.

2. Periods during which a faculty member is on leave of absence for one semester or more due to health-related issues or national guard service (see policy 12.11) shall not be counted as part of the service in rank unless the candidate and the provost and vice president for academic affairs agree in writing to an exception to this provision at the time the leave is granted.

III. Promotion Eligibility

A. To apply for the rank of associate professor, an individual should have held the rank of assistant professor for at least three years at SFA. The portfolio shall document all years in service at SFA at the rank of assistant professor. The provost and vice president for academic affairs may waive this requirement for an individual hired for a senior-level position.
B. To apply for the rank of professor, an individual should have held the rank of associate professor for at least three years at SFA. The portfolio shall document all years in service at SFA at the rank of associate professor. The provost and vice president for academic affairs may waive this requirement for an individual hired for a senior-level position.

C. In exceptional circumstances when warranted by extraordinary performance, faculty members may be reviewed for promotion earlier with the approval of the dean and provost and vice president for academic affairs. The evidence to support early promotion must be unequivocal.

IV. Promotion Procedures

A. Each college and its academic units shall establish a promotion review process that is approved by the dean and the provost and vice president for academic affairs.

1. A copy of all college/academic unit promotion review policies must be retained in the offices of the provost and vice president for academic affairs and general counsel.

2. The promotion review process must allow for review of faculty being considered for promotion by all full-time faculty members in the academic unit holding rank higher than the candidate, the academic unit chair/director, elected faculty (one from each department) at the college level, and the dean.

3. The academic unit, with approval of the college dean and provost and vice president for academic affairs, shall establish the promotion criteria in teaching, research/scholarly/creative accomplishments, and service.

B. The applicant is responsible for developing and submitting to the academic unit chair/director a portfolio of supporting materials. If the individual is also applying for tenure, only one portfolio for both processes should be submitted. The portfolio should demonstrate how the candidate meets or exceeds the promotion criteria. The portfolio should consist of relevant supporting materials, including a table of contents, current vitae, all annual faculty activity reports since last promotion, annual administrative evaluations since last promotion, and documentation of the following:

   a. teaching effectiveness, e.g., summaries of student evaluations, teaching awards, peer evaluations, innovative teaching approaches;

   b. research/scholarly/creative accomplishments, e.g., publications, research/creative projects, photographs of artworks, finished pieces of work;

   c. university-related service, e.g., committee responsibilities, leadership roles assumed at department, college, and university levels;

   d. contributions to the profession, e.g., memberships in professional organizations, offices held, other leadership roles; and

   e. general community service related to the profession, e.g., presentations and activities that enhance the professional discipline.

C. The portfolio must be submitted in the fall semester of the appropriate year of service according to the timetable established by the provost and vice president for academic
affairs. Once the portfolio is completed and submitted, nothing shall be added or deleted except according to academic unit, college, or university policy.

D. The academic unit chair/director shall make the portfolio available for review by all full-time faculty members in the unit holding rank higher than the candidate. These faculty members shall constitute the academic unit promotion committee/panel for the candidate.

1. It is possible that two separate promotion committees/panels may be necessary in an academic unit, one for promotion to associate professor and one for promotion to professor.

2. Administrators who are not involved in the promotion recommendation process at another level are eligible to serve on promotion committees.

3. In academic units with two or fewer full-time faculty holding rank higher than the candidate, the chair/director and each candidate shall submit separately to the dean of the college a list of three names of full-time faculty members from other academic units in the university holding rank higher than the candidate. The dean shall appoint members from these lists until there are at least three members of the academic unit promotion committee/panel.

E. The committee/panel shall make its recommendations to the academic unit chair/director.

1. The chair/director shall notify each candidate in writing of committee/panel and chair/director recommendations in a manner and timeframe congruent with academic unit and college policies.

2. The chair/director shall make a recommendation on promotion even if not holding a rank higher than the candidate.

3. Within five (5) class days of being allowed to review the written recommendations of the academic unit and chair/director, the candidate may attach a letter of response addressing errors of fact in the recommendations. Such a notification and any subsequent response by the candidate shall become part of the portfolio.

F. Once the review process is completed at the academic unit level, all documentation shall be forwarded to the candidate’s dean.

1. The dean shall follow college policy in assembling promotion committees/panels.

2. The committees/panels shall make their recommendations to the dean who shall notify each candidate in writing of the committee/panel’s and dean’s recommendations in a manner congruent with college policy.

3. Within five (5) class days of being allowed to review the written recommendations and comments, the candidate may attach a letter of response addressing errors of fact in the recommendations. Such a notification and any subsequent response by the candidate shall become part of the portfolio.
G. After the college has completed its promotion review, the portfolio, along with all academic unit and college recommendations and comments, shall be submitted to the provost and vice president for academic affairs for review.

1. The provost and vice president for academic affairs shall submit a recommendation on each candidate’s promotion to the president, along with all materials and the recommendations generated at each preceding stage of the process.

2. At the same time, the provost and vice president for academic affairs shall notify the candidate of the recommendation submitted to the president.

H. The president shall review all materials and recommendations, and any other evidence deemed pertinent, and make a recommendation to the Board of Regents.

I. Promotion in rank is by action of the Board of Regents of Stephen F. Austin State University. Exceptions to the policies and procedures related to promotion must be authorized by the Board of Regents.

J. Within the next class day following the action of the Board of Regents, each candidate shall be notified in writing by the provost and vice president of academic affairs of the action of the Board.

Cross Reference: Academic Appointments and Titles (7.2); Library Faculty (7.17); Tenure (7.29); Leave of Absence (Faculty) (12.11)

Responsible for Implementation: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Contact for Revision: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Forms: None

Board Committee Assignment: Academic and Student Affairs