

**College of Science (COS) Expectations and Guidelines  
for  
Collegiate Faculty Promotions  
(updates are highlighted)**

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I. Overview of the Promotion Process

Promotion to a higher rank is granted to Collegiate Faculty members who have demonstrated excellence and innovation in instructional responsibilities, and who show significant evidence of related professional growth and development, including an appropriate level of recognition outside of the University through publication and other professional activities. Consideration for promotion may be requested by the faculty member or recommended by the department.

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

- Departmental Committee
- Department Head
- COS Collegiate Faculty and Professor of Practice Promotion Committee
- Dean of the College of Science
- Provost

Composition of the department collegiate faculty promotion committee and its procedures are determined by the department within the bounds set by the Provost and the Faculty Handbook.

The College of Science CF & PoP promotion committee reviews both Collegiate Faculty and Professor of Practice applications for promotion. The goal is for this committee to be comprised of faculty at the associate or full level in the Collegiate Faculty and Professor of Practice ranks. Due to the currently small number of such faculty in the college, this may not be possible for several years. Until then, candidates will be considered at the college level by a committee that will include some tenured

faculty members. Committee members are nominated by COS departments and appointed by the Dean. The Dean, or other representative of the College of Science Dean's office as appointed by the Dean, serves as a non-voting member and committee chair. Minimal committee size will be four voting members. A faculty member serving on both the department committee and the COS CF & PoP promotion committee may vote only at the departmental level. 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.

Any application that receives a positive recommendation from one or both of the Departmental Committee and the Department Head moves on to the College level. An application that reaches the College level continues to the Provost upon receiving a positive recommendation from one or both of the COS Collegiate Faculty and Professor of Practice (CF & PoP) Promotion Committee and the Dean. The Provost makes the final decision on applications reaching that level.

An applicant is provided written feedback if failing to advance at either the department or college level. Applications that are turned down at the department 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 level, or by the provost, 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 Collegiate Faculty series may remain at their current rank as long as their performance warrants continued employment and serves departmental needs. In COS, promotion and retention decisions are made independently, and being turned down for promotion does not preclude reapplying in a future year

## II. Specifics of the Promotion Process

The Collegiate Faculty promotion process proceeds according to a college-issued timeline, available in Section V of this document.

Contract lengths for Collegiate Faculty are three, five, and seven years respectively for appointments at the assistant, associate, and full levels. Ordinarily, Collegiate Faculty members within COS will not be considered for promotion any earlier than in the fifth year of their employment at their current rank.

A candidate for promotion prepares a dossier (see Section IV of this document) describing her/his performance and accomplishments and submits this to the departmental committee. Once a dossier is submitted by the candidate, it may not be revised or modified except for addition of material in Section II of the dossier by department head, departmental promotion committee, dean and college promotion committee. Should additional information become available or if errors are identified during the review process, they should be included and/or explained as part of the department head letter and/or dean letter. 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, pro or con, for the promotion.

The Departmental Committee reviews the dossier of each candidate and prepares a letter stating its recommendation, positive or negative, for promotion, and reporting the numeric division of the committee's vote. 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 committee letter should also include a list of names of the eligible voting members and note the names of ineligible or non-voting observers. The department committee letter should explicitly make a recommendation for or against promotion.

The Department Head independently evaluates each dossier and the recommendations of the committee. The Head's letter is limited to 5-6 pages in length and should clearly state their recommendation on the case. The letter should be sure to address all areas as outlined in the Provost's guidelines. Particulars of the candidate's professional assignment should be provided, including the percentage of that assignment to teaching, for scholarly activities, and for service and outreach. The Head's letter need not repeat the information in the committee's letter, but must address the candidate's performance relative to the department's expectations for performance in the collegiate faculty series, explaining those expectations and the procedures by which the candidate was evaluated. If the faculty candidate did not meet an expectation, the letter should explain the reason(s) for not completing the expectation and may highlight other evidence that might show the candidate's success in a related area or intermediate progress in that area (e.g. scholarship published with students, student progress towards degree such as exams completed, etc.).

The Head should summarize the opinions of the external reviewers, providing explanations for any disagreements with those opinions. The Head's letter should also explain why each reviewer is well-placed to write an external letter. If a reviewer has co-authored with the candidate, the letter should provide an explanation of how the reviewer is sufficiently removed from the candidate and how they can provide an independent and unbiased review. If the Head's recommendation is not in agreement with the committee's, this should be more fully explicated and justified. If the Head concurs with a negative recommendation from the committee, then the case is ended and does not move on to the college level; the Head provides written feedback to the candidate should this occur.

The COS CF & PoP promotion committee will prepare a letter about each candidate whose application reaches the college level, stating its recommendation, positive or negative, for promotion, and reporting the numeric division of the committee's vote. The committee letter should also include the list of names of the eligible voting members and note the names of ineligible or non-voting observers. Letters from the COS CF & PoP promotion committee should be detailed but succinct, as they need not repeat material well summarized at the departmental level. If the vote is not unanimous, a brief explanation of the concerns represented by the dissenting votes is included in the college committee's statement. 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 an integrative summary of the candidate's contributions to the department, college, and university goals. In cases of a split vote or differing recommendations from the department or from the college committee, the Dean should explain and contextualize those differences so to aid understanding at the next level of review. If the Dean concurs with a negative recommendation from the committee, then the case is ended and does not move on to the Provost; the Dean provides written feedback to the candidate should this occur. Otherwise, the Dean writes a letter with her/his recommendation and forwards the dossier to the Provost. If the Dean does not concur with a CF & PoP promotion committee recommendation, the letter will explain the basis for the lack of concurrence. Notifications about CF promotion decisions are made by the Provost according to a published calendar.

### III. Expectations for Promotion within the Collegiate Faculty Series

- Quality instruction as evidenced by such measures as Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) evaluations, student responses to supplemental questions, activities in non-classroom settings, and peer reviews.
- Participation in departmental activities as related to programs of instruction, curricular development, and their relationships and integration with other programs at the university. Development of leadership within the department on curricular issues and on evolving goals of the department's instructional mission.
- Pedagogical innovation in terms of course development and/or methods of instructional delivery. Promoting teaching excellence within the department.
- 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 department's expectations for the faculty member's appointment. The research program may be 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.
- Adherence to the Virginia Tech Principles of Ethical Behavior and the Virginia Tech Principles of Community, as described in section 2.23 of the Faculty Handbook.

Where appropriate to their assignment, Collegiate Faculty members 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 departmental, college, or university committees as contributing members of their departments and the broader university community.

A faculty member in the Collegiate Faculty series should work with their department head to clarify and detail the expectations of their position within the guidelines provided by this document. This series allows for flexibility of the emphases placed on the various performance categories, so that positions may best be crafted to serve departmental needs. It is the joint responsibility of the department head and the faculty member to assure that expectations are sufficiently clear.

#### Criteria for Promotion to Associate Collegiate Professor

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

- Exemplary instruction, evidenced in the dossier by reference to such items as SPOT evaluations, student responses to supplemental questions, activities in a non-classroom setting, peer reviews, and annual departmental evaluations. Note that two letters or reports from departmental or college peer reviewers since last promotion are required. These reviews should be a minimum of two

pages each and provide substantive detail regarding the teaching and advising activities. Peer evaluation of teaching may address topics such as course organization and management, pedagogical strategies, content knowledge and communication, assessment strategies, and student engagement, among others. Additionally, the two peer reviews should represent different points of time in the review period and differing instructional events. Faculty whose evaluations of teaching, including peer evaluations and SPOT scores, suggest improvements in teaching are warranted should be sure to list what they have done to improve in subsection M of the promotion dossier.

- Professional development contributing to a growing regional or national reputation, to include participation in professional conferences and publications in venues deemed appropriate for their assignment by their department.
- Course or curricular development or development of new pedagogies. This may include (but is not limited to) contributions to textbooks or to 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 and/or other innovative models to courses previously employing older formats; and developing/teaching new courses.
- Substantial contributions to the department's instructional program in the form of advising or mentoring students; for example, academic advising of undergraduate students, GTA advising or mentoring, peer mentoring, or advising student organizations. Faculty should describe graduate mentoring accomplishments in detail, including exams completed, scholarship published, funding of graduate students on grants and contracts, the successful graduation of master's and/or Ph.D. students, and other milestones that demonstrate effective and successful graduate student mentorship.
- Substantive service to the department, college, and/or university.
- All faculty members are expected to demonstrate professional collegiality, and to conduct themselves with the utmost integrity, behaviors which are prerequisite for promotion to any rank. Collegiality includes but is not limited to participating in meaningful and positive ways in the activities of the department, college and university; interacting with others (students, staff, and faculty) in respectful ways in all communications, whether spoken or written; acting with integrity in all interactions with members of the university community and in any capacity in which a faculty member may be viewed as representing their department and/or Virginia Tech; and supporting the intellectual and professional development of colleagues at VT and elsewhere.

## Criteria for Promotion to Collegiate Professor

Collegiate Professor is the capstone rank in the Collegiate Faculty series and promotion to this rank requires exemplary performance across the full range of Collegiate Faculty

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, impactful instructional experience with continued excellence; of scholarly accomplishments relevant to the field and assignment; and of ongoing, valuable service within and external to the University. External validation of such accomplishments and leadership in the field is expected.

#### IV. Dossier Preparation

**As with other faculty promotion processes at Virginia Tech, the format for and content within the dossier is prescribed by the provost. Candidates are referred to the provost's webpage ([provost.vt.edu/faculty\\_affairs/promotion\\_tenure.html](http://provost.vt.edu/faculty_affairs/promotion_tenure.html)) for the CF template available there.**

Beginning in 2023-24, each dossier must contain a dossier certification form. The form is signed by the candidate certifying that their dossier is an accurate and truthful record of their scholarly achievement and that they assume full responsibility for the presentation and formatting of the dossier. The name of the department head, chair or school director, the department/school P&T Committee chair, or the candidate's faculty mentor who reviewed the draft of the dossier and provided the candidate with dossier preparation feedback and mentoring should also be included.

Each CF dossier must contain, at a minimum, four external review letters chosen according to the process and criteria described in the Provost's guidelines. University guidelines state that external reviewers should not include former advisors, post-doctoral supervisors, co-investigators on grants, or co-authors on recent publication or should not have other relationships that may be perceived as too close to the candidate. In this case, "recent" is defined consistent with NSF standards to mean within 4 years (48 months). External reviewers should be accomplished senior academics and senior contributors to the appropriate discipline(s) and/or areas of scholarship, preferably at peer universities. However, due to the distinctive responsibilities of collegiate professors, outside reviewers from less research-intensive colleges and universities may be appropriate. The dossier must include all external letters received, not just selected letters.

The reviewers and their letters should focus primarily on the candidate's contributions to and success in pedagogy and only secondarily and briefly on their scholarship contributions. To that end, departments should provide reviewers with appropriate artifacts for the candidates' teaching so that they can make an informed and appropriate assessment. These artifacts may include: course syllabi, student work samples, assessments and rubrics, teaching materials, classroom observations, professional development records, student feedback, professional accomplishments.

Letters to external reviewers should contain text that:

- a. Asks the reviewer to self-disclose their relationship with the candidate and any disqualifying (due to conflict of interest) relationships
- b. Describes the confidentiality related to their letters
- c. Describes the VT college faculty series in terms of responsibilities
- d. Describes VT's criteria for CF promotion

- e. Requests a review of teaching performance and scholarship contribution to include a statement such as: “Please provide an evaluation of the candidate’s teaching ability and their contributions to education of students. To that end, I have enclosed (or provided links) to the following artifacts of the candidate’s teaching to assist you in your evaluation.”
- f. Minimizes asking about research/scholarship and university service with focus on professional service including a statement such as: “Your evaluation of the candidate’s teaching and pedagogical innovation contributions is the primary focus of this review and will form an important component in the dossier. Review of the candidate’s scholarship contributions are also important, though not to the extent of a tenure-track assessment and within the scope of collegiate faculty expectations.”

More detail regarding guidelines and requirements for CF External Letters may be found in Section VI of this document.

In addition to the Provost’s requirements, the College of Science requires that full SPOT reports from courses taught by a candidate be included in the dossier as supplementary material, to cover the length of the candidate’s instructional career at Virginia Tech up to the application for promotion, though not to exceed the five years immediately preceding the application for promotion.



## V. College of Science Promotion Timeline for Collegiate Faculty



April – May 2024	Departments determine faculty members who will be considered for promotion in either the Professor of Practice (PoP) series or the Collegiate Faculty (CF) series.
<b>*June 1, 2024</b>	Notify the Dean’s Office (Amber Robinson) of faculty for whom external letters will be requested. External letters are required for promotion to associate or full in the CF series, and for promotion to full in the PoP series.
May – June 2024	External reviewers are identified and invited to serve. <b>Be sure to include verbiage about criteria and self-disqualification.</b>
July 1, 2024	Letters and candidates’ packets, including candidates’ statements, are sent to external reviewers. <b>Be sure to include required verbiage in letter.</b>
September 14, 2024	Due date for external letters to be received.
October 2024	Departmental deliberations and vote, and evaluation by the department head; dossiers for candidates going forward to the college are completed.
<b>*November 15, 2024</b>	Promotion dossiers submitted electronically to College of Science NAS.
January 20-24, 2025	COS CF & PoP Promotion Committee meeting, to review dossiers and issue recommendations, is scheduled within these dates.
<b>*January 31, 2025</b>	Letters from COS CF & PoP Promotion Committee, evaluating candidates, are finalized and submitted to the Dean.
February 2025	College completes the final dossiers for all CF and PoP candidates going forward to the University Committee.
<b>*March 1, 2025</b>	Final dossiers submitted to the Provost’s Office.

**\*Due dates;** all other dates are suggested timeframes for departments.

## VI.Guidelines and Requirements for CF External Letters



**To:** College Deans  
Department Heads, Chairs, and School Directors  
Department P&T Committee Chairs

**From:** Ron Fricker, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs   
Cyndi Hutchison, Project Director, Faculty Affairs 

**Date:** May 1, 2024

**Subject: Guidelines and Requirements for Collegiate Faculty External Letters**

1. **Purpose.** To provide guidance to departments about letters to external letter writers for candidates for promotion in the collegiate faculty series.
2. **Guidance Documents.** General requirements for promotion are contained in [section 5.1.5 of the Faculty Handbook](#), guidelines are available on the [provost's website](#). Requirements for dossier preparation are provided in the Collegiate Faculty Series Dossier Guidelines which is updated annually. This memo provides excerpts from that document focused specifically on external letters.
3. **External Reviewer Requirements.** Collegiate faculty seeking promotion to associate professor or professor are required to have four letters from external reviewers. The reviewers and their letters should focus primarily on the candidate's contributions to and success in pedagogy and only secondarily and briefly on their scholarship contributions. To that end, departments and schools should provide reviewers with appropriate artifacts of the candidate's teaching so that they can make an informed and appropriate assessment. These artifacts may include:
  - a. **Course Syllabi and Lesson Plans:** Detailed outlines of instructional activities, objectives, assessments, and materials used in a single class session or unit. They can be used by the external reviewer to gain insight into the candidate's planning skills and their course alignment with learning goals.
  - b. **Student Work Samples:** Examples of completed assignments, projects, or assessments demonstrating students' understanding and application of concepts. They can be used by the external reviewer to assess the candidate's effectiveness in facilitating and evaluating student learning.
  - c. **Assessments and Rubrics:** Various types of assessments (e.g., quizzes, tests, essays) and corresponding rubrics used to evaluate student performance. They can be used by the external reviewer to assess the candidate's ability to design fair and rigorous assessments aligned with learning objectives.
  - d. **Teaching Materials:** Resources such as handouts, presentations, multimedia

materials, and supplementary resources used to support instruction. They can be used by the external reviewer to evaluate the candidate's creativity in engaging students and delivering content effectively.

- e. **Classroom Observations:** Formal or informal observations of teaching conducted by administrators, peers, or instructional coaches. They can be used to help the external evaluator assess the candidate's instructional strategies, classroom management abilities, and rapport with students.
- f. **Professional Development Records:** Documentation of workshops, courses, conferences, or seminars attended by the teacher to enhance their teaching skills and knowledge. They can be used by the external reviewer to evaluate the candidate's commitment to continuous improvement.
- g. **Student Feedback:** Surveys, questionnaires, or reflections soliciting feedback from students about their learning experiences and perceptions of the candidate's effectiveness. They can be used by external evaluators to help them understand the candidate's performance from the student perspective.
- h. **Professional Accomplishments:** Awards, certifications, publications, or presentations related to teaching and education. They can be used by reviewers as evidence of external recognition of the candidate's expertise, contributions to the field, and recognition by peers or professional organizations.

Per the Collegiate Faculty Series Dossier Guidelines, "External reviewers should be accomplished senior academics and senior contributors to the appropriate discipline(s) and/or areas of scholarship, preferably at peer universities. However, due to the distinctive responsibilities of collegiate professors, outside reviewers from less research-intensive colleges and universities may be appropriate."

- a. A list of Virginia Tech's SCHEV-approved peer institutions is available at <https://aie.vt.edu/strategic-analysis/peer-institutions.html>
- b. If the best person to evaluate the work is at a university below peer level, *explain and justify that choice in the department head letter.*

4. **Required Text.** The following text is required for all candidates.

- a. Ask the reviewer to self-disclose their relationship with the candidate and any disqualifying relationships:

*"As part of your letter, please describe your relationship with the candidate. This should include how long you have known the candidate, whether you have a personal or professional relationship with the candidate, and, in general, whether there is potential for conflict of interest. The university guidelines state that our external reviewers should not include former advisors, post-doctoral supervisors, co-investigators on grants, or co-authors on recent publications, or should not have other relationships that may be perceived as being too close to the candidate. We ask that you self-disqualify if you meet any of these criteria."*

- b. Include the following statement on confidentiality:

*“The policy of Virginia Tech is to hold in confidence all letters of evaluation from persons outside the institution. Only the committees and administrative officers directly responsible for the decision of concern here will have access to your letter. It will not be provided to the candidate unless we are required specifically to do so by law.”*

5. **Suggested Text.** Letters to external reviewers should contain the following information.

a. Describe Virginia Tech’s collegiate faculty series. Some examples:

*The Collegiate Professor series at Virginia Tech provides for short- or long-term, full- or part-time, nontenure-track faculty appointments for individuals who bring specialized expertise to the instructional programs of the university, thereby complementing the qualifications and contributions of tenure-track faculty.*

*Collegiate professors have a major commitment to the instructional missions of their department. The involvement of collegiate professors can include classroom and online teaching, curricular updates, course transformations, and the adoption/integration of innovative and inclusive pedagogy. Working in collaboration with the department’s other faculty, collegiate faculty may take a lead role in enhancing the curricula and promoting teaching excellence.*

*Collegiate faculty are effective teachers of their discipline and are expected to understand and evaluate the research that applies to their field and to teach it to students. Collegiate professor faculty members may conduct research on the scholarship of teaching and learning related to their field and/or on disciplinary topics in their field and present their findings in professional venues, but there are no expectations for an extensive research program as is typical of tenure-track faculty appointments.*

b. Describe Virginia Tech’s criteria for collegiate faculty promotion. Some examples:

*Collegiate Faculty are expected to focus on excellence in teaching and student learning which could include pedagogical innovation, curricular reform, promotion of teaching excellence beyond themselves, or contributions to more holistic student development initiatives. Collegiate faculty must engage in scholarship of teaching and learning and/or disciplinary research, however, their scholarship is defined more broadly than for teaching and research faculty. This faculty track is also expected to participate in service and/or outreach and should maintain a connection to their professional discipline. Collegiate Faculty are not expected to develop an extensive externally-funded research program.*

*The candidate for promotion to Collegiate Associate Professor should demonstrate excellent teaching and impactful contributions to pedagogy, curriculum, co-curricular student activities, and/or promotion of teaching excellence with potential for greater impact in the future. The candidate must have produced scholarship and must have strong contributions to service. The cumulative record should indicate that a high level of teaching potential has been achieved and the candidate’s scholarship should have achieved at least regional or impact.*

c. Request a review of teaching performance and scholarship contributions. Some

examples:

*Please provide an evaluation of the candidate's teaching ability and their contributions to education of students (whether curricular or co-curricular). To that end, I have enclosed / provided links to the following artefacts of the candidate's teaching to assist you in your evaluation:*

- *Course syllabi and lesson plans*
- *Student work examples*
- *Assessments and rubrics*
- *Teaching materials*
- *Classroom observations*
- *Professional development records*
- *Student Feedback*
- *Professional accomplishments*

*We would specifically appreciate your overall assessment of the candidate's excellence in teaching and student learning, including their pedagogical innovation, curricular reform, promotion of teaching excellence, and/or contributions to more holistic student development initiatives. In addition, though secondarily, we would also appreciate your comments on their pedagogical or disciplinary scholarship within the bounds of the collegiate faculty series expectations previously described.*

*It would be helpful in your evaluation to rate the candidate's accomplishments in comparison with other individuals who are working in similar fields at other universities. Is the work of high quality? Does it reflect increasing maturity and depth? Is the candidate on a trajectory that suggests subsequent successful promotion to collegiate professor?*

- d. Minimize asking about research/scholarship and university service; focus on professional service. Some examples:

*Our decision will be based on several kinds of evidence, including a candidate's contributions to the teaching, scholarship, and service/outreach missions of the university. Your evaluation of the candidate's teaching and pedagogical innovation contributions is the primary focus of this review and will form an important component in the dossier. Review of the candidate's scholarship contributions are also important, though not to the extent of a tenure-track assessment, and within the scope of collegiate faculty expectations.*

*We do not expect you to comment extensively on the candidate's research and university service activities. While their contributions to research and service will certainly enter into our decision, we primarily seek your help in evaluating the candidate's teaching contributions.*

6. **Things NOT to do.** Please do not do the following in the letter.

- a. Please DO NOT ask about “promotability” at the reviewer’s home institution.  
Some examples of what *not* to do:

*Would the candidate's record align with the expectations of the promotion of teaching faculty at your institution?*

*Please indicate whether a candidate with a similar teaching, research, and service record would be promoted at your university.*

- b. Please DO NOT use statements such as:

*Your letter will be kept strictly confidential, and at no time become part of a file to which the Freedom of Information Act would apply.*

The reference to the Freedom of Information Act in this statement is confusing and such letters are already exempt from FOIA. The only time that Virginia Tech is required to provide an external review letter to a candidate is if the document is under court-ordered subpoena.

*The candidate has relinquished his or her right of access to evaluations supplied by reviewers.*

Candidates don’t have a right to access outside evaluations. This statement seems to imply that a candidate may choose to see the external evaluations.

*We will maintain strict confidentiality and destroy your letter when the evaluation process is complete.*

This statement leads the external reviewer to believe that all copies of his/her letter will be destroyed. The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost is required to maintain the P&T records for 5 years after the promotion or tenure decision.