

# **DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR DOCUMENT**

*amended at Faculty Senate, October 9, 2008*

**N.B. The Distinguished Professor Document in its entirety is available at the Provost Office**

## **Criteria for Distinguished Professor Rank**

1. Promotion to the Distinguished Professor rank is the highest honor that the University bestows on a faculty member. The title “distinguished” implies that a limited number of faculty members will attain this rank. It is intended to signify a select group of faculty members who are leaders in their respective fields as attested by national and/or international recognition. While the main criteria for the rank pertain to a record of extraordinary performance in research or creative work, candidates will also demonstrate excellent performance in teaching and service as defined by their department’s merit performance guidelines.

An excellent record of teaching, broadly defined, would not in itself sufficiently qualify a candidate for promotion to this rank. However, a Professor who has an excellent record in teaching and has gained a national or international reputation (e. g., through peer-reviewed publications) on his or her pedagogical methods or theories could readily qualify.

2. Such recognition may have been established at this or another institution as a result of extraordinary accomplishments in the area of research/creative arts. It is expected that eligible candidates will have been at the Professor rank for at least five years, of which three years will likely have been spent at Missouri State University.
3. Appointment to the rank of Distinguished Professor will be made only if it is clearly established that the individual is committed to sustaining a record of exemplary intellectual/creative accomplishments necessary to maintain national and/or international recognition.
4. It is the candidate’s duty to document all claims made regarding the outstanding nature of her or his performance. Candidates will provide:
  - a. an extensive record of original work in leading publications/venues at the national/international level, with original work refereed by credible sources in the candidate’s particular discipline. Documentation of scholarship quality includes a collection of the following: awards, published journal rankings in the applicant’s field, acceptance rates, impact factors, citation indices, critical reviews, and evidence of leadership roles in national/international organizations relative to the area of

candidates' expertise or pursuant to their accomplishments;

b. evidence of effective teaching and service as determined by departmental evaluations.

## Application and Review Procedures

Application Procedures: The candidate will present his or her application portfolio to the chair of the department's personnel committee, who will be responsible for the security of the portfolio. A complete application includes the following:

- Cover letter: The applicant's cover letter should detail how the documentation provided establishes a record appropriate for the Distinguished Professor rank. Examples of types of evidence appropriate for documenting the significance and impact of the applicant's work are detailed under Criteria 4a. The applicant must recognize that it may be difficult for members of his or her own department to make such an assessment, and even more so for those making evaluations outside the department. Therefore, it is the applicant's responsibility to provide an exposition of the documentation that addresses the significance of his or her work, and to do so in a manner comprehensible to faculty members from a wide variety of disciplines.
- *Curriculum vitae*
- Copies of selected publications, abstracts, and other supporting documentation.
- External letters of recommendation:
  - External evaluations from individuals who are themselves qualified to assess the candidate's reputation and contributions are essential to establishing the candidate's national or international reputation. A minimum of two letters will be required, though three or more supporting letters will be preferred, and it will be advantageous to solicit more than the minimum.
  - The process of soliciting external evaluations should start in the Spring semester prior to the academic year in which the candidate intends to apply for promotion, following the schedule set out for other promotions. The applicant and Department Head will meet to develop two listings from which external reviewers will be selected. Ideally, the faculty will submit four names and the Department Head will submit four names, working collaboratively with the personnel committee, to create the pool of potential peer reviewers.
  - Once a pool of potential reviewers has been established, it would be appropriate to make initial contacts with potential reviewers to determine if they would be willing to provide an evaluation, and able to do so within the time frame required. Any potential reviewer who indicates either unwillingness or inability to provide an evaluation should be eliminated from the list of reviewers.
  - Because the key criterion for the rank is national or international recognition for contributions in the applicant's professional field, it will be essential to identify reviewers who are themselves qualified to make such judgment. It will be the responsibility of the individual recommending the reviewer (applicant or Department Head) to provide documentation of that reviewer's qualifications.
  - The applicant and Department Head, in conjunction with the departmental evaluation committee, will consult to establish a final list of external reviewers, with at least two names from each list. Any potential reviewers who have indicated that they would be unwilling or unable to provide an evaluation in a timely manner should be excluded from consideration. Solicitations should then be made to at least one reviewer each from the candidate's and Head's lists, though it would be advisable to solicit more than the minimum.

- The applicant's evidentiary material should be compiled and sent to the external reviewers as soon as the candidate receives notification from the Provost Office of his or her eligibility for promotion to Distinguished Professor. The solicitations for external review should be accompanied by a cover letter describing the criteria for the Distinguished Professor rank, and should ask reviewers to specifically address the professional aspects of those requirements. The cover letter should clearly state that reference letters will not be confidential.
- Failure of any individual external referee to return an evaluation will not be prejudicial to the promotion decision. However, external evaluations are essential to establish the candidate's national or international reputation in his or her field, and they will be weighted heavily in the promotion decision.
- A five-year plan, describing the applicant's future research agenda. This plan should indicate to evaluators that the applicant has concrete goals for continuing professional work at a very high level.
- Evidence of effective teaching, consistent with the applicant's departmental evaluations.
- Evidence of effective service, consistent with the applicant's departmental evaluations.

Review Procedures: The review procedure will generally follow the steps for other promotions as described in the Faculty Handbook. However, because promotion to Distinguished Professor rank is somewhat distinct from other promotions, some steps in the process must of necessity be altered.

- The department personnel committee shall solicit input and recommendations from all faculty members of professor rank in the department (excepting the candidate), regarding a candidate's application for promotion to Distinguished Professor. The input may be shared anonymously in written form and/or via a face-to-face meeting.
- Voting members of the evaluation committee will include all Professors within the department, excluding the Department Head and candidate. In cases where there are fewer than three faculty members at the Professor rank within a department (not including the candidate), the evaluation committee will be complemented by Professors from other departments within the applicant's college, selected by the Dean of the College in consultation with the applicant and Department Head.
- After all faculty input is collected, the evaluation committee will meet and vote on the recommendation. The department's recommendation and the dossier of materials will then be forwarded to the Department Head.
- The Department Head will add his or her recommendation and forward both recommendation and dossier to the Dean.
- The Dean makes his or her recommendation, and may seek input from a college personnel committee if desired.
- The recommendations from the department committee, the Department Head, and the Dean will be forwarded to the Provost. The Provost, who may seek input from the Provost's Committee on Tenure and Promotion, makes the final recommendation to the President and the Board of Governors.

- The recommendation and written rationale at each level of the application process shall be shared with the applicant, who will sign the document indicating that she or he has been informed of the recommendation.
- If at any time, the recommendation of the Department Head, Dean, Provost, or the President differs from that of the departmental evaluation committee, the administrator initiating the change shall state in writing to the affected faculty member, the departmental committee, and other involved administrators, compelling reasons why he or she cannot agree with the original recommendation.
- Throughout the entire process, confidentiality of information must be maintained. Faculty members at every level of decision-making must assume personal responsibility to ensure confidentiality is not violated.

Application Withdrawal: The applicant may withdraw his or her application for promotion to Distinguished Professor at any time during the application and review processes.

## **Addendum: Monetary, Teaching Load, and Representation Aspects of the Distinguished Professor Rank**

Increase to Base Salary: Those individuals attaining the rank of Distinguished Professor should represent a select group of our faculty members. As such, the promotion should be accompanied by a salary increment commensurate with the distinction. It is not the committee's intention to fix a specific amount, but rather to recommend a base salary increase that would be significantly larger than that given for other promotions.

Discretionary Expense Grant: Promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor entails an expectation of continued stellar performance in research. Therefore, the committee recommends the establishment of discretionary grant for their use. These grant monies would be monitored by the Provost's Office and would be handled in the same manner as funds for other projects or grants. Specific recommendations are as follows:

- The application procedure requires applicants to submit a five-year plan for professional activities, and newly promoted Distinguished Professors would be given a discretionary grant to support those activities. (The committee recommends \$10,000 over five years).
  - The discretionary grant could be used for any of the individual's professional activities (e.g., travel to meetings, specialized software, equipment, research assistant support).
  - The grant will be available over a period of five years. Normally, no more than \$4,000 would be allocated for one academic year without prior approval from the Provost.
- To encourage Distinguished Professors to maintain a high level of professional activity, the discretionary grant should be renewable.
  - During the last year of the discretionary grant period, a Distinguished Professor who wishes to extend the discretionary grant funding will provide a report, documenting her or his activity over the past years and submit a new multi-year (two to five-year) plan. Continued discretionary grant funds will be based on evidence of continued exemplary performance and the plan for continued activity, as judged by the Provost.
  - The renewal may be for two to five years, with grant monies up to \$2,000 allocated per year. As with the initial discretionary grant, no more than \$4,000 would be allocated for any one academic year, without prior approval from the Provost.
  - A Distinguished Professor may allow the discretionary grant funding to lapse for a period of one or more years and then reapply, without prejudice.
- Faculty members currently having Distinguished Professor rank are also eligible for renewable discretionary grant monies. The application procedure for this grant is outlined above for the discretionary grant funding renewal.

- Teaching Load for Distinguished Professors: Promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor entails an expectation of continued stellar performance in research. However, the large time commitment required for teaching obligations may limit the time that can be devoted to research. Therefore, the committee recommends that, whenever possible, the teaching load of Distinguished Professors should be adjusted to a maximum of twelve TLEs (Teaching Load Equivalents) per year.

Faculty Senate Representation:

The committee anticipates that the number of Distinguished Professors will always remain low. Currently, guidelines for the Faculty Senate indicate that there should be a representative for each rank, but makes no provision for representation of the rank of Distinguished Professor (Constitution and Bylaws of the Faculty, August 2007). The committee recommends that the Faculty Handbook and Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws be amended so that, for the purpose of Faculty Senate representation, Professors and Distinguished Professors be considered a single group. This would allow representation of Distinguished Professors by the representative of Professors, and would also permit a Distinguished Professor to be the representative for the rank of Professor.