

## RESOLUTION TO CLARIFY FACULTY HANDBOOK LANGUAGE ON RESEARCH FACULTY PROMOTION PROCESS

**WHEREAS**, research is part of the core mission of Virginia Tech, and

**WHEREAS**, research faculty make significant ongoing contributions to the university mission, and

**WHEREAS**, Virginia Tech wants to recognize and reward the contributions of research faculty through a process of review, recognition, and promotion where appropriate, consistent with the process for recognizing contributions of other types of faculty, now

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that section 6.2 of the Faculty Handbook be modified and a section 6.2.1 and a section 6.2.2 be added that define the process for research faculty promotions as indicated below (changes and new language indicated in red):

### **6.2 Research Faculty Appointments**

Research faculty appointments are designated to promote and expedite university research activities. The rank descriptions create several series common to current sponsored research or outreach projects. For example, employees involved in conducting research are generally appointed as research associates or research scientists (or to the “senior” titles for either of these). Those individuals who are appointed to a research traineeship for a period of up to four years following receipt of their doctorate are usually appointed as postdoctoral associates. (See Guidelines for the Hiring of Postdoctoral Associates on the OVPRI Human Resources website.) Usually, postdoctoral associates work closely with a faculty mentor in preparation for a career in academe or research; if they remain involved with research projects at Virginia Tech over a period of time, they are appointed or promoted into another appropriate rank.

The “project associate” series was designed for employees involved in sponsored activity other than traditional research, such as delivery of service or technical assistance, consultation with particular clients, preparation of manuals and materials, and so on. The project associate series is also appropriate for personnel involved primarily in the administration of large and complex sponsored programs.

~~While there is logic to the progression between and among ranks, employees may change ranks as appropriate or necessary to reflect a change in role or project. Promotions from one rank to another in order to recognize a faculty member’s increased responsibilities, credentials, and/or contributions to the program over time may be recommended by the supervisor. Recommendations for promotions are done during the annual evaluation and merit adjustment process. The promotions require approval by the department head, dean, and Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation. Approval by a departmental committee is also required for certain ranks (see below). A faculty member may not serve on any committee that is evaluating a spouse, family member, or other~~

~~individual with whom the faculty member has a close personal relationship. (See chapter two, “Potential Conflicts Involving Spouses and Immediate Family Members.”)~~

Research faculty members may be assigned a functional title in addition to their official faculty rank in order to facilitate their work or clarify their role to internal or external constituencies. (A functional title may not be an official faculty rank other than that held by the research faculty member.) In some cases, increased responsibilities may lead to a change in functional title and possibly a salary adjustment rather than a promotion in faculty rank.

Appointments to research faculty ranks, except the rank of postdoctoral associate, are indefinitely renewable. However, tenure cannot be earned in any of the research faculty ranks and service is not applicable toward the pre-tenure probationary period if the employee is subsequently appointed to a tenure-track position.

The source of funds is not the determining factor as to whether a position carries a research faculty rank, but rather the nature and purpose of the assignment. Thus, a research faculty member may be funded by sponsored projects, overhead, state dollars, or other sources. Policies related to research faculty apply, regardless of the source of funding.

Research faculty may participate in activities outside of their direct source of funding, such as providing significant contributions to the conceptualization or writing of new proposals, or teaching; however, support for any time or effort spent on activities outside of their sponsored research must come from non-sponsored research funds. Special attention should be given in the development of position descriptions where funding is limited to only sponsored funding. (See chapter six, “Effort Certification Compliance Issues for Research Faculty Members,” and chapter ten, “Effort Certification and Salary Charges to Sponsored Grants and Contracts.”)

Original appointments and reappointments, including rank, salary, and other conditions, require the approval of the department head, dean (or next level administrator), and the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation *before* an offer is extended. Requests for principal investigator status may be submitted to the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation. Such requests require the approval of the department head, dean, and the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation.

### **6.2.1 Research Faculty Promotions: Non-professorial Ranks**

While there is logic to the progression between and among ranks, employees may change ranks as appropriate or necessary to reflect a change in role or project. Promotions from one rank to another in order to recognize a faculty member’s increased responsibilities, credentials, and/or contributions to the program over time may be recommended by the supervisor.

Recommendations for promotions ~~are done during the annual evaluation and merit adjustment process~~ within the non-professorial ranks (such as project associates, research associates, and research scientist) may be requested at any time during the year in recognition of significant increases in responsibilities, credentials or contributions. The promotions require approval by the department head, dean, and Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation. ~~Approval by a departmental committee is also required for certain ranks (see below). A faculty member may not serve on any committee that is evaluating a spouse, family member, or other individual with whom the faculty member has a close personal relationship. (See chapter two, "Potential Conflicts Involving Spouses and Immediate Family Members.")~~ Following approval of the promotion request, a promotion letter signed by the department head should be presented to the employee.

### **6.2.2 Research Faculty Promotions: Professorial Ranks**

Promotion recommendation into and within the research professorial faculty ranks (research assistant professor, research associate professor and research professor) should align with the annual timeline published by the university. Faculty members being considered for promotion have their dossiers reviewed by: (1) a departmental committee and the head or chair; (2) a college committee and the dean; and (3) the vice president for research and innovation. A parallel process for review, approved in advance by the executive vice president and provost and the vice president for research and innovation, is required for promotion of a member of the research professor series whose primary appointment is not in an academic department. A faculty member may not serve on any committee that is evaluating a spouse, family member, or other individual with whom the faculty member has a close personal relationship. (See chapter two, "Potential Conflicts Involving Spouses and Immediate Family Members.") Following approval of the promotion request, a promotion letter signed by the vice president of research and innovation should be presented to the employee.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the above resolution be approved.

June 4, 2018