

Guidelines for Tenure and Promotion in the Department of Biology 2011

Tenure is discussed in Article III of the Faculty Status and Welfare Handbook. The following brief description of the criteria for tenure is given:

“For teaching faculty, tenure will be awarded primarily on the basis of one’s excellence as a teacher, performance as a faculty member, and the prospect for continued meritorious contribution to the University...Excellence is to be construed in the fullest sense in terms of demonstrated talents in the classroom, continued scholarly growth, and professional excellence. Criteria for tenure evaluation shall also include the professional activities set forth in Article IV, Paragraph B.”

Those latter include teaching, scholarship and professional activity, advisement, participation in University governance, attendance at University functions, and community work.

Faculty apply for tenure through their department chair, who reviews their application, “with the participation of the tenured members of the department,” and then writes a recommendation that accompanies the application. Further information on tenure and promotion are given in the By-Laws of the Faculty Committee on Tenure and Promotions.

To assist the tenure-track members of the Biology department, the department faculty have articulated the following set of qualities that we particularly look for in tenurable and promotable faculty. These are not intended to supersede anything in the Governing Documents—they merely express the factors that will influence the department chair’s letter of recommendation on behalf of the candidate. It is also worth noting that decisions of the magnitude of tenure and promotion can never be entirely encapsulated in a rigid set of criteria, so these should be viewed only as guidelines to the thought process of senior faculty in the department.

As noted in the Governing Documents, tenure and promotion are awarded based on (1) teaching, (2) scholarship, and (3) professional activity. According to the By-Laws of the Faculty Committee on Tenure and Promotions, evidence of teaching effectiveness is the primary criterion for tenure as well as a necessary criterion for promotion to Associate Professor.

Teaching

An ideal candidate for tenure and promotion in Biology will demonstrate all of the following:

- 1) be knowledgeable in the subject matter of the courses they teach, and present to students an understanding of that subject matter that accurately reflects the current state of the discipline
- 2) explain biological concepts in a way that enables students to understand them

- 3) effectively communicate expectations to students, evaluate their work fairly in accordance with those expectations, and provide appropriate feedback to promote student growth and improvement.
- 4) challenge students to a degree that is reasonable for the level of the course in the curriculum
- 5) where appropriate, present a fair-minded account of divergent views on controversial topics that faithfully reflects the process of scientific inquiry
- 6) display a passion for their area of specialization and for the field of biology in general
- 7) express personal commitment to helping students master course material and develop as biologists and as persons
- 8) be available to students outside of class times, to further promote understanding of material and meet course expectations
- 9) provide students with a learning experience that they perceive as valuable, effective, and reasonable
- 10) afford students a level of respect that facilitates the formation of open and trusting relationships between faculty and students.

The above criteria will be assessed through examination of the candidate's syllabi, student evaluation, and peer evaluation of their teaching by other faculty members.

While not required of all candidates for tenure and promotion, we strongly encourage Biology faculty to involve students in laboratory and/or field research projects, giving them as much independence and involving them in as many aspects of the research process as possible, enabling them to grasp the role played by their work in research program as a whole, and communicating to them how the process of scientific discovery works and how one should conduct oneself as a scientist.

Scholarship

An ideal candidate for tenure and promotion in Biology will demonstrate some or all of the following:

- 1) publish and have published the results of their research in peer-reviewed journals and other publications
- 2) apply for and receive extramural funding to support their scholarship
- 3) present and have presented the results of their research at scientific conferences and in invited lectures
- 4) enable students who have conducted research with them to present the results of their research at scientific conferences

While all the activities listed above contribute to a candidate's case for tenure and promotion, the items are listed in descending order of value. A faculty member need not necessarily achieve in all of these areas, and excellence in one area can compensate for non-performance in another. For example, faculty members may be recommended for tenure and promotion without extramural funding, if they have a good track record of publications and presentations together

with consistent involvement of students in research. And while we certainly value the involvement of students in research, a faculty member may be recommended for tenure and promotion even if their research does not lend itself to involving students, as long as they have a good track record of publications and presentations together with extramural funding.

Publications and presentations from before a faculty member's time at SBU are factored into decisions for tenure and promotion, but **we expect continued scholarly activity during the years leading up to the application for tenure and/or promotion.**

While securing extramural funding is of course ideal, credible but unsuccessful applications for extramural funding do weigh in a faculty member's favor. Securing internal funding in support of scholarship and teaching is also of value.

In the field of Biology, the most common and generally the most meritorious publications are articles in peer-reviewed journals. Monographs, while relatively rare, can also be quite meritorious. Other publications such as chapters in edited volumes, non-peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, and book reviews are not as meritorious as peer-reviewed publications, but do contribute to an overall assessment of a candidate's scholarship.

Because there are several thousand peer-reviewed journals in the life sciences, it would be impossible to identify systematically which journals are considered more vs. less noteworthy. **Candidates for tenure and promotion are therefore expected to provide evidence on a case-by-case basis for the notability of their publications and of the journals in which they appear.**

Similarly, we expect candidates to distinguish between **submitted** and **invited** presentations, and to provide evidence regarding the **importance** of the conferences involved.

Professional Activity

An ideal candidate for tenure and promotion in Biology will demonstrate most or all of the following.

- 1) effectively advise a reasonable number of majors in one or more of the life sciences
- 2) effectively do their share of work in departmental governance and contribute to departmental activities
- 3) work collaboratively with other members of the Biology department in acquiring and using research equipment and supplies, to enable all members of the department to be as productive as possible
- 4) interact supportively and collegially with other members of the Biology department and of the university community
- 5) contribute to University governance by serving effectively on the Faculty Senate and/or committees, and through other activities
- 6) contribute to the intellectual life on campus through presentations and/or other activities

- 7) represent the department in a positive light to the University community, and represent the University in a positive light to the outside world

By and large, activities on behalf of students are weighted more heavily than activities on behalf of the department, which are weighted more heavily than activities on behalf of the university and the broader community. However, substantial contributions in less-heavily-weighted areas may factor more strongly than superficial contributions in more-heavily-weighted areas.