

## **Notes from Research Faculty Workshop, Friday, June 7, 2024**

The recording of the workshop is available at:

[https://video.vt.edu/media/COE+Promotion+Workshop+for+Instructional+Faculty+%28April+21%2C+2023%29/1\\_bvy1i54h](https://video.vt.edu/media/COE+Promotion+Workshop+for+Instructional+Faculty+%28April+21%2C+2023%29/1_bvy1i54h)

A survey was created to gather feedback on the workshop. That survey will remain open through Monday, July 10, 2024. The survey is available at:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hGiVYK0Q-kCGPU8yweOjejQRGbbz0dJMgkIqap8UmyhUN0g1ODdMQk5SN0xVODFURUIxMkxTOUdKNS4u>

### **Links for Useful Promotion Resources:**

Faculty Handbook (see Chapter 6 “Research Faculty”): <https://faculty.vt.edu/academic-personnel/academic-policies-and-resources/faculty-handbook.html>

University Guidelines for Promotion (include the dossier template): <https://faculty.vt.edu/academic-personnel/promotion-and-tenure.html>

COE College Guidelines for Promotion (see page 14 for Research Faculty expectations and Appendix D on starting on page 21 for additional guidance on dossiers): <https://eng.vt.edu/faculty-staff-resources/promotion-and-tenure-resources-for-coe-faculty.html>

Resources from OVPRI: <https://www.research.vt.edu/hr/research-faculty.html>

### **Q&A:**

Q: Can external reviewers be from industry or only from universities?

A: Only from universities, specifically, they must be from “peer institutions or other major research universities.” This question is addressed in a document called “Guidelines for External Reviewers” available with the University Guidelines for promotion of Research Faculty (as of 6/7/24, this is the last document posted under the Research Faculty expandable tab).

Q: Does a Co-PI role count or only PI for research grants?

A: All roles that contribute to a project count for listing research grants. You should have a formal role for all listed grants, typically Principle Investigator (PI), Co-Principle Investigator (Co-PI), or Co-Investigator (Co-I). The PI role is significant in indicating a high level of responsibility in a project, but it isn’t absolutely essential to move into the Research Assistant Professor rank.

# Promotion Workshop for COE Research Faculty

KEITH THOMPSON

ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ACADEMIC (AND FACULTY) AFFAIRS

SUMMER 2024  
JUNE 7, 2024

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## Notes about this workshop:

- ***The workshop is being recorded*** and will be posted later at:  
<https://eng.vt.edu/faculty-staff-resources/promotion-and-tenure-resources-for-coe-faculty.html>  
*(There is no need to turn on your camera. Please make sure your mute is on.)*
- ***Place any questions in the chat.*** I have some time set aside for Q&A at the end. I will also take all questions from the chat and create a document with answers to be posted later at the website above.
- ***I welcome your feedback.*** There will be a link to a feedback survey at the end of the workshop. This survey will remain open for one month after the recording of the session is posted for those who couldn't make it today, but watch the recording later on.

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### What are my qualifications to give this presentation?

- Have been the COE Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for 4 years. One of my roles is to support promotion and tenure review at the college level.
- Each year I supervise the college-level review of 20-30 tenured or tenure-track promotion and tenure cases, 2-10 instructional faculty promotions, and 1-4 research faculty promotions:
  - I see every dossier that comes through for COE college-level review.
  - I work with the faculty who do these reviews and are familiar with their views.
  - I help compose the sub-committee and Dean review letters that go into the dossiers and prepare the dossiers for submission to OVPRI.
  - I track data for the college committee.
- I oversee revisions of the college promotion and tenure guidelines.
- I liaise regularly with the university Faculty Affairs Office on promotion issues.

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### Topics of this Workshop:

1. Overview of Research Faculty Ranks
2. Overview of the promotion review process
3. University and COE expectations for research faculty
4. Data from past research faculty promotions
5. Advice for putting together your dossier and building a successful case for promotion

➤ *This workshop is specifically focused on advancement into and through the professorial research ranks (Research Assistant Professor, Research Associate Professor, and Research Professor).*

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## Overview of the Different Ranks

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### Overview: Virginia Tech Research Faculty Ranks

- All research faculty will conduct technical research tasks on projects.
- Exceptions in typical responsibilities listed below may be allowed with approval (for example: research associates acting as a PI or teaching)
- All positions generally funded on soft money (salary comes from grants).
- *None of the research faculty ranks may be tenured.*

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#### **Postdoctoral Associate “Postdoc”**

- A limited time appointment (lasts for the duration of a project, typically 4 years maximum).
- Stepping-stone for new PhD’s to gain deeper research experience and build scholarly and professional background. Does not act as an independent researcher.

#### **Research Associate | Senior Research Associate**

- Entry-level research faculty position.
- Generally, not intended to serve as a Principal Investigator (PI) nor advise graduate students.
- Develop skills by assisting in: grant proposal development, management of projects, and supervision of research group.

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## Overview: Virginia Tech Research Faculty Ranks (continued)

### Research Scientist | Senior Research Scientist

- Senior role in research program:
- Expected to develop and pursue research grants.
- May serve as a Principal Investigator (PI) and generally expected to supervise other research personnel.
- Not expected to act as a graduate advisor.

### Research Assistant Professor | Research Associate Professor | Research Professor

- These are the “Professorial Ranks”.
- All of the expectations of Research Scientists but **might also advise graduate students**.
- Might have voting privileges in departments (except on P&T) and might have occasional teaching responsibilities.
- Often higher expectations about professional service.



For more details: <https://www.research.vt.edu/hr/research-faculty/ranks.html>

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*The most common type of promotion is someone moving from Postdoc, Research Associate, or Research Scientist to Research Assistant Professor.*

### Why seek promotion as a research faculty?

- **Salary increase**
  - + \$3,000/yr by advancing to Research Assistant Professor
  - + \$5,000/yr by advancing to Research Associate Professor
  - + \$7,000/yr by advancing to Research Professor

There may also be additional salary adjustments to place someone in the correct salary band.
- **Opportunity to expand responsibilities:**
  - Take on PI responsibilities
  - More autonomy in pursuing grants
  - Act as a formal graduate advisor

Increased responsibilities can facilitate transition to more advanced positions (such as T/TT)
- **Greater position stability**
- **Increased prestige**

For more information on salary ranges:

<https://www.research.vt.edu/hr/research-faculty/ranks.html>

(login may be required)



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### Why seek advancement as a research faculty instead of looking for a T/TT position?

- Research faculty don't have to teach.
- Generally, don't a very high university service expectation.
- Research faculty roles are better aligned with pursuit intellectual property development (patents) and commercialization of research (good for those with a strong entrepreneurial mindset).
- Some of the Center / Institute Directors are trying to make career advancement through the research faculty ranks a more attractive career track.
- Virginia Tech has a Global Top 100 strategic goal – increasing the research enterprise is a strong thrust within this goal.

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## The Promotion Process


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### Two different types of promotion:

- Advancement within the non-professorial ranks (Research Associates, Research Scientists) is accomplished as a personnel action (approved paperwork submitted through Human Resources).
  - Advancement into or within the professorial ranks (Research Assistant Professor, Research Associate Professor, and Research Professor) requires formal promotion review at the department level, college level, and university level (or alternatively at the institute level and university level).
- *This workshop is specifically focused on advancement into and through the professorial research ranks with a specific lens for advancement under COE.*
- *Workshop is also based on the 2023-24 Faculty Handbook and Guidelines. 2024-25 documents have not been published yet.*

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### General steps in promotion review (if housed in an academic unit)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| > Submit Dossier of your accomplishments                                       | Summer to Early Fall                      | ~ 1 Year<br> |
| > External Review (for promotion into senior ranks)                            | Late Summer to Early Fall                 |   |
| > Supporting Letter from Institute/Center Director                             | Late Summer to Early Fall                 |   |
| > Department Committee Review  | Mid- to Late Fall                         |   |
| > Department Head Review   | Late Fall                                 |   |
| > College Sub-Committee Review   | January                                   |   |
| > Dean Review (typically very brief)   | Late January                              |   |
| > OVPRI Review <small><i>Dossiers generally due to OVPRI by Feb. 1</i></small> | February - March                          |   |
| > Provost/President  | March - April                             |   |
| > Board of Visitors  | June                                      |   |
| > Conferral of New Rank  | July - August<br>(start of next contract) |   |

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**VT VIRGINIA TECH**





**General steps in promotion review (if housed in a non-academic unit)**

> Submit Dossier of your accomplishments		Summer to Early Fall	~1 Year ↓
> External Review (for promotion into senior ranks)		Late Summer to Early Fall	
> Institute Committee Review		Mid- to Late Fall	
> Institute Director Review	----- <i>Changeover of Calendar Year</i> -----	Late Fall – Early Spring	
> OVPRI Review	<i>Dossiers generally due to OVPRI by Feb. 1</i>	February - March	
> Provost / President		March - April	
> Board of Visitors		June	
> Conferral of New Rank		July - August (start of next contract)	

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**VT VIRGINIA TECH**

**Important Resources:**

<p>Chapter 6 of the Faculty Handbook “Research Faculty”</p> <p><a href="https://faculty.vt.edu/academic-personnel/academic-policies-and-resources/faculty-handbook.html">https://faculty.vt.edu/academic-personnel/academic-policies-and-resources/faculty-handbook.html</a></p> 	<p>University Guidelines for Promotion</p> <p><a href="https://faculty.vt.edu/academic-personnel/promotion-and-tenure.html">https://faculty.vt.edu/academic-personnel/promotion-and-tenure.html</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>website where dossier template is posted</i></p> 	<p>College Guidelines for Promotion</p> <p><a href="https://eng.vt.edu/faculty-staff-resources/promotion-and-tenure-resources-for-coe-faculty.html">https://eng.vt.edu/faculty-staff-resources/promotion-and-tenure-resources-for-coe-faculty.html</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>website where this presentation will be posted</i></p> 	<p>Resources Provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation (OVPRI)</p> <p><a href="https://www.research.vt.edu/hr/research-faculty.html">https://www.research.vt.edu/hr/research-faculty.html</a></p> 
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➤ *Research institutes (NSI, VTTI, FBRI, etc.) may also start to develop their own guidelines.*

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## Expectations for Promotion (professorial ranks)

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### From the Faculty Handbook, 6.1.5 "Research Professor Ranks"

- Credentials are comparable to those of the tenured and tenure-track faculty of similar ranks (Assistant, Associate, Full)
- Parallel to research scientist and senior research scientist, but research professors have a role in the academic advising of graduate students ("appointment to this rank indicates actual or anticipated involvement with the academic program").
- At the **Assistant** Level: Expected to *contribute significantly* to the design and execution of research projects. They conduct independent research in their field of specialization under general supervision. They may have supervisory responsibility for project personnel and contribute to project management.
- At the **Associate** Level: *Responsible* for design and execution of research projects and interpretation of research results. They may have significant supervisory responsibility for project personnel and contribute to project management. Promotion to this rank requires evidence of continuous professional development, documentation of excellence in their disciplinary field, contribution to research or creative activity supported through grants and contracts, and at least *regional recognition*.
- At the **Full** Level: Promotion to this rank requires evidence of continuous professional development, documentation of excellence in their disciplinary field, outstanding research or creative activity supported by grants and contracts, and *national and/or international recognition*.

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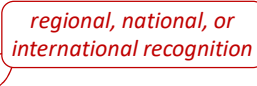
### From the COE Promotion and Tenure Guidelines

- **General Expectations:** The primary responsibility of the professorial research faculty is to conduct research including *securing grants, acting as Co- and Principal Investigators, and producing scholarship* in their field. Professorial research faculty *may also advise graduate students and serve on graduate committees*. They *may teach courses, but this is not a requirement* of the position. ... Research conducted by research faculty should be at a high level with an *ability to lead personnel, manage large projects, successfully analyze and interpret results*, and produce high-quality *scholarship capable of establishing an accomplished external reputation*.
- Promotion to **Research Associate Professor:** Candidate's dossier should contain evidence of an ability to secure and manage grants demonstrating the *potential to independently conduct large-scale research*. The record of scholarship should indicate that the candidate is a *substantial contributor to high-quality peer-reviewed articles, papers, and/or other modes of research dissemination*. The candidate must also have *established regional or greater prestige* in their field of research and must be *actively involved in professional development and engaged in professional societies* related to their field.
- Promotion to **Research Professor (Full):** Candidate's dossier should contain evidence of a successful grant record with a *significant personal share of research and roles as a PI*. The record of *scholarship should be robust with notable contributions as a leading author*. The candidate must also have established *national or greater prestige* in their field of research and must be actively involved in professional development and should be engaged in *leadership roles in professional societies* related to their field.

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### What do those items mean?

Need to develop core skills in:

- Identifying research funding opportunities, writing grants, and securing funding;
  - Managing research projects and people in a research group;
  - Conducting research that produces important results;
  - Publishing results to create a body of scholarship; 
  - Being active in professional societies in tasks aligned with your research field (editor of journal, organizer for symposia/workshops/etc, working on technical committees,...);
  - Supporting graduate student researchers on your grants; and
  - Mentoring / advising graduate students (helping them publish and do other activities to advance their career).
- To achieve promotion to Research Assistant Professor, you need to demonstrate your potential for all of these skills.
- To achieve promotion to the Associate and Full levels, you need to demonstrate your achievement of all of these skills.

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### **Demonstrating your potential to become a Research Assistant Professor**

- **Expectations are written broadly** – there is never a specific quantity of funding, papers, or any other performance metric stated.
- **Reviewers are making judgement calls** based on broad guidance in the expectations and the evidence they see in your dossier. Is the case presented in your dossier strong enough that it convinces enough reviewers to vote “yes” on your promotion?
- The best evidence is to be able to demonstrate actual performance in the skills expected. Have you secured funding? Have you been listed as a PI? Have you had a formal role in advising graduate students? What progress have you made in establishing external prominence for yourself? You don’t have to have hit every expectation, but you can demonstrate 1-2 strong points, then you have a better case.



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### **Additional Notes**

- Promotion to Associate or Full levels must be validated by at least four external reviews:
  - The candidate can suggest external reviewers. They cannot be past collaborators, former supervisors/advisors, or others with potential conflicts of interest (NSF COI rules are generally used).
  - At least three of the reviewers must be people independently selected by the department / institute promotion committee.
- Teaching responsibilities:
  - Not an expectation for promotion in the research faculty series.
  - Candidates may want to do it to prepare for a transition to tenure-track role.
  - Teaching is contingent on department need and budget constraints (salary for your teaching time cannot be covered from grants – the department has to find another source of funding).

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## Data from Past Cases

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- There are not a lot of cases available in the COE records. From 2017-18 to 2023-24:
  - 7 cases of promotion from Postdoc to Research Assistant Professor
  - 1 case of promotion from Research Associate to Research Assistant Professor
  - 9 cases of promotion from Research Scientist to Research Assistant Professor
  - 1 case of promotion from Research Assistant Professor to Research Associate Professor
- 18 total cases, but only have complete dossiers for 11 (those from 2020-21 and later).
- Of the 18 cases, 12 are from the ECE Department.
- These are only the cases that went through an academic department and college review; the COE Dean's Office does not see the cases that only go directly from institute review to OVPRI.
- All of these cases were successful, but some of them did have concerns during review.

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### Promotion from Research Scientist to Research Assistant Professor:

- Usually, the strongest type of case because these ranks are considered parallel.
- Data from 7 cases (data reporting is not always the best)

Metric	Range	Median	Notes
Time in rank before promotion	2 – 7 years	6 years	Almost always some additional years as postdoc
Peer reviewed publications	11 – 80	39	Peer-reviewed journal articles + conference papers
Pubs as lead author	5 - 16	11	
Courses taught	0 - 8	1	Number of times candidate acted as instructor of record over their entire history
Number of external grants	1 - 13	4	
Number of times PI on a grant	0 - 2	1	Several candidates who had not yet acted as a PI could provide evidence of contributions to proposal development and/or grant management.
Total external funding	\$0.4M - \$7.9M	\$3.9M	
Total personal share	\$0.4M - \$4.1M	\$0.8M	
Graduate advising	Most candidate had no official advising role at time of promotion, but many had served on graduate committees or had informal mentoring of graduate students which was noted in the dossiers. Two candidates had graduated an MS student. Two were currently advising PhD students.		

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### Promotion from Postdoctoral Associate to Research Assistant Professor:

- Usually, the weakest type of case. Concerns voiced in letters even though votes were successful. Sometimes considered to be skipping a rank in progression.
- 7 overall cases, but complete data for only 4. All 7 cases are from ECE.

Metric	Range	Median	Notes
Time in rank before promotion	2 – 3 years	2 years	
Peer reviewed publications	13 – 31	17	
Pubs as lead author	8 - 14	8.5	
Courses taught	0 - 2	0	
Number of external grants	0 - 1	0.5	
Number of times PI on a grant	0 - 1	0	Several candidates who had not yet acted as a PI could provide evidence of contributions to proposal development and/or grant management.
Total external funding	\$0K - \$50K	\$10K	Candidates with \$0 current funding were actively working on proposals or had proposals under review.
Total personal share	\$0K - \$47.5K	\$2.5K	
Graduate advising	The strongest of these cases (those with fewer concerns from review committees) had evidence of actively advising PhD and MS students.		

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#### Promotion from Research Associate to Research Assistant Professor:

- Only 1 case.
- The candidate was very comparable to the stronger Research Scientist cases for acting as a PI or co-PI on grants and for advising graduate students but was weaker on overall scholarship.

#### Promotion from Research Assistant Professor to Research Associate Professor:

- Only 1 case.
- The candidate had been in the rank of Research Assistant Professor for 4 years before promotion (3 years in rank before submitting their dossier). The *trajectory* of performance within those 3 years was strong.
- The candidate had a strong record for securing research funds and had acted as a PI 5 times.
- The publication record was very strong and had been a lead author more than 30 times.
- The candidate had been the advisor for 6 completed PhD students and 4 completed MS students. The candidate was currently advising 13 PhD students and 1 MS student (strong pipeline of graduate students).
- The candidate had 3 best paper awards and was on the editorial boards for 2 journals.
- External distinction was demonstrated by the record of scholarship (recognized with awards), the professional service, and the comments in the external letters.

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# Advice

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### How do you decide when to go forward?

- There is no magical time in rank before you can progress. You progress when you meet the performance expectations and when the conditions are right to support funding at a higher rank level.
- Progression in rank is not just dependent on performance but also a continuous funding stream.
- Have discussions with your supervisor about career progression.
- If a postdoc, it may be easier to advance to research scientist before trying for research assistant professor. Promotion from postdoc to research scientist only requires approval through a human resources procedure rather than full promotion committee review.

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### Make your dossier organized and clear

- Reviewers get tired – they need to dossier to follow the correct formatting to make it easier for them to read.
- Poorly put together dossiers are the most common issue I have observed in research faculty cases.
- Follow the university template and the guidance given in the appendices of the COE guidelines, particularly for the Executive Summary tables.
- Talk to someone from the P&T committee about the quality they expect in a dossier.
- Don't leave your dossier to the last minute. Download the template and work on it periodically as you progress.

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### Dossiers (continued)

- Do not present vague information – the review committees are too experienced. Information about your publications, grants, and graduate student advising needs to be accurate and precise:
  - Use numbered lists. Make your name bold wherever it appears in author lists as well as PI/Co-I/Co-PI lists for grants.
  - Make separate lists for external and internal grants.
  - List publications and grants from most recent to oldest.
  - Consider header breaks in lists to distinguish work done prior to and during your current position (ex. “Since joining VT” / “Before joining VT” or “Since Promotion to Research Scientist”/“Prior to promotion...”).
  - Be clear about your role in advising/mentoring graduate students (Were you a formal advisor or co-advisor? Were you just on a committee? Did you have an informal role?)
  - Make sure the information in executive summary tables matches the information elsewhere in the dossier.
  - Make sure you are tracking information that needs to go in your dossier from year to year.

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### Dossiers (continued)

- Candidate Statement – *My advice*: Use it to highlight what makes you qualified for the role you are asking for as well as giving coherence to the overall trajectory of your work. If you find it hard to do this, then that indicates a weakness in your case for promotion.
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### Career progression

- Use your annual Faculty Activity Report (FAR) as an opportunity for feedback.
- Get involved in professional societies and make connections.
- Find opportunities to be involved in proposal development and project management.
- Embrace opportunities to act as a supervisor and/or advise and mentor students.

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## Q & A in the time we have left

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How did I do?

Please complete the feedback survey:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=hGiVYK0Q-kCGPU8yweOjejQRGbbz0dJMgkIgap8UmyhUN0g1ODdMQk5SN0xVODFURUlxMkxTOUdKNS4u>

