

Department of Communication Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Departmental Faculty Handbook

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Department of Communication Studies Faculty

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Department of Communication Studies Faculty



Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

May 14, 2020

Date



Chair, Dept. of Communication Studies

May 14, 2020

Date

Preamble

This document provides departmental guidelines relevant to how college and university policies are interpreted and practiced in the Department of Communication Studies. This handbook will be available to all faculty online in accordance with UAB policy. This departmental document is advisory and does not supersede CAS and UAB handbook policies. The principles and processes apply broadly and not to specific cases or situations. The aim is to establish transparent and equitable decision-making within a collegial environment while promoting efficient administration of the Department of Communication Studies.

Mission, Vision, and Goals

The Department of Communication Studies is a unit within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) at UAB. We see the ability to communicate effectively as central to being an educated person. Our mission is to improve communication and enhance the understanding of communication in the UAB and Birmingham communities. The Department offers instruction in communication, including human communication processes and outcomes, media production, public relations, and sports communication. We conduct and disseminate original research on human communication and media. We strive to share our scholarship with each other, the broader academic community, and the general public in a continuing quest for understanding and improving human communication.

Faculty Voting Rights

All regular full-time faculty members regardless of tenure status shall have an equal vote unless otherwise explicitly specified in this document or a college/university policy (e.g., tenure and promotion decisions).

Department-Level Structure, Governance and Committees

The Committee on Promotion and Tenure shall include all tenured faculty in the Department of Communication Studies when considering the progress of an assistant professor to associate and all full professors when considering the progress of an associate professor to full. The committee shall elect a Chair from among its members for each personnel decision.

The Department Chair, in consultation with the faculty, shall appoint a standing *Awards and Scholarships Committee* to select and administer student awards and scholarships. The bestowing of awards and scholarships is delegated to the departmental Awards and Scholarships Committee. The Director of Graduate Studies shall be a permanent member of this committee.

The Department Chair, in consultation with the faculty, shall appoint a standing *Commencement Committee* to select and coordinate faculty who will attend Spring, Summer, and Fall Commencement. The Director of Graduate Studies shall be a permanent member of this committee and coordinate faculty attendance at graduate commencement.

As needed, the Department Chair, in consultation with the faculty, shall appoint a *Search Committee* and a Search Committee Chair for all full-time faculty positions.

Other committees may be formed as needed, either by the chair or by a majority vote of the voting-eligible faculty.

Faculty Evaluation Criteria and Standards

For the purpose of annual evaluations and merit raises, all regular faculty are evaluated in two or more of four categories: teaching, research, service, and administration-management depending on the nature of their appointments and assigned duties. For the purpose of tenure and/or promotion, performance in administration-management duties will count as a type of service.

Quality teaching is highly valued in the department. The minimum classroom obligations for teaching faculty include careful preparation of assigned classes, routinely holding classes as scheduled, staying up to date with online instruction, keeping scheduled office hours, and following departmental, college, and university academic policies including the dynamic syllabus policy and timely submission of grades. At minimum, satisfactory student course evaluations are required as evidence of quality instruction. Other types of evidence (teaching awards, unsolicited student letters, peer observation, student performance or awards in various competitions, etc.) may be considered as relevant.

Research productivity is expected for all tenure-earning and tenured faculty. The refereed journal article is the basic unit of research productivity. The number of articles, the quality of work, and prestige of the journal shall all be relevant. Co-authoring is encouraged, but evidence of individual scholarly contribution is expected. Books, book chapters, conference presentations and proceedings, research awards, citations, grant applications, and successfully obtaining research funding all count as evidence of research productivity. All forms of scholarly accomplishments vary in quality, prestige, and impact, and are weighted accordingly.

Service can take many forms and can include, but is not limited to, administration and management of a multi-section course or degree program, service on departmental, college, and university committees, service to the communication discipline, student service, and service to the community. Minimal expectations include attending departmental and college faculty meetings when possible and responding to email from administration, staff, and colleagues as relevant. Membership on journal editorial boards is especially prized because this is reported as part of the department's annual evaluation.

Administration and management of a multi-section course or degree program may be a separate category for internal evaluation. Faculty who direct a multi-section course or degree program are responsible for quality of instruction and the smooth operation of the course or program they oversee. The success of a multi-section course or degree program shall be reflected in the evaluation of course or program directors.

Annual Evaluations

All regular faculty shall be reviewed annually each April by the Department Chair.

It is the Department Chair's responsibility to ensure that evaluations and raises are fair, equitable, unbiased, and consistent with Department, College, and University policy.

Annual evaluations take the form of a letter written from the Department Chair to the faculty member.

The nature of the review will depend on: whether the faculty member being evaluated is non-tenure-earning, tenure-earning, or tenured; whether the review is related to retention, tenure, or promotion; and the distribution of duties (teaching, research, administrative, and service).

Evaluations of teaching, research, administrative duties, and service shall be weighted as specified in the candidate's offer letter or employment contract. If not otherwise specified, tenure-earning faculty are typically evaluated 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service. Non-tenure-earning faculty are typically evaluated 80% teaching and 20% service, unless they have an administrative assignment such as directing a program or a multi-section course where the distribution shall typically be 40% teaching, 40% administrative role, and 20% service.

Faculty will be evaluated in each relevant area (teaching, research, administrative, and service) as outstanding, strong, meets expectations, or below expectations. Faculty will also be given an overall rating using these same four categories.

The Department Chair shall meet with faculty individually to discuss annual evaluations. Meetings are optional for tenured full professors with positive evaluations; otherwise meetings are required.

Merit Raises

Merit is based exclusively on achievement and may not be based on questions of equity.

When UAB and/or CAS indicates that merit raises are available, the Department Chair shall review the CVs and annual evaluations of each faculty member eligible for a raise. The Chair's recommendations are subject to approval by the CAS Dean's office, and they are not guaranteed.

Faculty must at minimum be evaluated as meeting expectations in his or her most recent annual evaluation to be eligible for a merit increase. The available merit funds shall be equitably distributed among eligible faculty by the Department Chair proportionally to the strength of accomplishment.

Renewals

Tenure-track and non-tenure earning full-time faculty will be evaluated and renewed in accordance with College and University guidelines and timelines. Renewal of untenured, tenure-earning faculty is based on annual evaluations and an evaluation of progress toward tenure. Only

faculty evaluated as making reasonable progress toward tenure and being judged as having a substantial likelihood of a successful tenure will be renewed. Non-tenure earning faculty will be renewed based jointly on annual evaluations and programmatic needs. Any untenured faculty receiving two consecutive annual evaluations below expectations shall not be eligible for renewal.

Promotion and Tenure Procedures

In addition to annual reviews by the department chair, all tenure-track assistant professors will undergo a review by the departmental Committee on Promotion and Tenure every two years to assess progress toward tenure and provided written feedback.

The promotion and/or tenure application process is the same for all full-time regular faculty.

- May 1: Potential candidates for Promotion and/or Tenure notify the Department Chair of their candidacy.
- June 1: Department Chair sends list of the names of potential candidates for Promotion and/or Tenure to the CAS Dean.
- July 1: The Department Chair, in consultation with the department Promotion and Tenure committee solicits external evaluation letters, to be completed no later than October 1.
- December 1: The department Promotion and Tenure Committee meets, votes, and submits a letter of evaluation to the Chair. The Chair writes an independent letter.
- February 1: Department forwards a complete set of requested promotion/tenure materials of candidate to the CAS Dean.

The promotion and/or tenure application process for all faculty, including non-tenure, shall begin at the CAS departmental level with a review by the department Promotion and Tenure committee of the application materials provided by the candidate. The candidate can find instructions and information about the documentation that the person should submit as part of the application on the Provost's website. In accordance with UAB Faculty Handbook, the department will provide a minimum of three letters of evaluation of the candidate's promotion and/or tenure application from reviewers external to UAB who are qualified to review the candidate's qualifications. Co-authors, prior professors, and other with close connections to the candidate may not serve as external reviewers. These letters will become part of the application and of the departmental review leading to its recommendation. In the area of teaching, student evaluations should also be provided as part of the application.

Candidates may submit names of preferred external reviewers to the Department Chair prior to June 1. The Department Chair, in consultation with the departmental Promotion and Tenure committee, will select external reviewers, inviting at least one from among the names provided by the candidate. External reviews must hold the rank the candidate is seeking or higher. The Department Chair is responsible for obtaining external letters.

Each candidate will be judged by the criteria outlined in the UAB, CAS, and departmental Faculty Handbooks in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service in proportion to their relative importance to each academic rank, to the type of appointment held by the faculty member, and to the program priorities of the appointing unit. Each candidate shall be evaluated independently in these areas by the Department Chair, the departmental Promotion and Tenure committee at UAB, and by the external reviewers.

Evaluations of teaching, research, and service shall be weighted as specified in the candidate's offer letter or employment contract, although this may change over time. For the purposes of promotion, any administrative duties such as directing a multi-section course, internships, and/or degree program shall count as service. If not otherwise specified, tenure-earning faculty are typically evaluated 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service. Non-tenure faculty are typically evaluated 80% teaching and 20% service, unless they have a substantial administrative assignment where the distribution shall typically be 50% teaching and 50% service.

The Department Chair shall consider yearly evaluations in his or her letter of evaluation. Any substantial discrepancy in evaluations shall be explicitly addressed.

Candidates for promotion and tenure may supplement and update their file as specified in the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Handbook. If a candidate's vitae has work listed as "submitted" or "under review" that gets accepted (or rejected) at any point in the review process, the candidate should update the appropriate Promotion and Tenure Committee by inserting the new information into their application materials and making a note of such within the application.

Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee members shall adhere to the following guidelines:

- Only tenured members of departmental Promotion and Tenure Committees regardless of rank may vote on tenure applications in accordance with the UAB Faculty Handbook.
- Only tenured faculty may vote on promotion applications of tenure-earning and tenured faculty.
- Only full-time faculty members at or above the rank to which the candidate under consideration is to be appointed or promoted may vote on such applications.
- The departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee will vote by secret ballot.
- The departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee will vote for promotion separately from a vote for tenure if a candidate is applying for Promotion and Tenure at the same time.
- An affirmative recommendation for promotion or tenure by the departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee requires positive votes from a simple majority of its voting members.

Letters of review written by department Promotion and Tenure Committee and by the Department Chair should be written so that faculty from any of the diverse disciplines in the CAS can clearly understand the requirements for promotion (and awarding of tenure, if applicable) as set out in the department Promotion and Tenure policies. These letters should also address the reasons why the department committee or department chair felt that the candidate has or has not met those requirements.

Candidates for promotion and/or tenure will be informed of the decision of the Chair within a timely manner. The reporting of the decision will be in such a way as to protect the confidentiality of the process.

It is the Department Chair's responsibility to ensure promotion and/or tenure applications are completed in accordance with the Provost's guidelines and submitted to the CAS Dean on time.

Amendments to and Ratification of the Handbook

This Handbook will be ratified when it receives the approval by written ballot of a majority of the voting members of the Department. The Handbook must also be approved by the College Dean and other appropriate bodies before becoming fully operational.

Amendments to the departmental handbook will be proposed at a Department meeting and voted upon by written ballot. Approval requires a majority of those voting. Amendments must also be approved by the College Dean and other appropriate bodies before becoming fully operational.

This departmental faculty handbook shall be reviewed every five years, or more frequently upon a majority vote of the faculty.