

(Approved by VUSM Executive Faculty 1/10/24)

Criteria for Appointment or Promotion to Full* Professor on the Investigator track

*Hereafter, “professor” refers to the rank of tenured full professor and not assistant or associate.

The standards applicable for promotion to tenured professor on the **Investigator Track** shall be substantial and more completely developed than what would be expected for an associate professor. The expectation is that professors in the School of Medicine are regarded nationally or internationally as leading figures in their field. Time in rank is not sufficient justification for promotion to professor. Rather, promotion requires: 1) excellence in research, scholarship, innovation, or creative expression in one's discipline of sufficiently high quality to gain favorable recognition within one's discipline, optimally at the international level; 2) continued high level of effectiveness and/or leadership in teaching, mentoring, and training; 3) expanded involvement in the area of service. Promotion to professor will be justified by the totality of accomplishments, including those occurring before the last promotion. Vanderbilt expects the quality of achievement in research, scholarship, innovation, or creative expression, as well as in teaching and in service similar to that required for professors at other peer universities. The scholarship of a professor at Vanderbilt should bring honor and prestige to the institution.

1. Research, Scholarship, Innovation, or Creative Expression

The conduct of research of high quality or other evidence of scholarship or creative expression is a necessary requirement for advancement. Research and/or scholarship includes the discovery, development, and dissemination of new knowledge or understanding. Scholarly activity may also consist of innovative conceptualizations or theoretical advancements, as well as technological or methodological innovation and entrepreneurship. Scholarly activity may also consist of innovative conceptualizations or novel solutions to health care problems that receive national recognition. Candidates considered for promotion to professor have already achieved and show strong promise of continuing to achieve a high level of excellence in their contributions to their discipline. Contributions to team-based scholarship are considered highly meritorious and are valued. Types of activities that are generally recognized as demonstrative of an individual's stature in research or scholarship include:

A. The sustained and amplified conduct of meritorious, independent, and original research and/or scholarship, since promotion to associate professor, which substantively advances knowledge in one or more areas of interest. Quality rather than quantity of publications is important. Vanderbilt recognizes the critical importance of collaboration (“team science”) in research and scholarly activity. For multi-authored publications, the specific contributions of the candidate must be clearly described in the promotion dossier.

B. The recognition by peers of the quality of research or scholarship as indicated by evidence of a sustained research program, including receipt of funding from competitively awarded research grants. This evidence is necessary for promotion to professor on the Investigator Track.

C. Recognition by the scientific community as evidenced by invitations to review grants/manuscripts, or to speak at major conferences, participation in state and national legislative and policy formulation, and receipt of awards and honors.

2. Teaching, Mentoring, and Training

Teaching, mentoring, and training have a central role within the University, and candidates for promotion to professor are required to have demonstrated a high level of effectiveness in these activities. These activities occur in lecture rooms, small discussion groups and seminars, and in the research laboratory. Trainees might include undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral trainees, medical students, residents, or other professionals. To meet promotion standards in teaching, candidates must demonstrate a high level of effectiveness and advocacy in various forms of teaching. Examples include:

A. Evidence of effective teaching practices as demonstrated by learner, peer, and supervisor evaluations.

B. Ongoing advancement of mentees toward successful careers within or outside academia, as evidenced by their achievements and positions attained.

C. Evidence of commitment to building diversity, equity, and inclusion in academic training venues and the workplace.

D. Evidence of mentoring and advancement of early career faculty.

E. Leadership roles such as directing a training program, serving as director of graduate studies, serving on admissions committees, or directing an undergraduate or graduate course.

F. Induction into the Academy for Excellence in Education

G. The receipt of individual awards and honors specifically recognizing teaching or mentoring skills.

3. Service

While promotion to associate professor may be achieved with service mostly within the institution, the level of service for professor should be more expansive and should reach outside the institution and into the scientific community of the relevant discipline. In addition, evidence of the development of leadership roles in multiple areas is typically expected. Examples of this include:

- A. Service as a permanent member of a federal agency review panel, membership on scientific and professional advisory committees, membership on committees within a national society, etc.
- B. Service activities that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at the departmental, professional society, and community levels.
- C. Leadership in the scientific community, which may include chairing scientific or professional advisory committees, grant review panels, and commissions or task forces, or leadership roles within professional societies.
- D. Organizing or hosting scientific conferences.
- E. Senior editorial leadership roles such as serving as an associate editor or editor for leading journals.

Required Supporting documentation:

1. Standardized Form of the Curriculum Vitae

The Committee on Faculty Appointments and Promotions has developed a [standard form of the curriculum vitae](#) that must be used by faculty and departments in supporting recommendations for promotions and tenure. Use of the standard form will assure that all information needed by the committee is present and will expedite the review of recommendations.

2. Documentation of Teaching Effectiveness

It is required that the [Documentation of Teaching Form](#) be used to specify the teaching activities of the candidate on the **Basic Science Investigator (tenure track)**.

3. Critical References

Candidates for promotion to Professor on the Investigator track must demonstrate sustained research accomplishments. Five references to publications representing the candidate's most significant contributions since promotion to Associate Professor should be identified. The Faculty Appointments and Promotion Committee developed the [Critical Reference Form](#) on which to provide this information. If the candidate is not first or last author, the specific contribution of the candidate to the referenced work should be described. Copies of three of these five key papers may be submitted as part of the candidate's dossier.

4. Letters of recommendation

Strong letters of recommendation from professors and/or leaders at peer institutions assessing the national and international stature of the candidate in the field. These professors must not have a prior relationship (e.g. mentor/mentee relationship, publications, and/or funding) with the candidate and must be able to provide an

independent assessment of the dossier. The letter writer should include a statement as to their relationship or collaboration with the candidate.