Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics Merit Standards for Senate Faculty
May 12, 2026

Merit and promotion expectations with performance benchmarks

The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (BMB) has determined the normal merit advancement criteria for its faculty, which also provides a measure of a candidate's achievements when acceleration is proposed. Faculty members are evaluated on their scholarship, teaching, and service appropriate to their series and responsibilities. Faculty in the Professor series are expected to maintain a productive and high-impact research program that advances their field and contributes to the broader biochemical sciences. Faculty in the Teaching Professor series are expected to demonstrate exemplary teaching, professional and/or scholarly achievement, and educational leadership, consistent with university policy. All faculty members are expected to maintain a standard teaching load as established by the department and to strive for excellence in their teaching. Faculty members are also expected to participate in the governance of the department, division, university, and/or outside professional or public service through committee and other administrative work.

Research/Scholarly Activity: Faculty in the Professor series are expected to maintain a productive research program directed at understanding basic and/or applied problems in the biochemical sciences. Productivity is judged primarily on the impact of published work in their chosen area of study and its greater impact on the biochemical sciences. Although one cannot provide a simple metric on evaluating such productivity, an average of 1-3 significant publications in the field per year for Associate and Full Professors over a review period is a reasonable expectation for a normal merit increase. The Department recognizes that scholarly contributions vary significantly in scope, depth, and impact. Accordingly, evaluation of research productivity shall prioritize the quality, originality, intellectual leadership, and field-wide influence of contributions over simple numerical counts of publications. A small number of exceptionally high-impact and substantively comprehensive works may warrant recognition as meeting or exceeding expectations for the relevant rank or step.

Published, peer-reviewed work shall remain the primary basis for evaluation of scholarly achievement. Consistent with university policy permitting assessment of work in progress, the department may also consider preprints and other publicly available scholarly works as supplementary evidence of productivity, originality, and research trajectory, particularly in areas where publication timelines are prolonged. Such materials shall be evaluated in context and ordinarily shall not be treated as equivalent to fully published peer-reviewed work. External recognition of research impact that reflect national or international standing can be evidenced in multiple ways including but not limited to competitive honors and awards, invitations to present at seminars/conferences/symposia at leading institutions and meetings, patents or translational impact when relevant, and compelling evidence that the candidate's work has influenced subsequent research directions or practice.

Professor series faculty are expected to maintain a strong record of external research funding, typically including support as Principal Investigator or Multi-Principal Investigator on major competitive grants (e.g., federal extramural grant, major foundation grant, sponsored research, or equivalent). Funding should be sufficient to sustain an active and productive research program

appropriate to the faculty member's area of scholarship. Faculty without current funding must demonstrate an active pattern of competitive grant submissions.

Expectations for tenure: Faculty should demonstrate establishment of an independent research program for promotion with tenure. This includes publications with high visibility and impact (as evaluated by external letters). Collaborative works are encouraged and evaluated positively. However, faculty are expected to demonstrate scholarly independence, as evidenced by corresponding or senior authorship on publications that establish an independent research direction, as well as description of specific independent contributions to non-corresponding or non-senior authorship publications.

Teaching: The typical teaching assignment for faculty in the Professor series is two courses per academic year, usually one large-enrollment course and one smaller or specialized course. Teaching expectations are based on overall instructional effort rather than a fixed course count and may be adjusted to account for course size and departmental needs, with high-enrollment courses weighted accordingly.

Teaching is evaluated for both satisfactory quantity and quality. The teaching load should be commensurate with the equivalent number of years of the review period, considering specific teaching releases due to significant administrative duties, or campus and department approved leaves. While teaching quality can be difficult to evaluate objectively, faculty are expected to document and demonstrate teaching effectiveness through their personal statement and teaching portfolio. An explanation of teaching principles and pedagogy should be included, as well as improvements and modifications made to teaching strategies in response to external evaluation such as student feedback. Associate and Full Professors are expected to have a diverse teaching portfolio, having taught several different classes, and the ability to step in to fill teaching needs in the department as they arise.

For faculty in the Professor series, excellence in mentoring is another core component of teaching. The candidate is expected to provide thoughtful and sustained guidance to undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, postdoctoral scholars, and other research personnel. Strong mentoring is reflected in the ability to stimulate intellectual curiosity, set and model high standards of scholarship, and empower trainees to pursue independent, creative, and impactful research, and present their research in formal and informal settings.

Expectations for tenure: Faculty should demonstrate a teaching load commensurate with the years of service they are being evaluated for (typically five years), and considering any pre-tenure teaching relief and other teaching relief officially granted by the department or campus. A small portfolio of courses taught is acceptable and expected. Teaching effectiveness in the first few years may be developing and may fall below departmental expectations; however, candidates must provide clear evidence of active efforts to improve teaching quality, including responsiveness to external feedback and implementation of changes in pedagogy.

Service: Associate and Full Professors are expected to contribute to department, division, campus, and professional service, with expectations increasing significantly from Associate to Full Professor levels. The personal statement must specify the scope and impact of service contributions. Service contributions are evaluated in terms of their significance and impact on the department, university, and professional community, with emphasis on roles that require

substantive engagement and responsibility. Faculty service contributions may span departmental, campus, professional, and infrastructure-related activities, and will be evaluated based on their scope, significance, and impact. Departmental service includes at least one committee role per year, and faculty must demonstrate full participation in these roles, as evidenced by appropriate documentation of participation and contributions. Departmental service may also include other activities that support the broader research, teaching, administrative, and service mission of the department. Division/campus service includes participation in activities beyond the department that support the broader research, teaching, and service mission. External/professional service should demonstrate the faculty's reputation in their field, and may include serving on grant review panels, society leadership roles, editorial service, reviewing of manuscripts, organizing conferences, among other activities.

Expectations for tenure: Campus-level service is not expected for promotion with tenure. Assistant Professors are expected to be active members of the Department and contribute to departmental governance. Assistant Professors are expected to contribute to departmental service, typically through participation in a department-level committee. However, service expectations are minimal in the first year to allow for the establishment of an independent research program.

Criteria for Accelerations: Accelerations in the Professor Series are considered when scholarly achievement clearly exceeds the expectations for the rank, as evidenced by the impact, quantity, and/or quality of publications, as well as external recognition of research impact. Strong contributions in teaching and service, with no areas of weakness, are also required for consideration of acceleration. Accelerations are typically not considered in cases where scholarly impact is high but there are clear weaknesses in either teaching or service contributions. In cases of proposed accelerated advancement, the department shall document the basis for acceleration with particular attention to the special impact of the candidate's scholarly contributions, as well as evidence of external recognition, including major prizes, honors, or other professional recognition. Documentation may also include, where appropriate, exceptional service of significant duration and/or importance that is not otherwise fully recognized through compensation or formal relief, consistent with university policy.

Faculty with Split Appointments: Faculty with joint or split appointments shall have teaching and service responsibilities proportional to their appointment fraction in the Department. Teaching assignments will be made with this proportionality in mind but may be balanced over time to accommodate course scheduling, curricular needs, and programmatic priorities; accordingly, teaching loads need not align precisely with appointment fraction in any single academic year, provided they are appropriate when considered over a multi-year period. The Department recognizes that service roles are often indivisible and that faculty typically serve in discrete committee roles rather than fractional assignments. Accordingly, faculty with partial appointments may have lighter or less frequent committee assignments each year, with overall service contributions assessed over time to ensure equity relative to appointment fraction. The Chair, in consultation with the Executive Committee, shall make reasonable efforts to coordinate expectations across units and to avoid overburdening faculty with joint appointments.