MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR PROMOTION OF TENURED, TENURABLE, AND NON-TENURABLE FACULTY AND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR TENURE
(revision 18 August. 2026)

Approved by Biology Dept. P&T Committee Chair _____ Date 8/18/26

Approved by Department Chair _____ Date 8/18/26

Approved by College Dean _____ Date 8/28/26

Approved by Provost _____ Date 10/20/26

Approved by President _____ Date 10/20/26

PREAMBLE:
This policy establishes criteria and procedures relating to academic promotion and tenure in the Biology Department at Middle Tennessee State University. It is the sole responsibility of the candidates for promotion and tenure to comply with the current University, College, and Biology Department guidelines and requirements for a complete application. The candidate is solely responsible for amply documenting all relevant activities, achievements, and products (e.g., publications, grants, presentations) in their Faculty Success dossier and Outline of Faculty Data (OFD) and ensuring that this is a comprehensive, accurate, and error-free document for evaluation.

I. Introduction

Candidates for promotion and/or tenure in the Biology Department should consult and familiarize themselves with the following five university documents, in addition to this current document.

a) Policy 201 – Academic Freedom and Responsibility
b) Policy 202 – Faculty Definition, Roles, Responsibilities, and Appointment Types
c) Policy 204 – Tenure
d) Policy 205 – Promotion of Tenured and Tenurable Faculty
e) Policy 206 – Tenure and Promotion Appeals

Candidates should also familiarize themselves with the following College policy.

II. Biology Department policy for formation and procedures of the Promotion and Tenure Review Committee

The Biology Department has developed the following modifications, clarifications, and additions to the University Policies and Procedures for Promotion of Tenured and Tenurable Faculty (MTSU Policy 205).

a) In the Biology Department, one committee, designated as the Promotion and Tenure Review Committee ("D-PTRC"), reviews and makes recommendations on all applications for promotion and/or tenure, and conducts third-year, pre-tenure reviews and annual evaluations for tenure-track faculty whose academic appointment is in the Biology Department.

b) Neither candidates applying for promotion and/or tenure, the department chairperson, nor faculty members holding administrative appointments at the college level or above are members of the D-PTRC.

c) The D-PTRC includes ten tenured Associate Professors and Professors, who will serve a one-year term, except for a committee member voted to be the succeeding D-PTRC Chair (see below, item f). Given that the current ratio of Professors to Associate Professors is 4:1 (Spring 2026) within the Biology Department, representation on the D-PTRC will be proportional to the numbers at each rank who are eligible to serve on the committee. The ratio will be reevaluated each year prior to voting on committee membership (see item h below).

d) All tenured faculty are eligible to serve on the D-PTRC.

e) Candidates for the D-PTRC must be willing to participate in all activities of the committee, including attendance at all meetings and voting on all candidates, to participate in peer teaching evaluation, and to participate in annual and third-year reviews of tenure-track faculty. Habitual unexcused absenteeism (more than two meetings in a row or five total) will result in removal from the D-PTRC.

f) The D-PTRC committee members will elect a D-PTRC Chair for the subsequent academic year at or near its final meeting of the year (to be completed by the end of the Spring semester).

g) The new D-PTRC Chair calls for nominations for the subsequent academic year's committee prior to the end of the spring semester during an all-faculty departmental meeting.

h) Election of committee members takes place at the last faculty meeting of the academic year (usually May). The current D-PTRC Chair will compose a ballot of all nominees and distribute it to all tenure-track and tenured faculty in the department at least three days prior to this last faculty meeting. All full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty will be eligible to vote for nine committee members in the proportions indicated in item c. The committee will be composed of the top vote earners as long as the D-PTRC composition represents all departmental domains (Biology Education; Cellular Biology and Molecular Genetics; Ecology and Evolutionary

Biology; Microbiology; Toxicology and Physiology) and has proportional representation of Associate Professors vs. Professors. If a specific subdiscipline is unrepresented, then the representative candidate with the most votes will replace the lowest vote earner. The same method will be used to ensure proportional representation of Associate Professors vs. Professors.

i) All candidates' dossiers are available through MTSU's Faculty Success software for review by D-PTRC members, according to the dates established in the Annual Faculty Assessment Calendar.

j) All D-PTRC members review and vote for candidates applying for tenure and for promotion to Associate Professor and for renewal of tenure-track faculty.

k) Only Professors review and vote for candidates applying for promotion to Professor. During committee discussions and voting on individuals applying for promotion to Professor, Associate Professors should not be present.

l) Each candidate applying for annual renewal will receive two votes by the D-PTRC:
i) a vote for annual contract renewal, and
ii) a vote on the committee's assessment of adequate progress toward tenure and promotion.

m) Real or perceived conflicts of interest (COI) which may cause a D-PTRC member to recuse him/herself from voting are generally covered under MTSU Policy 012. In the case that situations arise wherein Policy 012 does not address real or perceived (COI), the D-PTRC will follow the following guidelines, which should lead a committee member to recuse him/herself from voting on a candidate, although this committee member may participate in discussion of the candidate leading up to voting:

- Your Ph.D. thesis advisor or Ph.D. thesis student, whether current or past.
- An individual with whom you collaborated on a project, book, article, report, paper or grant application (funded, unfunded or pending) within the last 48 months.
- An individual with whom you co-authored a book, article, report or paper within the last 48 months.
- An individual with whom you co-edited a journal, compendium or conference proceedings within the last 24 months.
- Your business or professional partner or anyone with whom you seek to have a business, contractual or other financial relationship.
- An individual with whom you have a relationship, e.g., close personal friendship, that would cause you or a reasonable person familiar with the relationship to question your impartiality or judgment. It would be incumbent upon the committee member to divulge this information.

Your assigned departmental research and teaching mentors are not considered real or perceived COIs unless they meet any of the criteria listed above. If your research and/or teaching mentor is not on the D-PTRC, then you may request a letter(s) of support from the

mentor(s) and submit them to the committee and/or the mentor(s) may be invited to meet with the committee to give a summary of your strengths and weaknesses (with the committee being allowed to ask questions of the mentor(s)).

n) Candidates applying for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor will receive a vote for tenure and promotion. Candidates at the associate level applying for tenure will receive separates votes for tenure and promotion to Professor.

o) For purposes of deliberation and voting, seven committee members constitute a quorum for votes on promotion and/or tenure to Associate Professor, and four for votes on promotion to Professor. D-PTRC members submitting a proxy vote and those abstaining from votes count towards the quorum, but abstentions do not count as either positive or negative votes.

p) Committee members unable to attend a meeting can provide proxy votes, but these must be provided in writing to the D-PTRC chair prior to the meeting.

q) During all D-PTRC deliberations, discussion is limited to the candidate's professional scholarship and activities in teaching, research, and service, as documented in the candidate's Faculty Success dossier. The committee will consider no evidence regarding a candidate's performance or character, positive or negative, not documented in the dossier, in deliberations and recommendations for tenure and promotion.

r) Prior to voting on promotion or tenure for a candidate, the D-PTRC Chair communicates to all tenured biology faculty that the D-PTRC committee is open to accepting feedback for candidates under evaluation, for the purpose of better informing the committee's vote. Feedback from the faculty is limited to discussion of the candidate's professional scholarship and activities in teaching, research, and service. Anonymous accounts and hearsay are inadmissible. Note: Although the University includes "creative activity" with research as an evaluation category (University Policy 205.III.D.), the Biology Department does not consider it a valid measure of job performance in the sciences, and as such, this category of activities is not evaluated for promotion and/or tenure.

s) After committee discussions of candidate dossiers, the D-PTRC chair will prepare a letter of evaluation and/or recommendation for promotion and/or tenure, addressing strengths and weaknesses in the areas of teaching, research, and service, for each dossier reviewed. The committee chair will circulate drafts of the letters to the voting committee members for their comments and revisions. A final version of the letter is approved by a majority vote of eligible D-PTRC members, and the committee chair will upload the letter to Faculty Success before the deadline specified in the Annual Faculty Evaluation Calendar. The Biology Chair, the College of Basic and Applied Sciences Promotion and Tenure Review Committee, and the College of Basic and Applied Sciences Dean review the letter electronically.

t) The committee's recommendation letter will report the vote tallies supporting the recommendation for promotion and/or tenure. A tie vote is considered a non-supporting vote.

u) In the event of a non-unanimous decision, the minority voting members may prepare a

dissenting letter. This is added as an addendum to the majority letter that is uploaded by the D-PTRC chair to Faculty Success and included in the candidate's promotion and/or tenure packet as it goes forward.

III. Biology Department policy for peer evaluation of teaching

As required by MTSU promotion/tenure policies 205.VI.C, the promotion/tenure dossier includes evidence of evaluation of teaching by faculty peers.

Three members of the D-PTRC annually evaluate one section of a course taught by tenure-track faculty in the Fall semester. The candidate will choose the instructional session(s) to be evaluated. The reviewers attend at least one instructional session (either as a group or separately, depending on their schedules) or view a provided recording to evaluate instructional effectiveness, with the reviewers and the faculty member being evaluated arranging the date of this classroom visit in advance. The D-PTRC may review course materials, including the syllabus and whatever lecture outlines, presentation files, in-class activities, or other visual aids made available by the candidate.

The D-PTRC Chair will provide the peer evaluations to the candidate as soon as possible in the Fall semester, with a projected date of the last day in October for transmission of reviews to candidates. Candidates are required to attach the peer evaluation report to their Faculty Success dossier. These are included with the candidate's promotion/tenure dossier as it moves forward. The lone exception to this schedule is for those faculty applying for promotion and tenure with an August due date for submission of their dossier. In this case, peer evaluations will be conducted in the Fall and Spring semesters of the year in advance of application for promotion and tenure; there will be no peer evaluation in the Fall semester of dossier submission for these candidates. In the case of faculty (both tenured and non-tenure track, see below) applying for discretionary promotion, the August due date for submission of their dossier will not allow enough time to complete peer evaluations in the Fall semester. Therefore, these candidates must declare their intentions to the D-PTRC Chair during the Spring semester of the previous academic year so that peer evaluations of teaching can be carried out.

After the initial review of a course, reports from prior semesters are available to the reviewers so that improvement and innovation may be recognized.

At the time of annual, pre-tenure, and promotion/tenure reviews, all available reports are examined by the D-PTRC, and evidence of both observed quality, innovation, and any efforts to improve deficient areas are considered in the evaluation of teaching.

The same procedure will be followed for the peer evaluation of teaching of non-tenure track faculty. Here, one section of a course taught by the candidate is evaluated in the semester prior to the submission of their dossier for promotion.

IV. Biology Department policy for external peer review of scholarship

External peer reviewers evaluate candidates for tenure and/or promotion to Associate or Professor rank, and these evaluation letters are included in the promotion/tenure dossier.

Procedure and Timeline for solicitation of external review letters:

Because the letters must be included in the dossier before review by the D-PTRC, the Biology Chair must solicit these letters several months prior to the beginning of the departmental review process.

The Biology Department Chair solicits names of three potential reviewers from the candidate, along with a list of non-preferred reviewers (people the candidate believes might not provide a fair and objective review of the candidate's scholarship). The suggested external reviewers may be colleagues familiar with the candidate's research, but not former advisors or recent coauthors/collaborators (from the previous five years). The department Chair identifies three additional potential reviewers who are likely knowledgeable about the candidate's area of research. In instances where the candidate's research area is outside the Chair's area of expertise, the department Chair has the discretion to seek suggestions for additional potential reviewers from current Biology faculty with appropriate expertise.

The department Chair solicits letters from three reviewers, typically at or above the rank for which the candidate is applying. The department chair provides reviewers with a copy of the candidate's CV, research statement, and copies of recent publications, and requests evaluations of the candidate's research efforts relative to peers in the same research area and career stage, in light of MTSU Carnegie Classification, teaching loads, and other responsibilities indicated in the OFD. If identified reviewers are unavailable or fail to perform the review in a timely manner, the Chair identifies additional reviewers per the previous section, and solicits letters as described above. Every effort will be made by the Chair to obtain at least three external reviews before the committee review deadline.

V. Biology Department guidelines for Tenure – differences from MTSU Policy 204

Decisions to award tenure are important to the Department and University in that they determine the quality of faculty in the foreseeable future and ensure candidates have the academic freedom to pursue innovative research, teaching, and service opportunities. Candidates applying for tenure at MTSU are evaluated with respect to their performance in teaching, research, and service as indicated by criteria in University Policy 204.VI. The Biology Department predominantly emphasizes scholarly research and awards tenure primarily based on high-quality professional productivity in research.

The majority of tenure applications are associated with Assistant Professors already within the Department of Biology at MTSU applying for promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. In this case, criteria for tenure are the same as promotion to

Associate Professor (see below, VI.). Other instances of application for tenure occur if a faculty member is hired at the Associate Professor or Professor ranks. In these cases, the tenure application will be evaluated by MTSU Department of Biology criteria expected for promotion to Associate Professor or Professor, respectively (see below, VI.). Exceptional cases of the awarding of tenure may occur if the University hires an individual for leadership positions such as department chair or program director. In such cases, the D-PTRC assesses the individual's career scholarship record and work experience as it relates to the position and votes accordingly with regard to the needs of the Biology Department.

VI. MTSU Biology Department guidelines for Promotion – differences from MTSU Policy 205

Promotion in rank within the Biology Department acknowledges a faculty member's scholarly achievements and future potential in research, teaching, and service. Candidates applying for promotion are evaluated with respect to their performance in teaching, research, and service as indicated by the criteria in University Policy 205.VI. The University distinguishes the different expectations of faculty by academic rank in Policy 202.IV. Promotion in the Biology Department predominantly emphasizes high-quality professional research productivity and has different expectations by rank.

a) Candidates for Associate Professor must demonstrate consistent progress toward establishing an active research program in their area of specialization beyond that achieved during graduate school/postdoctoral training, primarily as evidenced by a consistent record of quality peer-reviewed publications. The Biology Department acknowledges that one's publication record is a continual process (e.g., manuscripts submitted prior to joining MTSU may require revisions or further work). New faculty will be credited with their works in progress but will be expected to establish an active program of research, which includes publications initiated at MTSU, to be considered for promotion. In all cases, the quality of the research is more important than the quantity, regardless of the absolute number of publications. The dissemination of research is expected through peer-reviewed or invited presentations given at professional scientific conferences, consortia, seminars, etc. Overall, there should be evidence that a candidate's research program has contributed in a meaningful way to the body of knowledge in their area of expertise. Faculty seeking promotion to Associate Professor are expected to have evidence of ongoing efforts to secure external funding to support their research. While awards of University-associated funding are beneficial and commendable, those efforts alone are not enough to warrant promotion.

Candidates for Associate Professor must demonstrate continuous growth as an instructor, as evidenced through student and D-PTRC committee member evaluations, engagement with teaching mentors and/or participation in teaching professional development. Evidence of high standards for student learning and engagement in all courses taught is expected while recognizing that there are many ways to demonstrate this. Evidence of classroom innovation is encouraged. Criteria for evaluation of teaching effectiveness are provided in University Policy 205.VI.C. Additionally, the Biology

Department expects candidates to have evidence of mentoring undergraduate and/or graduate students in research.

Expectations in service are that faculty have demonstrated service to both the University and their research profession. Criteria for evaluation of service are provided in University Policy 205.VI.E.

b) Candidates for Professor must demonstrate evidence of sustained high-quality professional productivity in research, and ongoing excellence in teaching and service. The candidate will demonstrate a substantial record of high-quality peer-reviewed publications in his/her area of research specialization that is recognized at the "*national level*" (see below, VII.). While collaborative research is both valued and encouraged, the candidate's dossier must demonstrate an established research program for which they independently determine the agenda and direction of study. Faculty hired at the Associate Professor level are evaluated by the same expectations; they are credited with their prior professional scholarship activities and publications, with expectations to maintain an active program of research and publication at MTSU to be considered for promotion. In all cases, the quality of the research is more important than the quantity, regardless of the absolute number of publications. Funding is important for a mature research program, and faculty seeking promotion to Professor should have acquired enough external funds to play a significant role in their program's development or have documented multiple attempts for external funding with proposals receiving excellent reviews/high scores from the reviewers/funding agency.

Expectations in teaching are that faculty have developed sustained excellence beyond that expected for promotion to Associate Professor as evidenced through professional development, innovative instruction, and/or the scholarship of teaching and learning. Candidates should be highly proficient in the implementation of their assigned courses and possess the capability to mentor junior faculty in teaching. Criteria for evaluation of teaching effectiveness are provided in University Policy 205.VI.C. The Biology Department expects candidates for Professor to have accumulated evidence of mentoring multiple undergraduate and graduate students in research.

Expectations in service for promotion to Professor are that candidates have demonstrated high-quality service to both the University and their research profession beyond that expected of faculty applying for Associate Professor. Criteria for evaluation of service are provided in University Policy 205.VI.E.

VII. Biology Department definition of National Recognition (MTSU Policy 205.VI.D)

The Biology Department considers the dissemination of knowledge through high-quality, peer-reviewed publications to be the primary criterion by which research/scholarship activity of its faculty will be judged. Metrics are available from organizations/companies such as Thompson-Reuters, Scopus, and Google Scholar, which provide independent, objective, and commensurable evidence of research quantity and quality. The Biology Department respects academic freedom and does not consider the subject matter of a publication as long as it is pertinent to the biological sciences, although evidence of a coherent, progressing research

program is desirable. Because there is no single factor that indicates whether a candidate's research/scholarship has garnered "*national recognition,*" the Biology Department will consider the following different sources of evidence:

a) Research publications in high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. Numbers of citations and the impact factor of the journal should be reported in the OFD. If a candidate does not feel that these metrics fairly reflect the merit of his/her published work, then this should be explained in the OFD or cover letter. Links to all published work should be provided by the candidate within the OFD.

b) Publication of peer-reviewed book chapters or books by recognized academic or trade presses. If book reviews are available, those should be included in the supporting documents.

c) Funded external research grants from public or private sources.

d) Excellent reviewer comments/high scores on unfunded grant proposals.

e) Funded contracts where those funds are utilized to move the candidate's research agenda forward.

f) Invited or plenary presentations before one's professional peers at national or international meetings/conferences/symposia, or lectures/seminars at other institutions. Evidence that a presentation meets these requirements must be provided in the supporting documents.

g) Non-peer reviewed products, such as software, databases, and data publications, will also be considered, but will carry less weight than peer-reviewed publications.

Note that for a – g, the committee considers the candidate's role in the reported work as evidence of an individual's national recognition. For example, sole or senior authorship on a publication is considered more substantial than co-authorship. The OFD should clearly indicate the candidate's role in multi-authored publications, presentations, and grants. If necessary to fully document the scope and impact of a candidate's scholarly endeavors, alternative metrics that document national recognition may be cited as supplementary evidence. Items contributing to a candidate's national reputation but more related to service than scholarship (see MTSU Policy 205.VI.E) include:

h) External letters of evaluation from the candidate's scientific peers (see above, IV.).

i) Funded external grants whose primary purpose is not research.

j) Service as editor, associate editor or editorial board member for a national/international journal.

k) Service as an invited reviewer for journals or funding agencies.

l) Invited service as a consultant, committee member, advisory board member or officer for a

governmental agency, federal grant, or professional society at the national level.

m) Receiving meritorious awards for professional activities (research, teaching, or service) by scientific societies of national prominence.

n) Elected membership to distinguished scientific societies (e.g., National Academy of Sciences)

VIII. Procedures to ensure fairness and continuity of the review process leading to evaluation for promotion and tenure

Progress of tenure-track faculty towards promotion and tenure is evaluated annually by both the Biology Chair and the D-PTRC. In order to ensure consistent feedback to junior faculty as they proceed towards the final evaluation for promotion and/or tenure, an annually-updated dossier of prior annual reviews by the Biology Chair and the D-PTRC, peer teaching evaluations, and any other pertinent documents will be available to the D-PTRC in each subsequent year, so that annual evaluations may be made in light of prior reviews. It is the responsibility of the candidate to compile all previous annual reviews and upload them to their dossier in Faculty Success. The reviewed faculty members may make notes in their Faculty Success file (e.g., cover letter) of efforts to address deficiencies (if any) noted on prior reviews. The ultimate aim of these reviews is transparency and consistency, so that there are no surprises when the final evaluation for promotion and tenure takes place.

IX. Non-tenure track promotions

This section describes procedures and criteria related to promotion to the ranks of Instructor, Senior Instructor, and Master Instructor. Supporting materials for promotion applications must be provided to the D-PTRC and Department Chair (via Faculty Success) in accordance with the published university promotion and tenure review calendar. This is the candidate's responsibility.

Promotion materials include, but are not limited to, items that document the requirements outlined in University Policy 202.VIII.B. Candidates will submit all documentation through MTSU's digital faculty activity software of record, as described in University Policy 204.I. Following the D-PTRC rendering a recommendation to the Department Chair and Dean, the documentation is stored in the Department Chair's office in hard copy for future reference.

Criteria to be considered in Promotion to Instructor, Senior Instructor, and Master Instructor are described in University Policy 202.VIII, with additional Biology Department criteria described below. If/when the Provost periodically notifies departments that they are permitted to convert a Lecturer position to an Instructor position, the Department then invites all Lecturers to apply.

Promotion to Instructor:

The candidate must provide:

a) Documentation of teaching a full load (approximately 15 academic credit hours (ACHs) per semester) while at the rank of Lecturer.

b) Documentation of student teaching evaluation results for each course section evaluated since initial appointment, if hired within the previous five (5) years, or last five (5) years of course evaluations, if employed longer than five (5) years. The expectation is that they are consistent with what is considered acceptable by the department.

c) Documentation of efforts to address any concerns brought forth by the Department Chair's annual review of the candidate, including any concerns related to student evaluations.

Promotion to Senior Instructor:

a) Documented evidence of high-quality teaching with a minimum of six (6) years as a Lecturer and/or Instructor. Thus, a typical candidate is eligible to apply for promotion to Senior Instructor at the beginning of their sixth (6th) year.

b) Documentation of teaching a full load each semester while at the rank of Lecturer and/or Instructor.

c) Documentation of efforts to promote student success, including but not limited to the use of evidence-based instruction practices or innovative instructional methods.

d) Documentation of student teaching evaluation results for each course section evaluated since initial appointment, if hired within the previous five (5) years, or last five (5) years of course evaluations, if employed longer than five (5) years, or since most recent promotion. The expectation being that they are consistent with what is considered acceptable by the department.

e) Documentation of peer evaluation of teaching (see above, III.). Evidence of observed quality and innovation are considered in the evaluation of teaching.

f) Documentation of efforts to address any concerns brought forth by the Department Chair's annual review of the candidate, including any concerns related to student evaluations.

Promotion to Master Instructor:

a) Documented evidence of high-quality teaching with a minimum of four (4) years as a Senior Instructor or ten (10) years as a Lecturer and/or Instructor. Thus, a typical

candidate is eligible to apply for promotion to Master Instructor at the beginning of their fourth (4th) year as Senior Instructor or tenth (10th) year as Lecturer and/or Instructor.

b) Documentation of teaching a full load each semester while at the rank of Lecturer, Instructor, and/or Senior Instructor.

c) Documentation of efforts to promote student success, including but not limited to the use of evidence-based instruction practices or innovative instructional methods.

d) Documentation of student teaching evaluation results for each course section evaluated since initial appointment, if hired within the previous five (5) years, or last five (5) years of course evaluations, if employed longer than five (5) years, or since most recent promotion. The expectation being that they are consistent with what is considered acceptable by the department

e) Documentation of peer evaluation of teaching (see above, III.). Evidence of observed quality and innovation are considered in the evaluation of teaching.

f) Documentation of efforts to address concerns brought forth by the Department Chair's annual review of the candidate, including any concerns related to student evaluations.