

University of Pittsburgh Distinguished Faculty Prenomination and Nomination Process as recommended by the 2020/2021 Distinguished Faculty Committee¹

As noted in the Faculty Handbook of the University, *‘the appointment of a faculty member to a Distinguished Professorship at the University of Pittsburgh constitutes the highest honor that can be accorded to a member of the professorate. It is important, therefore, that regularized policies and procedures govern such appointments.’* This document outlines the procedures recommended by the Distinguished Faculty Committee, building on the requirements as set forth in the Faculty Handbook.

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Distinguished Faculty Committee - Overview

The process for evaluating nominations for Distinguished Professor appointments (Distinguished University Professor, Distinguished Service Professor, and Distinguished Professor), is managed by a committee of Distinguished faculty from across the University (hereafter the DFC).

Membership:

The DFC consists of 10 members: 5 appointed by the Provost, and 5 appointed by the Senior Vice Chancellor of the Health Sciences. Members are appointed to three year terms. The chairperson of the committee is selected for a one year term, and selection is undertaken by the Provost and the SVC of the Health Sciences, generally rotating annually between their respective areas.

Process:

The DFC process is outlined in full in the section below entitled “Process for Consideration of Faculty Member for Distinguished Professor Appointments.” Candidates recommended to the DFC by their units are considered first for prenominations. If a prenomination is approved, the unit submits a nomination to the DFC for consideration. The DFC generally meets twice each year, in the late fall (Nov/Dec) and late spring (April/May). Prenominations approved by the DFC in one meeting should normally be submitted as nominations in the following meeting to ensure sufficient overlap in committee membership deliberating on the prenomination and nomination. The DFC will consider both prenominations and nominations at each meeting. In no event should prenominations approved in one meeting be submitted as a nomination later than a year after approval.

The sections below entitled “Dossier Materials” outline the information the DFC would like to receive for prenominations and nominations. **The DFC requests that the section below, “Process for Consideration of Faculty Member for Distinguished Professor Appointments” as well as the two sections on “Dossier materials” be shared semi-annually with each unit (July and January), along with instructions for submission of materials and associated deadlines as outlined in the section “DFC Committee Time Line.” It further requests that the following paragraph be incorporated with emphasis in the Provost Office’s semi-annual request for prenominations and nominations:**

The DFC recognizes that faculty careers do not always progress linearly. Faculty members attain extraordinary achievements following multiple and diverse pathways. Likewise, the DFC recognizes that extraordinary achievements may not always be well reflected in limited ranges of metrics such as number of peer reviewed articles or funding dollars, which are subject to biases against excluded and marginalized groups. The DFC encourages units to recognize the full breadth of evidence for excellence as they contemplate who to prenominate. For example, major contributions can take varied forms, including efforts that have important or even transformative impact on the University community, or that pave the way for societal improvements (e.g., health, well-being, equity, inclusion, etc.). In thinking about candidates to prenominate, units

should consider the breadth of intellectual recognition, intellectual advancement in their home schools and the university, national/international recognition and impact interpreted broadly, and performance excellence. Units should pay particular attention to ensure that the contributions of all faculty, including from a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives, are considered.

Process for Consideration of Faculty Member for Distinguished Professorship Appointments

1. Unit Deans or Regional Presidents consider internal prenominations for Distinguished Professorship appointments.

Prenomination materials are given great scrutiny and not all prenominations will move to the next stage of a full nomination. For this reason, **individuals being considered for prenomination or who are prenominated formally, should NOT be informed that they are being, or have been, prenominated. Self-requests for prenomination should be informed that prenominations for the distinguished faculty rank are confidential and do not come from the individual being prenominated.**

2. Each unit must adopt an internal process for vetting prenominations and follow that process when prenominating individuals for Distinguished Professorships. It is expected that at a minimum, there is faculty consultation in the process. Often this includes a unit-level committee of senior faculty in the unit reviewing and voting on prenominations. (See 2.d under “Dossier Materials: PRENOMINATION for further requirements relating to unit-level process.) The Distinguished, Distinguished Service, and Distinguished University Professorships hold equivalent rank in the University. However, they may reflect different types of contributions and accomplishments. The Appendix provides additional detail to help guide the unit in the determination of which title might be most appropriate for a particular candidate².
3. Prenomination materials (see “Dossier materials”) are submitted **as a single document** to the Provost office via faculty@pitt.edu, with a copy to the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement and Leadership Development by the published deadline in the call for prenominations.
4. The outcome of the Distinguished Faculty Committee’s deliberations are shared with the Provost. The Provost will share the results of these deliberations with the Units.
5. If a prenomination is successful, the candidate may be informed that they were prenominated, and a full nomination packet prepared (see “Dossier materials”).

² In very rare circumstances, it is possible that the contributions made by a faculty member holding one of the three distinguished faculty titles have evolved to such an extent that a different distinguished faculty title better captures the faculty member’s contributions. In such instances, a submitted prenomination may be considered for a change to a different distinguished faculty title. For example, if a distinguished professor, or distinguished university professor has made exceptional service contributions as their career evolved, they may be prenominated for a distinguished service professorship. As with any prenomination for a distinguished faculty title, individuals being considered for a title change prenomination, or who are prenominated formally for a title change, should NOT be informed that they are being, or have been, prenominated. If an individual under consideration is serving on the University Distinguished Faculty Committee, the unit will be asked to hold the prenomination until that faculty’s service on the DFC is completed. Self-requests for prenomination should be informed that prenominations for the distinguished faculty rank are confidential and do not come from the individual being prenominated. If a prenomination for a new title change is successful, the candidate may be informed of the prenomination and can decide whether to proceed with a full nomination. If the full nomination process is successful, the new distinguished faculty title supplants the prior distinguished faculty title.

- Nominations must be for the same distinguished faculty category that is indicated in the prenomination. **No nominations will be accepted for cases where the distinguished faculty category is different from the prenomination.**
 - Units should wait at least two years before resubmitting a prenomination for a candidate whose prenomination has been turned down by the DFC.
6. Nomination packets (see “Dossier materials”) must be submitted by the published deadline in the call for nominations. Successful prenominations that were submitted in the fall should normally be considered as nominations the following spring, and successful prenominations submitted in the spring should normally be considered as nominations the following fall. However, if nomination materials are not complete, the nomination may also be considered in the subsequent meeting. In any event, nominations should be submitted no later than one year from the prenomination approval.

No nominations will be accepted without a prenomination approved by the Distinguished Faculty Committee. In unusual circumstances, the Provost or Chancellor may ask the DFC Chair if the committee might consider a prenomination out of cycle.

Dossier Materials: PRENOMINATION

Prenominations should include the following materials:

1. **Dean or Regional Campus President prenomination letter** that provides:
 - a. Distinguished faculty category for which the prenomination is being made.
 - b. Reasons for the prenomination, situating the assessment relative to standards of excellence in the candidate's field or professional role [explained in a fashion that can be easily understood by those outside the field].
 - c. Criteria for selection.
 - d. Full description of process to vet prenominations within the school or regional campus, including an indication that there has been appropriate faculty consultation in the evaluation process and a description of the form of that consultation.
 - i. If a faculty committee was involved in the recommendation, a copy of that committee's report should be included.
 - ii. If any voting steps did not lead to a unanimous positive outcome, the voting results should be provided along with an explanation for each negative as well as abstaining vote.
 - e. Record of achievement upon which the nomination is based. It is expected that the achievements of nominees, significantly exceeds what is expected of a successful full professor, department chair, dean, etc.. However, extraordinary contributions can take many forms and do not necessarily manifest in traditional indicators such as number of peer reviewed publications, or research funding. Please take license to expand on unique contributions that do not fit neatly in the categories below. While information on all categories should be provided, particular depth is requested for those categories that pertain most directly to the distinguished faculty title suggested for the candidate.
 - i. *Academic background*
 - ii. *Research (include the below as appropriate for the field – if not relevant, please indicate.)*
 1. Overview of particularly salient contributions [written without jargon and in a way that faculty from other disciplines are able to understand and appreciate].
 2. Citations, H index [situate in relation to expectations in field(s)].
 3. For fields that do not focus exclusively (or even at all) on citation counts, typical indicators of extraordinary success in the particular field, and how the candidate compares to others (e.g., reviews of performances in top newspapers, books published by top publishers in a field, book reviews, conferences held drawing on candidate's scholarly contributions, etc.).
 4. Publications, including a specific explanation of the meaning of the order of authorship used in the field(s) (e.g., the significance associated with "first author," "last author," "senior author," etc.). This explanation should be written so that the significance of the order of authorship can be understood by those outside the field(s).

5. Funding [situate in relation to expectations in field(s) and explain the relevance and meaning of different categories of funding, where applicable, so that the significance of the funding can be understood by those outside the field].
 6. Graduate students and Post-Docs mentored [situate in relation to expectations in field(s)].
 7. Editorships, or other significant service roles in the field that indicate national or international prominence.
 8. Public engagement and societal impact, if any [situate in relation to expectations in field(s)].
 9. Any other indicators of national/international reputation not captured above.
- iii. *Service (Please include all relevant and exemplary contributions, including leadership of important initiatives, contributions to significant change efforts, implementation of key programs to enhance university or societal outcomes...)*
1. Service to the Department and Unit (e.g. transformative contributions to operating structure or educational program, expansion or major enhancement of functions).
 2. Service to the University (e.g., leadership in University-wide initiatives, committees, or administrative roles beyond the normal expectations of faculty).
 3. Service to the Profession (e.g., leadership in professional societies, founding new associations or journals, establishing new opportunities in mentoring, outreach to underrepresented populations).
 4. Service to the Community, locally and internationally. (e.g., activities with high impact on university recognition and standing, leadership in establishing new opportunities for collaboration).
- iv. *Teaching, Indicators of success (e.g., new courses, teaching innovations, peer and student evaluations, awards, mentorship).*
- v. *DEI and Community Engaged Research*
1. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging contributions.
 2. The unit's criteria for rigor, quality, and impact of Community-engaged scholarship, and the candidate's contributions and performance on these criteria.

For units that have not yet incorporated community-engaged scholarship in their promotion process as directed in the Provost Office memo dated October 30, 2023 "Acknowledging faculty work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and in Community-Engaged Scholarship":

Please situate the candidate's contributions on this front in relation to criteria of excellence in the field. If community-engaged scholarship is new to the field please note this for the

committee and provide established criteria elsewhere against which the contributions might be measured. If community-engaged scholarship is new to the faculty in the field at Pitt (but not new to the field as a whole), it would also be helpful to elaborate on the work that the candidate has undertaken to engage in this research and the extent to which that work has laid the foundation for others at Pitt to engage in community-engaged scholarship in the field.

- vi. Awards, Honors, etc., that signal unique and significant contributions.
 - 1. Notable accolades, Fellow titles in significant societies, Leadership roles.
 - f. Statement regarding the candidate's future directions and promise for future productivity.
2. **The candidate's current *curriculum vitae*.**

Dossier Materials: FULL NOMINATIONS

The Distinguished Faculty Committee suggests that the following be included in Full Nomination dossiers. NOMINATIONS SHOULD ONLY BE SUBMITTED IF A PRENOMINATION FOR THE CASE HAS BEEN APPROVED:

1. The nominee's updated current *curriculum vitae*;
2. *At least 10 letters of reference* from internationally, nationally, or regionally recognized experts (as appropriate for the field and the criteria for the Distinguished Professorship category indicated in the prenomination).
 - a. Letters of external review should be solicited from scholars who are arm's-length from the candidate, excluding former advisors and advisees, co-authors/co-editors, research collaborators, and current/former colleagues. When this is not possible or feasible as, for example, in a new or emerging field of study, an explanation should be provided in the dossier.
 - b. The preponderance of external letters should be from scholars at distinguished rank, named chairs, or similar titled professorships. When this is not possible or feasible, an explanation should be provided in the dossier.
 - c. A record should be provided of who was contacted to provide a letter. For those instances where a letter was solicited, but not received, please provide an explanation for why the referees chose not to provide a letter.
 - d. A statement describing the professional standing of the external referees, their relationship to the candidate (if any), and why they were chosen.
 - e. A list of names and contact information for an additional four or five referees who the distinguished faculty committee might contact if more information is needed;
3. Personal statements from the candidate on their research, teaching, and service activities;
4. *Revised Prenomination Letter* incorporating brief overview of the letters of reference and any materially relevant changes regarding the candidate's case following prenomination as well as addressing any issues or requests for information raised by the DFC at the prenomination phase.

DFC Committee Time-line

Early July:

- The Provost and SVC for the Health Sciences select new committee members to replace those with completed terms, and a new DFC Chair. The Faculty Affairs team in the Provost's Office will provide information to the Provost on DFC membership, term completions, and distinguished faculty who are eligible for selection to open committee roles.
- The Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs sends a note requesting prenominations from all units by Oct. 10 for consideration in the fall, and March 20, for consideration in the spring. As noted on page 2, the DFC requests that the paragraph specified in the "Process for Consideration of Faculty Member" be re-emphasized in the Provost Office's request. The request will be accompanied by the above sections entitled "Process for consideration of Faculty member for Distinguished Professorship Appointments" and "Dossier Requirements."

October:

- October 1-10. Scheduling of DFC for November/December based on anticipated prenominations and nominations.
- October 10. All prenominations and nominations received.
- October 15. All prenominations and nominations reviewed by faculty affairs team for completion against material requested in section entitled 'Dossier Requirements.' Incomplete cases will be deferred to spring meeting, pending completion. **Note, units may submit materials early and request an early review for completion.**

November / December

- DFC meets
- Results of deliberations shared by DFC Chair with Provost, and by Provost with the units.
- Units with successful prenominations reminded of March 20 deadline for full nomination dosiers to be considered in spring.

January

- The Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs sends a note requesting prenominations from all units by March 20. As noted on page 2, the DFC requests that the paragraph specified in the "Process for Consideration of Faculty Member" be re-emphasized in the Provost Office's request. The request will be accompanied by the above sections entitled "Process for consideration of Faculty member for Distinguished Professorship Appointments" and "Dossier Requirements."

March

- March 10-20. Scheduling of DFC for April/early May based on anticipated prenominations and nominations.
- March 20. All prenominations and nominations received.

- March 25. All prenominations and nominations reviewed by faculty affairs team for completion against material requested in section entitled 'Dossier Requirements.' Incomplete cases will be deferred to fall meeting, pending completion. **Note, units may submit materials early and request an early review for completion.**

April/May

- DFC meets
- Results of deliberations shared by DFC Chair with Provost, and by Provost with the units.
- Units with successful prenominations informed of October 10 deadline for full nomination dossiers to be considered in fall.

Committee Process

Case Assignment:

Each prenomination and nomination will be assigned two DFC members as formal readers: A primary reader and a secondary reader who will take responsibility for reading a case in depth and providing a brief synthesis at the meeting. It is expected that all committee members will review all materials.

Deliberations:

The DFC plans to spend 15-20 minutes on prenominations and 10-20 minutes on nominations. Scheduling for fall and spring meetings will be set accordingly. The primary reader will present the case for two or three minutes, and the secondary reader will provide their thoughts, and also fill in if the primary reader is unable to attend the meeting.

Decision Making:

Promotion recommendations are decided based on a collective model of support. While straw votes may be taken to assess sentiment, the expectation is that only cases with broad support among committee members will move forward to the next stage. The DFC may also decide to request additional information from a unit and defer its deliberations pending receipt of that information. The DFC's recommendation to the Provost are advisory, and the promotion decision rests with the Provost and Chancellor.

Confidentiality:

All deliberations of the DFC are confidential and only the committee's recommendation on prenominations and nominations is recorded. The DFC's recommendation on each case is the only item shared outside the committee unless the committee agrees to provide some additional thoughts or feedback to the Provost. For example, in the case of prenominations, the DFC may decide to provide a committee agreed-upon advice on what might strengthen a future prenomination of the candidate, if it chooses.

Distinguished Faculty Titles:

At each DFC meeting where prenominations and nominations are decided, the committee members will have access to all associated files, as well as the description of the faculty titles under consideration (see Appendix).

Faculty prenominations must clearly specify the Distinguished Faculty category for which a prenomination is being made. DFC recommendations will only address the category indicated in the prenomination and failure to clearly specify the category will result in the prenomination being returned to the unit for inclusion of a clearly specified Distinguished Faculty category, resulting in delayed consideration of the prenomination to the next meeting of the DFC. Similarly, nominations will only be reviewed for the distinguished faculty category indicated in the prenomination. If a unit wishes to nominate a candidate for a different distinguished

faculty category, a new prenomination must be submitted, and the DFC will take this to mean that the prior prenomination approval was withdrawn by the unit.

In the first meeting of the Academic year, the DFC chair or Provost liaison will remind the DFC that the Distinguished Professorships carry the same rank within the University, but reflect different types of contributions (as described below), and will provide the appropriate extract from the Faculty Handbook describing the various Distinguished Professorships prior to the meeting.

- Distinguished University Professor – eminence in several fields of study, transcending accomplishments in and contributions to a single discipline. National and/or international recognition in at least one field. Contribute to the intellectual advancement of their home schools and institution as a whole.
- Distinguished Service Professor – distinctive contributions and outstanding service to the University community in support of its multifaceted teaching/research/service mission. Performance excellence in the department or school. National status in their discipline or field.
- Distinguished Professor – extraordinary, internationally recognized scholarly attainment in an individual discipline or field. Contribute to the intellectual advancement of their home departments and schools, and institution as a whole.

See Appendix with Extract from University Faculty Handbook.

Appendix: General Criteria and Definitions

For further detail, see the Faculty Affairs [Distinguished Faculty Appointments](#) webpage.

The appointment of a faculty member to a Distinguished Professorship at the University of Pittsburgh constitutes the highest honor that can be accorded to a member of the professorate. It is important, therefore, that regularized policies and procedures govern such appointments.

The Faculty Handbook [Distinguished Professorships and Endowed Chair Appointments](#) page describes the criteria for each faculty rank.