**School of Information Science**
**Professional-Track Faculty Promotion Guidelines and Procedures**
College of Information and Communications
University of South Carolina
As Approved by Faculty on November 22, 2024
Approved by University Committee on Professional-Track Faculty on May 6, 2025

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# I. Professional-Track Faculty

The purpose of these guidelines is to define and differentiate professional-track faculty position titles and provide criteria and procedures for evaluation and promotion. All professional-track faculty are integral members of the School of Information Science and the College of Information and Communications and play an essential role in its development and operation. They commit significant effort to instructional, research, and/or professional service activities and administrative responsibilities related to the iSchool's or CIC's educational outreach missions. They may be assigned by the Director of the School of Information Science to engage in a variety of different kinds of scholarship and service activities, to be specified by individual appointment letters and contracts. The focus of the professional-track faculty member's contribution (percentage of effort) will be determined by School of Information Science Director and the Dean and delineated in the letter of appointment. Instructional and research faculty will be evaluated based upon the success with which this distribution of effort is achieved, according to the guidelines for promotion below.

# II. Professional-Track Instructional Faculty Positions and Ranks

The School of Information Science complies with the following University policies: Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-track, and Professional-track Faculty (ACAF 1.00), Professional-Track Faculty (ACAF 1.16), and Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified

Academic Staff Positions (ACAF 1.06), as well as the Faculty Manual. Accordingly, the position titles and ranks are as follows:

- Instructor, Senior Instructor, and Principal Instructor
- Teaching Assistant Professor, Teaching Associate Professor, and Teaching Professor
- Research Assistant Professor, Research Associate Professor, and Research Professor

**The possible promotions are:**

- Instructor to Senior Instructor
- Senior Instructor to Principal Instructor
- Teaching Assistant Professor to Teaching Associate Professor
- Teaching Associate Professor to Teaching Professor
- Research Assistant Professor to Research Associate Professor
- Research Associate Professor to Research Professor

**Instructor to Senior Instructor**

An Instructor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Senior Instructor if they have at least five years of full-time teaching experience with at least three years at USC and achieve a rating of Excellent or better in their primary area of effort (teaching, research, or service) and at least Good in the other(s).

**Senior Instructor to Principal Instructor**

A Senior Instructor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Principal Instructor if they have at least nine years of full-time teaching experience in higher education and achieve a rating of Excellent or better in all areas of responsibility.

**Teaching Assistant Professor to Teaching Associate Professor**

A Teaching Assistant Professor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Teaching Associate Professor after five years in rank. The candidate will have an earned doctorate, a record of sustained success in academic, instructional, and/or professional achievements at that rank, and a rating of Excellent or better in their primary area of effort (teaching), and at least Good in the other(s) (research, or service). There should also be evidence of progress toward establishing a regional, national or international reputation in their field.

**Teaching Associate Professor to Teaching Professor**

A Teaching Associate Professor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Teaching Professor after at least nine years of full-time teaching experience in higher

education. The candidate will have an earned doctorate, a record of sustained success in academic, instructional, and/or professional achievements at that rank, and a rating of Excellent or better in all areas of responsibility. There should also be evidence of regional, national or international stature in a field.

**Research Assistant Professor to Research Associate Professor**

A Research Assistant Professor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Research Associate Professor after five years in rank. The candidate will have an earned doctorate, a record of sustained success in research achievements at that rank, and a rating of Excellent or better in their primary area of effort (research) and at least Good in any other area(s). There should also be evidence of progress toward establishing a regional, national or international reputation in their field.

**Research Associate Professor to Research Professor**

A Research Associate Professor will typically be considered eligible for promotion to the rank of Research Professor after at least nine years of full-time professional research experience. The candidate will have an earned doctorate, established a national/international reputation of excellence in research, and a rating of Excellent or better in all areas of responsibility. There should also be evidence of regional, national or international stature in a field.

## III. Evidence of Accomplishments and Performance Standards for Promotion of Professional-Track Faculty

The iSchool uses the following guidelines related to teaching, research, and service to lead to a comprehensive evaluation of the performance of candidates for promotion. The iSchool adheres to the promotion procedures delineated in the Faculty Manual.

All professional-track faculty who have completed the minimum time in rank specified in both the Faculty Manual and this policy, and who have met these unit criteria for rank advancement, can be considered for promotion. The procedures outlined below are for evaluation of teaching, service, and research are below.

### A. Teaching

A record of sustained effective performance in the area of teaching is required of all Professional-track instructional faculty members. Teaching includes a full range of activities engaged in by the faculty member, such as regularly scheduled classes – whether face-to-face, distance, blended, or other pedagogically sound approaches, one-to-one independent studies, advising, supervision of student research studies, supervision of internships and service learning experiences, service on undergraduate, master's or doctoral thesis/dissertations, preparation

of instructional materials, design of new courses, another curriculum development work. Evaluation of teaching is fully described below.

Evidence and Evaluation:

- Student evaluations from every course taught during their time in the current rank, or since the last promotion will be examined to determine the degree to which students judge faculty as effective in instruction. A summary assessment of this teaching will be prepared by the Chair of the Committee on Professional-Track Faculty or another member of the Committee. The summary assessment of teaching is based on the required sources (e.g., student evaluations and peer reviews of teaching) and any additional documentation the candidate chooses to include. The summary should include comparative data from other sections of multi-section courses and from the same, or when applicable, comparable courses taught by other faculty members in the recent past. This document will clearly explain the iSchool's student evaluation process, evaluation system, and provide an overall rating of teaching in keeping with the definitions of rating of teaching given above.
- Peer reviews of teaching will be given consideration in judging teaching effectiveness. Peer evaluations are conducted regularly, with at least one review included in the promotion file. The unit will determine a schedule for peer reviews and communicate that schedule to candidates; candidates may request additional reviews if desired.
- A statement of their teaching philosophy.

Whereas no candidate is expected to have achievements in all areas, teaching effectiveness can be further indicated by:
- supervision of student internships and/or service-learning contributions
- direction of student research at undergraduate, master's, or doctoral levels and membership on thesis or dissertation committees
- Mentorship contributing to receipt of student awards and/or honors
- Supervision of student work leading to presentation and/or publication
- Receipt of teaching awards, fellowships, and other recognition
- Receipt of peer-reviewed teaching-related grants and support
- Adoption of teaching resources by other universities
- Evidence-based or theory-based publications on teaching or student learning
- Membership in international educational networks
- Course/curriculum/program development and/or innovation evidence
- Requests to instruct seminar sessions for academic or professional associations
- Requests to serve as a visiting instructor or guest lecturer at another institution
- Attendee evaluations from professional development workshops
- Other feedback from colleagues, students, alumni, in the form of solicited letters of input

Ratings:

- Outstanding: The candidate's teaching consistently receives high student course evaluations and exceeds the excellent level through evidence of noteworthy accomplishments and contributions, such as significant mentorship roles, impactful curricular design, external teaching engagements, nominations/awards for teaching, etc.; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the iSchool Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as outstanding; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities show exceptional evidence of engagement and development beyond teaching assigned courses.

- Excellent: The candidate's teaching consistently receives high student course evaluations; receives a rating of excellent on peer evaluations; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the iSchool Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as excellent; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities show a variety of evidence of engagement and development beyond teaching assigned courses.

- Good: The candidate's teaching generally receives overall positive student course evaluations with some indication of continuing areas for improvement; candidate has taken the initiative to seek help in areas needing improvement; generally receives at least a rating of good on peer evaluations; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the iSchool Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as good; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities show some evidence of engagement and development beyond teaching assigned courses.

- Fair: The candidate's student course evaluations are only occasionally positive; occasionally receives at least a rating of fair peer evaluations; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the iSchool Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as fair; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities show little evidence of engagement and development beyond teaching assigned courses.

- Unacceptable: The candidate's teaching consistently receives student course evaluations that are not positive; consistently receives peer evaluations that are rated as unacceptable; the summary assessment of teaching prepared by the iSchool Committee on Professional-Track Faculty rates the teaching as unsatisfactory; overall evaluation of course materials and teaching activities shows no evidence of engagement or development beyond teaching assigned courses.

**B. Professional Engagement and Service**

A record of sustained and effective service is required of Professional-track instructional faculty, as specified in distribution of effort in the appointment letter and contract. The School of Information Science encourages an increasing level of responsibility and leadership with increasing rank. Individuals are expected to make contributions in the area of service to the School of Information Science, CIC, the University, the profession, and larger society (at the community, state, national and/or international levels). Service includes participation and service on School, College, and University committees, task forces, and related activities; election, service or leadership related to professional organizations in the information field; non-research-based consulting, presentation of seminars, workshops, and continuing education events; administrative duties, and application of professional expertise with community groups. Evaluation of service is fully described below.

**Evaluation of Service**

Definition of Service:

- Administrative roles and responsibilities in service of the iSchool, the College of Information and Communications, and/or the University
- Review of manuscripts for academic or professional journals
- Review of papers for academic or professional conferences
- Review of grant proposals for internal and external funding agencies
- Editorial positions on scholarly and professional journals
- Participation in and leadership of School, College, and University committees, task forces, and related groups
- Participation in and leadership of professional and/or scholarly organizations in the information field and their committees, special interest groups, task forces, conferences, etc.
- Non-research-based consulting, presentation of seminars, workshops, and continuing education events
- Non-research application of professional expertise with community groups
- Non-research-based community engagement and outreach
- Receipt of service grants, honors, and awards
- Organizing meetings, symposia, conferences, and workshops

Evidence and Evaluation:

The candidate's service record will be evaluated on the degree and quality of professional activity and service locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The degree and quality of service to the School, College, and University's faculty governance structure will also be

evaluated. Service efforts that positively impact teaching and/or research are particularly valued. Evidence includes:

- The service record as documented by the candidate's dossier and personal statement
- Letters of appointment and/or support from colleagues indicating the nature of the service contributions
- Other documentation of contributions or products that are generated through the service activity

Ratings:

Outstanding: Candidate's record shows an exceptionally high level and quality of service in at least two of the following areas: School, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community, and candidate has taken on a leadership role such as committee chair or has initiated new service projects.

Excellent: Candidate's record shows a high level and quality of service in at least two of the following areas: School, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community.

Good: Candidate's record shows a high level and quality of service in one of the following areas: School, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community.

Fair: Candidate's record shows an adequate level and quality of service in one of the following areas: School, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community.

Unacceptable: Candidate's record shows an inadequate level and quality of service in all of the following areas: School, College, University, community, or professional/scholarly community.

## C. Research

The School of Information Science values as scholarship both the generation of new knowledge and the dissemination of existing knowledge in ways that significantly inform and shape professional practice. Solo scholarship and collaboration (with colleagues inside and outside of the School of Information Science, CIC, USC, and with students) are both highly valued. The following items (not in order of significance) constitute research and/or scholarship, although candidacy need not be supported by all items listed: articles, chapters, books, or monographs which are in progress or under review for publication; preparation and submission of high-quality proposals for funding, even if these are not yet funded; development of competencies, curricula, or instructional materials which are not published but which are used within the College beyond the faculty member's own courses; and citation of candidate's work by other scholars. Evaluation of research is fully described below.

**Evaluation of Research**

Definition of Research:

Research includes the intellectual activities that contribute to the development and dissemination of the knowledge base of the information field and the information professions. The scope and interdisciplinarity of the information field leads researchers to draw upon qualitative, quantitative, mixed, historical, and other methodologies appropriate to specific inquiries. Research can be demonstrated by ability to:

- Investigate questions with appropriate methodological technique and rigor
- Conceptualize and theorize in an original way
- Synthesize, criticize, and clarify extant knowledge and research
- Innovate in the collection or analysis of empirical data
- Relate findings to the solution of practical problems of individuals, groups, organizations (e.g., libraries, schools, communities, government agencies, and corporations), or society
- Produce or interpret literature, art, etc.
- Disseminate the results of scholarly inquiry through publication, presentation, performance, and other means of communication not limited by format or intended audience

Production and performance that are tied to the faculty member's special field of scholarship and create venues for community outreach and engagement may be included in the definition of research; for example, scholarship focused on enriching cultural literacy through literature, folklore, storytelling, etc. As scholars engage in community outreach, they will disseminate promising innovations to appropriate audiences and subject their work to critical review.

Evidence and Evaluation:

The candidate's record will be evaluated on the overall significance, contribution, and impact made to the discipline and the information professions through independent and collaborative research. Since the relative importance of different types of research products and order of authorship will vary depending on the candidate's subdiscipline within library and information science, the personal statement should contextualize the candidate's research within their subdiscipline's customary markers of significance, impact, and quality and explain levels of involvement and contribution in collaborative projects. The iSchool also recognizes that particular methodological approaches may impact the rate of publication. Evidence includes:

- Peer-reviewed publications or juried presentations, productions, or performances.
- Editorially reviewed publications, presentations, productions, or performances
- Invited publications, presentations, productions, or performances in recognition of scholarly productivity or expertise
- Publication of textbook chapters, reviews, or writing/editing whole textbooks; evidence-based or theory-based publications on pedagogy
- Other publications reflecting scholarship and expertise (e.g., technical reports, reports to government, professional standards, white papers, evaluations, assessment tools, podcasts, etc.)
- Evidence of publication venue quality such as journal impact factors, journal or conference acceptance rates, or other measures of impact and quality
- Evidence of impact, visibility, and professional status such as total citations, h-index, g-index, i10-index, alt-metrics, reviews, awards, media coverage, and other forms of recognition of the quality of publication, production, and performance
- Grant proposals, with funded proposals having a higher standing
- Evaluation of research quality and impact by external reviewers
- Research projects in progress or under review
- Evidence of contributions to theoretical, conceptual, and/or methodological development, influence on pedagogy or professional practice, or application of innovative approaches to research problems
- Expert witness
- Awards for research-based publications and activities
- Other evidence of scholarly activity, which the candidate offers for consideration or by request of the iSchool Director

Ratings:

- Outstanding: The candidate's record of research is of such a high quantity and quality that a national and/or international reputation is evident. Indicators and evidence of impact demonstrate the substantial influence of the candidate's scholarship on the discipline of library and information science. The evaluations by external referees note the outstanding quality, significance, and impact of the candidate's research record.

- Excellent: The candidate's record of research reflects a high level of quantity and quality, and the achievement of a national and/or international reputation is likely. Indicators and evidence of impact demonstrate the increasing influence of the candidate's scholarship on the discipline of library and information science. The evaluations by external referees recognize the quality of the candidate's work and the likelihood that they will have a significant impact on their field of specialization.

- Good: The candidate's record of research reflects a consistent level of quantity and quality, and there is the potential for achievement of a national and/or international reputation. Indicators and evidence of impact demonstrate a moderate degree of influence of the candidate's scholarship on the discipline of library and information science. The evaluations by external referees generally attest to the quality and significance of the candidate's scholarship.

- Fair: The candidate's record of research reflects an inconsistent level of quantity and quality and does not clearly show the potential for achievement of a national and/or international reputation. Indicators and evidence of impact demonstrate a minimal degree of influence of the candidate's scholarship on the discipline of library and information science. The evaluations by external referees minimally attest to the quality and significance of the candidate's scholarship.

- Unacceptable: The candidate's record of research is of low quantity and quality and shows little or no potential for achievement of a national and/or international reputation. Indicators and evidence of impact do not demonstrate an influence of the candidate's scholarship on the discipline of library and information science. The evaluations by external referees do not attest to the quality and significance of the candidate's scholarship.

**Use of Outside Referees**

If a candidate's distribution of work is at least 40 percent Research, their application file for promotion will contain at least five evaluations of the candidate's file by impartial scholars at peer or aspirant institutions within the field of library and information science. A person who is a leading scholar in the field of library and information science may be used as an outside evaluator if they are at an institution that is not peer or aspirant. A non-university specialist may be used as an outside evaluator if their expertise is particularly relevant. Faculty serving as outside evaluators should hold a higher rank than the candidate under review. The external reviewers should not include individuals who were former instructors of the candidate, dissertation directors, coauthors, colleagues with whom the candidate has served at other institutions or who were fellow students with the candidate at the same institution, or where there may be some other conflict of interest.

The Chair of the Professional-Track Faculty Committee, with the advice of other members of the Committee and the Director, will select enough outside referees to ensure that at least five evaluations are received. All outside evaluators will be asked to disclose any relationship or interaction with the candidate. The Chair will handle all communications with the outside referees using the letter recommended by the University Committee on Professional-Track Faculty and will add the referees' evaluations to the candidate's file for review by the University Committee on Promotion of Professional-Track Faculty.

## IV. Procedures for Applying for Promotion

***The school will follow the university-wide deadlines presented for the Professional Track Faculty Promotions and ensure that the deadlines are communicated to the faculty well in advance.***

For promotion of professional-track faculty to the next successive rank, it would normally be expected that the candidate is in at least their sixth year at the University of South Carolina in the previous rank and is performing successfully according to their evaluations. The following procedures will be followed:

1. The iSchool Committee on Professional-Track Faculty (the Committee) will be composed of five appointed faculty members (three professional-track faculty and two tenured faculty members). When there are fewer than three professional-track faculty members available to serve, or when the professional-track faculty are not at the appropriate rank, faculty members on the professional-track in other units will serve in their stead. In matters of promotion, voting members of the Committee are all those faculty members of higher rank. The director of the iSchool is not eligible to vote or to serve on the committee, though the director will participate in meetings of the Committee in an advisory role when possible. The chair of the Committee will be elected in a meeting of the Committee by April 1st of each year for a one-year term that will extend from the ensuing April 15 to April 14, by a majority vote of the members of that Committee. All members of the Committee are eligible to vote for candidates for chair.

2. By October 1, the Director will solicit from all Professional Track Faculty whether or not they intend to seek promotion.

3. By October 15, a faculty member who intends to apply for promotion must provide written notification to the Director. The Director will then provide the Dean and the Committee the names of professional track faculty members applying for promotion. The Dean's office will submit the names to the provost online by November 5.

4. By October 31 of each year, the Committee will meet with applying faculty and provide an orientation to the application and review process as well as familiarize them with the calendar for the year.

5. By December 1, a faculty member seeking promotion will submit a dossier demonstrating and documenting how current performance criteria for promotion to the next rank have been met.

6. The complete dossier including the statement assessing the teaching record will be reviewed by the Committee. Each Committee member will vote by confidential ballot with justifications whether to recommend promotion. The Committee adheres to the following procedure for determining whether an affirmative recommendation on an application will be

made to the Director:

> A majority affirmative recommendation on an application for promotion is achieved when at least fifty-one percent of all those eligible committee members have cast a "yes" ballot on the candidate's application for promotion. Eligible members of the committee who cast an "abstain" ballot are not counted for purposes of determining whether a majority affirmative recommendation has been achieved. The Faculty Manual notes that written justification of all votes at the unit level is mandatory and this justification will state specifically how the candidate meets or does not meet the unit's criteria.

By March 1, the Committee will forward the dossier along with the ballots and justifications to the Director who will vote on the promotion and draft an accompanying letter. The Director shall forward their vote with written justification, along with all other recommendations, statements, and endorsements to the Dean of the CIC. Promotion is recommended by the Dean who will submit the file to the Office of the Provost no later than May 1 of the following year. Promotions shall be approved by the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.