

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

Criteria for Appointment or Promotion to Associate Professor on the Investigator Track

Appointment or promotion to associate professor with tenure on the **Investigator Track**, requires: 1) excellence in research, scholarship, innovation, or creative expression in one's discipline; 2) a high level of effectiveness in teaching; 3) strong commitment in the area of service. The academic contributions of faculty promoted on this track must be disseminated in a scholarly manner as evidenced by speaking invitations and/or publication of journal articles, reviews, book chapters, or other appropriate media. Vanderbilt expects the quality of achievement in research, scholarship, innovation, or creative expression and in teaching to be equivalent to that required for tenure at major peer research universities.

Research, Scholarship, innovation, or Creative Expression

- 1) Research and/or scholarship includes the discovery, development, and dissemination of new knowledge or understanding. Scholarly activity may also consist of innovative conceptualizations, theoretical advancements, or technical and methodological innovation and entrepreneurship. Scholarly activity may also consist of innovative conceptualizations or novel solutions to health care problems that receive national recognition. Candidates considered suitable for promotion with tenure have already achieved, and show promise of continuing to achieve, a high level of excellence in their discipline, profession, or society of such high quality as to gain favorable recognition at the national level. Such recognition will be based mostly on the unique and creative nature of the candidate's independent contributions. Nationally recognized contributions to team science and collaborative endeavors are highly valued and can include distinct indispensable contributions to co-authored publications and multi-PI or program-type grants. Certain types of activities are recognized as supporting an individual's stature in research or scholarship. Examples of these activities include:
 - a) Publication/dissemination of meritorious, independent, and original research and/or scholarship in a sustained fashion that makes a significant contribution to new knowledge. Quality rather than quantity of publications is important. Vanderbilt recognizes the critical importance of collaboration ("team science") in research and scholarly activity. For multi-authored publications, the specific contributions of the candidate must be clearly described in the promotion dossier.
 - b) Recognition by peers of the quality of research or scholarship as indicated by the receipt of major competitively awarded research grant funding, projecting a sustained upward trajectory.
 - c) External validation of broader (societal) significance of work through adoption by society of research products or innovations, such as development and licensing of intellectual property, including patents, copyrights, proprietary processes, and tangible property; conduct of industry, non-profit, and foundation-sponsored

research; or creation and leadership of startup/spinoff organizations (for-profit and non-profit) founded on University intellectual property.

- d) Participation in scientific and professional advisory committees at the national and/or international levels, such as NIH study sections, National Research Council, national professional societies, national commissions and task forces, or industry boards.
- e) Recognition by the scientific community as evidenced by invitations to speak at universities and national conferences, participation in state and national legislative and policy formulation, and/or by receipt of early career-specific awards and honors.

Teaching, Mentoring, and Training

- 2) Teaching, mentoring, and training have a central role within the University, and all candidates for promotion are required to have participated in these activities. They can occur in lecture rooms, small discussion groups, and seminars, in the laboratory setting, and by mentoring other professionals on campus or in the broader community. To meet standards for this rank on this track, candidates must demonstrate a high level of effectiveness in teaching. Examples of these types of activities include:

- a) The attraction and training of medical students, graduate students, residents, and/or clinical and research postdoctoral fellows to support a sustained and effective research program.
- b) Advancement of mentees toward successful completion of their degrees and transition to further career-advancing training, commercial or governmental internships, or independent careers. This should include publications by the trainees and may include extramural funding of their stipends.
- c) Participation in mentor training activities in the classroom and/or laboratory.
- d) Evidence of effectiveness of teaching activities in the classroom and/or small group settings (e.g., peer and learner evaluations, letters of support from trainees).
- e) Participation on student Qualifying Examinations and Dissertation Committees and/or postdoctoral fellow mentoring committees.
- f) Induction into the Academy for Excellence in Education
- g) Development and planning of current and new courses, or new and effective approaches to teaching as exemplified by manuals, textbooks, audiovisual aids, curriculum development, and other special accomplishments.
- h) The receipt of individual awards and honors specifically recognizing teaching or mentoring skills.

Service

- 3) Vanderbilt expects its tenure-track faculty to make strong service contributions. These activities may include:

- a) Participation in departmental, school, and university committees.
- b) Service activities that promote health and wellness and/or mentorship at the departmental, professional society, and community levels.
- c) Service as *ad hoc* member of NIH or other study sections, membership on committees within regional and/or national societies, or relevant service to non-profits or commercial entities.
- d) Participation in organization and execution of regional and/or national scientific conferences.
- e) Regular reviewing or editorial activities for leading scientific journals.

Required Supporting documentation:

1. Standardized Form of the Curriculum Vitae

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

2. Documentation of Teaching Effectiveness

It is required that the **Educator Portfolio** (See the [Educator Portfolio within Faculty180](#)) be used to specify the teaching activities of the candidate on the **Investigator Track (tenure track)**.

3. Critical References

Candidates for promotion to Associate Professor on the Investigator track must demonstrate research accomplishments. Five references to publications representing the candidate's most significant contributions should be identified. The Faculty Appointments and Promotion Committee developed the **Critical Reference Form** ([PDF](#), [MSWord](#) or [Faculty180](#)) on which to provide this information. If the candidate is not first or last author, the specific contribution of the candidate to the referenced work should be described. Copies of three of these five key papers must be submitted as part of the candidate's dossier.

4. Letters of recommendation

Strong letters of recommendation from professors and leaders at Vanderbilt's peer institutions assessing the national stature of the candidate in the field and indicating candidate's likelihood for promotion to the same or comparable rank in their own institution. These professors must not have a prior relationship (e.g. mentor/mentee relationship, publications, and/or funding) with the candidate and must be able to provide an independent assessment of the dossier.