

Recruitment, Mentoring, and Promotion of Faculty in Centers and Institutes

With the growth of the number of Centers and Institutes within VUMC and across the campus, interdisciplinary research and teaching are flourishing. The scientific advancements possible in collaborative, interactive centers and institutes build upon, and often enhance and transcend opportunities available in a traditional disciplinary-based departmental structure. This expansion and cross-discipline intermeshing of scientific inquiry and education adds to the bedrock of departmental instruction and discovery, has worked to the benefit of both sets of entities, and is helping to propel VUMC into the top ranks of academic medical centers in the country.

To ensure that our faculty recruitment, mentoring, reappointment, and promotion policies and practices mirror advancements in our intellectual and educational pursuits, the School of Medicine expects and benefits from collaboration between center directors and department chairs in these endeavors. Representation from both centers and departments is vital in all these arenas for the benefit of the faculty and to maintain the collaborative, collegial atmosphere that helps make Vanderbilt unique.

Recruitment. There should be close collaboration between center directors and department chairs in the recruitment of new faculty at all levels of rank when that recruit is of significant interest to the center. Communication about recruiting should occur at the earliest stages of the recruitment process so as to lead to clear understanding of goals and expectations associated with each recruit. The offer letter will ordinarily be co-signed by the department chair and the center director. Under circumstances where a suitable home department cannot be found for a prospective faculty recruit in a discipline that is of primary interest to the center, center directors should consult with the Dean and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research to develop an appropriate route for the recruitment of such faculty.

Mentoring. A mentoring committee of senior faculty members should be appointed for each new junior faculty member. When this new faculty member is of primary interest to the center (for example, when the center provides substantive support, e.g., space development, or ongoing funding), the center director and the department chair will jointly establish the composition of that committee such that the committee will be of greatest benefit to the junior faculty member. Such jointly established committees will ordinarily have members from both the department and the center. The chair of the mentoring committee will provide either a written or oral report to both the center director and the department chair at least annually. The report should address the faculty member's progress towards identified goals and suitability for promotion.

Promotion. The mentoring committee for a faculty member of primary interest to a center will be asked to make an initial recommendation regarding promotion and tenure when the faculty member is considered to have met the appropriate criteria. If the original mentoring committee is no longer operational, the department chair and the center director will jointly constitute a new evaluation committee to make this initial recommendation. The center director may independently recommend consideration of

promotion and tenure to the departmental chair for review by the departmental appointments and promotion committee. The center director and junior faculty member may also request creation of a promotion and tenure committee with shared appointments from the center director and the department chair. The center director will have the option of participating in the deliberations of the departmental promotion committee or naming a designee to do so on her/his behalf. In the event of a positive recommendation from the promotion committee, the department chair will forward the recommendation to the school's promotion committee with a letter that will be endorsed by the center director. In the event of a negative recommendation from the promotion committee, if the department chair supports this negative recommendation, but the center director disagrees with this decision, the center director with the concurrence of the involved faculty member will have the option appealing such a negative decision to the school's Faculty Appointments and Promotions Committee.

Miscellaneous.

With support of the center director, a faculty member whose primary activity is within a center should have the option of transferring the department of primary appointment if such a transfer might be more appropriate for his/her career development and has the concurrence of the involved department chairs and the Dean.

Deference should ordinarily be given to the decision of center directors with regard to appointments to the research track that are contingent on the availability of funding for faculty whose primary activity and support will be within a center.

In recognition that centers have members that are not medical center faculty, it is the committee's recommendation that the principles and procedures embodied in this report will govern the relationship between centers and departments across the University.

For research track faculty within centers, the center director and department chair of the home department will collaborate on promotion decisions. If the research track faculty member is paid through specific grants, the PI of that grant will have primary responsibility for making the recommendation for promotion to the department chair and center director based upon criteria and guidelines established for research track faculty in the faculty manual. Otherwise, the center director will assume this responsibility. Research track faculty will benefit from having a mentoring committee and the committee should include a minimum of two individuals, one of which would be the lead tenure track faculty member the research track faculty member works with. Both the department chair and center director should assume the responsibility of ensuring quality mentoring for the research track faculty member.