

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ASTRONOMY

Departmental Functions and Criteria

August 2026

This document provides the functions and criteria policies for the Department of Astronomy in the College of Arts and Sciences of New Mexico State University (NMSU). These functions and criteria provide the standards and expectations for annual contract renewal, promotion, and tenure. The document also covers the procedures for annual performance evaluation, promotion, and tenure. The specific standards and procedures for various faculty lines, College-Track, Tenure-Track, Tenured, and Research Faculty are covered.

Depending on the faculty line, the faculty member will be responsible for the functions (areas of effort) of Teaching, Scholarship (Research), Service, and Outreach, in various proportions of effort as is appropriate for the faculty line and as described below. Further, depending on the faculty line, some degree of leadership in each of the four areas of effort, as defined throughout this document, may be required for promotion. The four areas of effort of Teaching, Scholarship (Research), Service, and Outreach are defined as follows:

Teaching: Teaching is a primary department responsibility. Our primary program is a graduate program, offering M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. Graduate teaching involves coursework teaching and, for members of the Graduate Faculty, graduate student advising. The Department does not offer an undergraduate major, but undergraduate teaching of general education courses, Viewing a Wider World courses, and upper level courses for minor degree candidates is a significant component of our teaching responsibility. The teaching loads of department faculty members will be assigned so that the necessary courses are offered each semester to meet the academic needs of the students at the lower and upper divisions, as well as graduate students. A faculty member budgeted exclusively from instruction and general funds will normally be responsible for the equivalent of teaching an annual minimum of three (3) courses per academic year (9-12 credits), unless a reduced load is approved by the Department Head. Balance between graduate and undergraduate courses can vary from faculty member to faculty member; both are equally valued. As discussed in the NMSU Administrative Rules and Procedures (ARP) Section 6.61 Part 8B, "courses such as thesis, dissertation, research, special problems and independent study are not automatically considered to be the equivalent with teaching typical graduate or undergraduate courses. As of July 2026, such courses in the Astronomy Department include ASTR 400, 499, 500, 598, 601, 600, and 700.

Scholarship: Scholarship (Research) is, in any of its equally valued facets described in the Boyer Model (Discovery, Integration, Application, Teaching), a primary responsibility of the department and its individual faculty. It also forms a core component of graduate education, so there is considerable interplay between teaching and scholarship.

Service: Service plays a significant role in the department's responsibilities to the institution and the broader academic and professional communities. Service activities include professional service (e.g. paper review, panel reviews, advisory committees, project management) in the faculty's various areas of expertise, as well as service to the University (Department, College, and University committee assignments, advisory boards, etc.) and community (activities where the discipline provides appropriate expertise).

Outreach: The department values outreach, particularly given the broad interest of the general public in astronomy and the recognition that much astronomical research is enabled by public funding. Outreach involves interaction with the public in the form of Observatory Open Houses, visits to/from local schools and civic groups, responding to information requests from the public and news organizations, publishing popular articles relevant to research, participating in radio interviews, etc.

1. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

Each member of the faculty is expected to engage in Teaching, Scholarship (Research), Service, and Outreach activities within and on behalf of the department. Furthermore, collegiality – defined in the College of Arts and Sciences Promotion and Tenure Policies and Procedures document as “the ability of a faculty member to positively interact and collaborate with all constituents within the academic environment, including colleagues, students, staff, administrators, and members of the community” – is an expectation of all department faculty members. The Astronomy Department interprets “collegiality” narrowly as a tendency – not just ability – to promote professional success for oneself and for others through civility and collaboration, while deprioritizing congeniality for its own sake. Examples of the value of collegiality are provided in the descriptions of the evaluation criteria for each of the four functions listed below.

1.1 ALLOCATION OF EFFORT

Allocation of effort is an agreement between the faculty and the Department Head. However, the Dean of the College shall ensure equitable distribution and shall approve variations from the standard allocation of effort.

1.1.1 COLLEGE-TRACK FACULTY

A college-track faculty position is the track for which a faculty member is not on the tenure track and the primary allocation of effort is teaching. If the faculty member joins the Graduate Faculty, then they will be expected to engage in the advising of graduate students. Standard ranges of allocation efforts for college-track faculty may be 55-80% for Teaching and Advising, 0-30% for Scholarship (Research), 5-10% for Service, and 0-5% for Outreach, depending on the strengths of faculty members, the source of funding for the position, and Departmental needs. Examples of teaching-related service for a college-track faculty member include participating in department- or university-level curriculum development efforts or serving as a course evaluator. Inclusion of activities not associated with Teaching and Advising (e.g. Scholarship, Outreach) in the Allocation of Effort for a college-track faculty member requires written permission from the Dean. The professional performance of college-track faculty is evaluated annually by the Department Promotion and Tenure Committee (P&T Committee).

1.1.2 RESEARCH-TRACK FACULTY

A research-track faculty position is the track for which a faculty member is not on the tenure track and the primary allocation of effort is Scholarship (Research). A research-track faculty member is eligible to be a member of the Graduate Faculty; if they join the Graduate Faculty, then they will be expected to engage in the advising of graduate students. Standard ranges of allocation efforts for research-track faculty may be 0-30% for Teaching and Advising, 55-80% for Scholarship (Research), 5-10% for Service, and 0-5% for Outreach, depending on the strengths of faculty members, the source of funding for the position, and Departmental needs. Examples of teaching and advising for a research-track faculty member include serving on graduate student committees and advising graduate students. Examples of service for a research-track faculty member include serving as a manuscript referee, review panel member, or professional conference organizer. Inclusion of activities not associated with research and advising (e.g., Teaching and Outreach) in the Allocation of Effort for a research-track faculty member requires written permission from the Dean. The professional performance of research-track faculty is evaluated annually by the Department P&T Committee.

1.1.3 TENURED AND TENURE-TRACK FACULTY

Tenured and tenure-track faculty will be expected to engage in mentoring students, regularly attend faculty meetings, and participate and engage in department committee work.

Those tenured and tenure-track faculty who are members of the Graduate Faculty may chair graduate committees, direct master's theses and doctoral dissertations, teach 600-level and above courses, and serve as representatives of the Dean of the Graduate School on master's and doctoral exams in other departments. These responsibilities will be commensurate with a faculty member's experience, as recommended by the P&T Committee, Department Head or the Dean as part of the annual evaluation process.

Standard allocation of effort for tenured and tenure-track faculty will be 50% Teaching and Advising, 40% Scholarship (Research), 9% Service, and 1% Outreach. Exceptions to these ranges will be allowed in cases of sabbatical leaves or other special circumstances, in consultation with the Department Head and the Dean of the College. Approved **teaching buy-outs** resulting from major grant awards or service buy-outs resulting from university- or professional-level administrative responsibilities are example reasons for an adjustment of annual allocation of effort assignments, and are acceptable in terms of the faculty's Annual Performance Report (APR).

Allocation of effort for each faculty member for each academic year will be agreed upon by the faculty member and the Department Head. If the allocation of effort of a faculty member will reside outside the standard percentages adopted by the department, they shall be subject to approval by the College Dean. Further, if a faculty member requests a change in their allocation of effort during the academic year, this change is also subject to approval by the College Dean. The sum of a faculty member's allocation of effort assignments to Teaching, Scholarship (Research), Service, and Outreach shall always equal one-hundred percent (100%).

1.2 TEACHING

The quality and quantity of faculty teaching shall be taken into consideration when evaluating departmental faculty. In the case of college-track and research-track faculty, graduate student advising – and serving on graduate student committees if the individual is a member of the Graduate Faculty – shall also be considered when evaluating the faculty member.

1. Quality: Evaluation criteria include:
 - a. teaching evaluation via student evaluations, peer evaluation, self-assessment, measured learning gains, and/or demonstration of teaching effectiveness. Faculty should follow Department Head guidance each year when providing evaluations of teaching. University-designed course evaluations are automatically administered to all students at the end of each semester; mid-semester evaluations can also be appropriate and beneficial;
 - b. efforts towards improvement of teaching, including modification of teaching materials and development of innovative instructional approaches, participation in teaching-focused professional development workshops offered locally (e.g., Teaching Academy events) or nationally (e.g. at professional conferences);
 - c. guiding advisee graduate students to meet program milestones in a timely fashion, which requires remaining up-to-date on program requirements.
2. Quantity: Criteria include:

- a. total number of “contact” courses taught should match annually-agreed upon course load and teaching percentage of allocation of effort;
 - b. total student credit hours taught, so that individually-directed classes, e.g. independent research and dissertation research credits, are recognized as important components of teaching;
 - c. number of graduate degree candidates supervised and their progress;
 - d. to a lesser extent, student committee work load (e.g. serving as a Secondary Advisor or on the graduate committees of Astronomy graduate students);
 - e. advising of undergraduate students, including undergraduate research advising.
3. Special Factors: Criteria may include student participation in faculty research activities, special courses and seminars offered by the faculty member, development and implementation of new courses, or teaching of courses to a broader audience (i.e., outside of NMSU).
4. Collegiality: Examples of collegiality in the context of teaching include maintaining civility in an academic setting; communicating with students, staff, and colleagues in a professional and respectful manner; respecting the rights of students; and contributing through professional conduct to a collaborative and constructive learning environment.

1.3 SCHOLARSHIP (RESEARCH)

The quality and quantity of faculty research shall be taken into consideration when evaluating departmental faculty. In the case of college-track and research-track faculty, the same standards apply as for tenure-track faculty accounting for specific allocation of effort.

1. Quality: Criteria will be those of peer evaluation and/or review on the basis of current professional standards. Specific areas to be considered, as defined by Boyer and all equally valued, will include:
 - a. Scholarship of Discovery: Those activities that increase knowledge within the faculty member's discipline; this is the traditional research in which all faculty members are expected to be engaged
 - b. Scholarship of Integration: activities that make connections between discovery in the discipline and other disciplines, including interdisciplinary efforts that couple astronomical work with technology, computational science, engineering, etc.
 - c. Scholarship of Application: activities that apply astronomical knowledge to societal, industrial, national, and international issues.
 - d. Scholarship of Teaching: efforts that quantitatively address student learning and teaching methods within the discipline or in a broader science education context.

2. Scholarship activities should result in high-quality achievement of and dissemination of results (via peer-reviewed publications, meeting presentations, review articles, granted patents, etc.) according to national standards, and should provide a basis for the highest quality education at the graduate level.
3. Interdisciplinary activities can be an integral component of Scholarship.
4. In the present structure of doctoral programs, grant support for scholarship (research) activities is an important part of efforts to maintain or improve upon the quality of the doctoral education and Scholarship productivity, and provides a community assessment of the quality of the faculty member's work. Securing extramural funding for research activities is therefore an important component of Scholarship.
5. Quantity and Communication:
 - a. Scholarship of Discovery. Criteria include:
 - i. the number and quality of publications (especially those in reviewed journals). Note that, in astronomy, first (and often second or third) author papers generally represent a significantly larger fundamental contribution than appearing in a long author list, but the latter can be relevant for a faculty member whose research is related to experiments conducted by a large group. Papers with a faculty member's student as first author should be considered equivalent to those with the faculty as first author, since they generally represent (at least) as large of an effort;
 - ii. number of citations of published papers, although note that this can vary by sub-discipline, depending on the size of the sub-discipline;
 - iii. meeting/conference presentations, including those led by a faculty member's student (especially invited presentations and papers);
 - iv. pursuit of and receipt of external funding focused upon scientific advancement. Grants on which a faculty member is the Principal Investigator demonstrate a high degree of leadership and therefore carry significant weight. Grants on which a faculty member is a funded Co-Investigator are also important, as are student-led research grants for which a faculty member is the administrative PI;
 - v. submission and success with other types of proposals (observing proposals, for example);
 - vi. mission/project and scientific team involvement; selection for full proposal submission from white papers, etc.;
 - vii. colloquia and special lectures presented at other institutions/departments, especially invited lectures;
 - viii. efforts to establish and enhance University reputation through large project endeavors;
 - ix. membership on conference organizing committees.

- b. Scholarship of Integration. Criteria include the number of clearly identifiable interdisciplinary activities participated in (investigations, proposal submissions, meetings attended, papers published and presented, etc.) that would not have arisen from the faculty member working in isolation within their own discipline. If the result of the effort is not a peer-reviewed product (e.g. a paper or proposal), the faculty member will provide documentation attesting to the evaluative process that results of the effort were subjected to. Other criteria include organizing national or international conferences or workshops and participating in or chairing a science organizing committee for such workshops.
 - c. Scholarship of application. Criteria include the number of activities (textbook development, expert testimony, algorithm development, etc.) in which the faculty member is engaged; if the activity engaged in does not lend itself to peer-review, the faculty member will provide documentation that the Scholarship of Application activity has received some form of external review by appropriate 'experts' in the area/field. Additional criteria include the creation of public databases/websites, and/or related data, for broad distribution to colleagues.
 - d. Scholarship of Teaching. Criteria will include peer-reviewed publications and submitted/funded proposals specifically focused upon the study of teaching methods and student learning methods in the discipline. Additional criteria could include external solicitation of student-learning tools developed by the faculty member.
6. Collegiality: Examples of collegiality in the context of scholarship include demonstrating intellectual inquiry and research practices; modeling ethical behavior for graduate students and other colleagues; and contributing through professional conduct to a collaborative and constructive research environment.

1.4 SERVICE

The quality and quantity of faculty service shall be taken into consideration when evaluating departmental faculty. In the case of college-track and research-track faculty, the same standards apply as for tenure-track faculty accounting for specific allocation of effort.

- 1. Professional Discipline Service. Activities for evaluation include reviewing papers for peer-reviewed journals, discipline-specific journal editing, evaluation of proposals for funding agencies/entities, professional organization/committee work (including meeting/conference planning), offices held in professional organizations in the faculty member's discipline, etc.
- 2. University/College/Departmental Service. Departmental committee work and university and College committee work are included; other factors are duties and responsibilities associated with the management of university-connected research facilities and instruments, or mission-related managerial responsibilities. Serving as a Dean's

Representative on graduate student committees in other departments and fundraising activities on behalf of the Department, College, or University are also considered service.

3. Collegiality: Examples of collegiality in the context of service include willingness to actively participate in collaborative departmental activities; taking an active role in the discussion and development of policies and programs; and upholding ethical standards and demonstrating civility during interactions with other members of the University and professional community.

1.5 OUTREACH

The quality and quantity of faculty outreach shall be taken into consideration when evaluating departmental faculty. In the case of college-track and research-track faculty, the same standards apply as for tenure-track faculty accounting for specific allocation of effort.

1. Public Engagement. Criteria include the quantity of public lectures, observatory tours, public nights at the observatories, web-based public dissemination, etc. Testimonials of the quality of such activities from the inviting party are welcome.
2. Public Relations. Public relations activities on behalf of the Department, College, and University are included. These include articles by or about the faculty member that are published in popular publications, newspapers, or other media outlets.
3. Collegiality: Examples of collegiality in the context of outreach include demonstrating concern for the needs and rights of community members and maintaining civility in all interactions with event organizers, co-volunteers, and the general public.

1.6 COLLEGE- AND RESEARCH-TRACK FACULTY

When college- and research-track faculty are hired, a written document will be developed and agreed upon by the faculty member and the Department Head that outlines the relative percentages of allocation of effort that will be used to evaluate their performance; any deviations from standard Allocations of Effort ([Sections 1.1.1 or 1.1.2](#)) will require inclusion of reasons for the deviations. Within any given area, the evaluation criteria and procedures for promotion will be the same as for tenure-track faculty, accounting for allocation of effort.

2. PROCEDURES OF EVALUATION

2.1 ANNUAL EVALUATION OF ALL FACULTY

All tenure-track, tenured, and non-tenure track college and research faculty will be evaluated by the Department Head each year, based upon the information the faculty member provides in their Annual Performance Report (APR). The APR will be submitted during the Fall semester and must be completed using Watermark, which is the University's official reporting instrument for recording all faculty activities. In all cases, the person being evaluated is responsible for supplying materials necessary for the evaluations.

In the following Spring semester, after discussing each faculty member's APR with the Dean, the Department Head will share their evaluation with each faculty member, with an option to review it together in a meeting. Note that the Department Head and the Dean of the College are *not* required to reach full consensus in their evaluations. The faculty member may submit a written statement in response to the Department Head's final evaluation; this must be submitted by email to the Department Head within ten business days of receipt of the final evaluation.

Note that faculty performance evaluations are not officially completed until they have been discussed by the Department Head and the faculty member and the APR is signed by the Department Head. In parallel with the annual completion of the faculty member's APR (late in the calendar year), the faculty member will discuss with the Department Head the faculty member's planned allocation of effort for the coming calendar year. The faculty member shall prepare the final Allocation of Effort document with the agreed upon percentages for approval by the Department Head by a date that is likely to be near the beginning of the calendar year in question, and certainly no later than the deadline determined by the College.

2.2 EVALUATION FOR PROMOTION AND/OR TENURE

2.2.1 ANNUAL EVALUATION OF NON-TENURED, COLLEGE-, AND RESEARCH-TRACK FACULTY

Non-tenured tenure-track faculty, and Assistant Professor college-track and research-track faculty will be evaluated annually by the Department Head and by the tenured faculty to assess progress toward promotion and/or tenure. The evaluation by the tenured faculty occurs during the Spring semester through the departmental P&T Committee. Membership of this committee is discussed in [Section 3](#) below. Both the Department Head and the P&T Committee will prepare written evaluations of each non-tenured tenure-track faculty and each college-track and research-track faculty member's overall progress towards promotion and/or tenure, as well as an assessment of that faculty member's planned accomplishments given in the Allocation of Effort for the year under review. In addition to annual performance evaluation in the areas of teaching, research, service and outreach commensurate with a faculty member's allocation of effort, the evaluation process will document strengths and weaknesses regarding a candidate's collegiality, and its impact on any of the primary areas of evaluation – not as a dominating factor but as a contributing factor in progress toward promotion and/or tenure. These progress

appraisals should take place in the Spring semester in conformance with the timetable set by the College of Arts & Sciences. They are separate from the Department Head's annual performance review, which occurs during the Fall semester. The Department Head will meet with the faculty member to discuss the faculty member's progress toward promotion and/or tenure as determined by the Department Head and the P&T Committee. The faculty member may submit a written statement in response to the P&T Committee and/or Department Head's evaluation; this must be submitted within ten business days of receipt of the evaluations. These written evaluations plus any faculty response are thereafter delivered to the College Dean.

2.2.2 TENURE

Non-tenured tenure-track faculty normally apply for tenure during the Fall semester of year six (6) of their appointment. Exceptions to this timeline will either have been established at the time of hire, or will require written recommendation of the Department Head and College Dean, and must be approved by the Provost. Requests to temporarily suspend the tenure "clock" (time passed from the date of the faculty's appointment date) and pause the tenure process are allowed, but will also require written recommendation of the Department Head and College Dean, and must be approved by the Provost. Non-tenured tenure-track faculty applying for tenure will be separately evaluated by the Department Head and by the P&T Committee. Written reviews are prepared, based upon the candidate's portfolio of application materials, early during the Fall semester of the academic year during which the faculty member's application is submitted. See [Section 3](#) in this document for additional information.

2.2.3 PROMOTION TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Non-tenured tenure-track faculty may apply for promotion to Associate Professor at the same time as they apply for tenure, but not before. College-track and research-track faculty are eligible to apply for promotion to College (or Research) Associate Professor in the Fall semester of year six (6) of their appointment. Following consultation and approval of the Department Head, once a faculty member expresses intent to apply for promotion, they will be separately evaluated by the Department Head and by the P&T Committee. Written reviews will be prepared, based upon the candidate's portfolio of application materials, early during the Fall semester of the academic year during which the faculty member's application is submitted. See [Section 3](#) in this document for additional information.

A tenured, college-track, or research-track Assistant Professor and/or the Department Head may request an annual review of progress toward promotion to Associate Professor. Each progress review would include a meeting between the tenured faculty member and the Department Head, which can be at a time of year of their mutual agreement. The P&T Committee need not engage in annual reviews of progress toward promotion for tenured faculty, unless, in mutual agreement with the faculty member, the Department Head presents a special request for a one-time-only review on the progress.

2.2.4 PROMOTION TO PROFESSOR

Promotion to the rank of Professor or College Professor is not automatic and should not be considered to be forthcoming merely because of years of service, or because promotion to Associate Professor, or College or Research Associate Professor, was awarded. There is no specific number of years of service required to apply for promotion to Professor.

Above and beyond the criteria for promotion to Associate Professor, the qualities of a Professor include that the faculty member has:

1. demonstrated, through consistent and continuously growing accomplishments, that they have a mature intellectual command and view of the discipline as it relates to the candidate's primary subfield within the discipline.
2. established a record of engaging in various leadership roles within the candidate's profession and within the Department, College, and/or University in the areas of teaching, scholarship and creative activity, outreach, and/or service.
3. demonstrated a commitment to mentorship of faculty at lower ranks, supporting them in achieving their professional goals.
4. sustained and demonstrated civility, collegiality and professional integrity in all aspects of Department, College, and/or University Service since promotion to Associate Professor.

When considering candidates for promotion to the rank of Professor, primary evaluation is given to performances in proportion to the candidate's allocations of effort. Promotion to Professor requires faculty to demonstrate distinction in teaching and advising, including curricular development and teaching innovations; significant accomplishments with wide recognitions in the area of scholarship; and exemplary service to the institution and profession. Leadership within these areas of performance is also important. There is no single definition of "leadership"; it is generally characterized by one who promotes teamwork, encourages collegiality, empowers others, uses one's position to benefit others, and promotes the development of new ideas. Evidence of leadership can come in many forms, and can be focused on Department and University initiatives (e.g. by chairing Departmental, College, or University committees, mentoring junior faculty members, establishing a new research program, guiding the development of a strategic plan and vision) or professional functions (e.g. by organizing a conference that is national or international in scope, serving on national-level committees, or serving as a journal editor).

Performance of a candidate for promotion to Professor is assessed in terms of how the above qualities and performances are sustained along the candidate's trajectory as an Associate Professor and on an assessment of the candidate's potential future contributions based on the candidate's record.

A tenured, college-track, or research-track Associate Professor and/or the Department Head may request an annual review of progress toward promotion to Professor. Each progress review would include a meeting between the tenured faculty member and the Department Head, which can be at a time of year of their mutual agreement. The P&T Committee need not engage in annual reviews of progress toward promotion for tenured faculty, unless, in mutual agreement with the faculty member, the Department Head presents a special request for a one-time-only review on the progress.

2.2.5 EMERITUS/EMERITA STATUS

The criteria for Professor Emeritus/Emerita status are described by NMSU ARP 8.65, which states that two conditions must be satisfied:

1. The faculty member is eligible for retirement under the New Mexico Educational Retirement Act or the Federal Civil Service; and
2. The faculty member is tenured by the university; or is a college- or research-track faculty who has been promoted (per College and Department faculty promotion policies) to the rank of College or Research professor.

Retirement eligibility status can be viewed at <https://www.erb.nm.gov/retirement-eligibility/>.

According to ARP 8.65, the general benefits of Professor Emeritus/Emerita status are that the individual emeritus/emmerita faculty shall be listed for life as emeriti in the official university directory. Emeritus/Emerita faculty will receive general university publications upon request. They may be issued identification cards; be listed in the university phone directory; have on-campus office or work facilities (if available, requested, and approved); and be requested as an emeritus/emmerita consultant.

Within the Department of Astronomy, Professor Emeritus/Emerita status will allow the individual, if they choose, to complete their activities on Ph.D. Committees for which they are already Chair or a member at the time of their retirement until the student successfully defends their dissertation or permanently leaves the Ph.D. Program. This will allow continuity of the student's Ph.D. process. A faculty member who transitions to Emeritus/Emerita status can continue to serve as Chair until the completion of the student's Ph.D. The emeritus/emmerita faculty cannot become Chair of a new Ph.D. Committee once they are retired. They may, however, join as the "fifth" non-essential member if requested by the Chair of the Ph.D. Committee and with approval of the Department Head. They may also serve on (or Chair) M.S. Committees.

The College of Arts and Sciences views emeritus/emmerita status as a recognition of meritorious and continuous excellence during the service at New Mexico State University and a privilege granted in recognition of such services.

Emeritus/Emerita status should be requested according to the following procedures:

1. The faculty member is required to request consideration of emeritus/emmerita status.

2. The request must be delivered in writing to the Department Head (or to the Dean in the case where the request from the Department Head). The Department Head will then inform the Chair of the P&T Committee.
3. The written request from the candidate faculty member shall include a narrative describing the candidate's motivation for the request and expected future contributions to the institution and Department. The request should also include whether office space, computing facilities, or other resources are requested from the Department, with justification for such request.

The Department recommendation for emeritus/emerita status should be developed as follows:

1. The request should be reviewed by all members of the P&T Committee. In the case of a request from a college-track or research-track faculty member, the Committee should also include at least one college-track faculty at the rank of Professor. If no such individuals in the Department are available, this individual shall be appointed by the Dean at the request of the Department Head in collaboration with the Chair of the P&T Committee.
2. The Committee shall review the written request and provide a written recommendation to the Department Head, inclusive of signatures of all eligible Committee members and an anonymous vote count.
3. The Department Head shall evaluate the Committee's recommendation and vote and then provide their own written recommendation. The two recommendations are sent to the Dean for review along with the narrative from the faculty member requesting emeritus/emerita status.
4. The final recommendation is communicated by the Dean to the Provost and to the Benefits Services office.

2.3 TEACHING EVALUATION PROCEDURES

1. Annual Evaluation: evaluation of faculty teaching is based upon the teaching criteria listed above (see [Section 1.2](#)).
2. Evaluation for Promotion and Tenure: methods will include those employed for Annual Evaluation, although the assessment will also take into account consideration of the multi-year progress of graduate students advised by the faculty member, the history/trending of student evaluations of course instruction, the breadth of courses taught during the faculty member's time in the department, etc.

2.4 SCHOLARSHIP EVALUATION PROCEDURES

1. Annual Evaluation. Evaluation of faculty research is based upon the criteria listed above (see [Section 1.3](#)).

2. Evaluation for Promotion and Tenure. Same as for Annual Evaluation, with the addition of demonstrated growth during the time toward tenure.

2.5 SERVICE EVALUATION PROCEDURES

1. Annual Evaluation. Evaluation of faculty service is based upon the criteria listed above (see [Section 1.4](#)).
2. Evaluation for Promotion and Tenure: same as for Annual Evaluation, with the addition of demonstrated growth during the time toward tenure.

2.6 OUTREACH EVALUATION PROCEDURES

1. Annual Evaluation. Evaluation of faculty outreach is based upon the criteria listed above (see [Section 1.6](#)).
2. Evaluation for Promotion and Tenure: same as for Annual Evaluation, with the addition of demonstrated growth in these activities during the time toward tenure.

3. PROMOTION AND TENURE APPLICATION PROCEDURES

The Department Head is responsible for posting the most up-to-date version of this Functions and Criteria document on the Astronomy Department webpage, as well as links to the Promotion and Tenure Policies webpage of the College of Arts and Sciences and other university-wide promotion and tenure resources from the Provost's Office and the NMSU ARP. The Department Head is also responsible for providing an electronic version of this document, and any other requested document outlining policies for promotion and tenure policies, to any faculty member upon request.

The Department Head must provide an electronic version of this document and any other policies to any faculty member who intends to apply for promotion and/or tenure, and this must be done in the spring semester prior to the application submission; the detailed promotion and tenure application timeline issued annually by the College of Arts and Sciences must be followed.

If possible, sample portfolios of successful applications for promotion to the intended applicant's aspiring rank and tenure should be made available to any faculty member who intends to apply for promotion and/or tenure, and this would be done in the spring semester prior to the application submission. Permission to use the sample portfolio for this purpose must be

provided to the Department Head in writing by the previous successful applicant. Sample portfolios are also curated and made available to NMSU faculty by the Teaching Academy.

The promotion and tenure application materials to be reviewed should follow the standard organization described in the College of Arts and Sciences Promotion and Tenure Policies Document. The core document contains the mandatory information submitted for the approval process, and the supplemental document remains in the department and under control of the Department Head. Both can be used for the review at the department level, but the supplemental document is only provided to the Dean, the College Faculty Affairs Committee, or the Provost upon request. The supplemental document should be used to provide additional evidence in all areas of faculty activities. These may include detailed evidence of teaching effectiveness, copies of peer reviews of grant proposals or journal articles, external letters acknowledging service or outreach activities, and documentation of recognitions and awards. The supplemental document may not contain unsolicited review letters.

There are currently no formal guidelines or restrictions on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the preparation of faculty members' APRs and other promotion and tenure materials per the College of Arts and Sciences Promotion and Tenure Policies and Procedures or the NMSU Administrative Rules and Procedures sections dealing with promotion and tenure. However, the Astronomy Department P&T Committee strongly urges all faculty members to consult with the Committee Chair or the Department Head about appropriate usage of AI when drafting promotion and tenure related documents. While the Committee understands the value of AI for assisting with writing mechanics such as grammar and spelling, it strongly discourages the use of AI in creating text for candidate materials. At a minimum, any use of AI in producing promotion and tenure documents should be disclosed and described.

Additional department policies and procedures regarding application for promotion and/or tenure are as follows.

1. The Department Head will submit a written recommendation to the Dean in matters on promotion and/or tenure.
2. The faculty member must formally apply for tenure and/or promotion in writing, to be submitted to the Department Head.
3. The department must establish and maintain a mentoring process for tenure-track faculty. Appendix 1 contains recommendations for this faculty mentoring process.
4. A department committee, referred to as the Department Promotion and Tenure Committee, will be constituted to make recommendations of promotion and/or tenure. The committee will not include the Department Head but will consist of:
 - a. a minimum of three tenured department faculty, plus one appointed (by the Dean) member from outside the department, when non-tenured faculty are being evaluated with regard to their progress toward tenure

- b. all departmental tenured faculty (who are not on leave), plus one appointed member from outside of the department, if the committee is to make a recommendation regarding tenure
 - c. all department Professors and Associate Professors (who are not on leave), plus one appointed member from outside of the department, if the committee is to make a recommendation regarding promotion to Associate Professor.
 - d. all department Professors (who are not on leave), plus one appointed member from outside of the department, if the committee is to make a recommendation regarding promotion to Professor.
- 5. Other issues pertaining to membership of the Promotion and Tenure Committee:
 - a. The Dean, upon advice from the College Council, appoints at least one external faculty member at the rank of Professor to each departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee at all times. If the department faculty includes fewer than 4 members eligible for service on the P&T Committee, the Dean will appoint more external members, to bring total membership to at least five (5) individuals. Membership of all tenured departmental faculty, as listed above, is only required for promotion and tenure decisions. In the regular annual appraisals of progress towards tenure and promotion, not all eligible faculty may need to serve, as long as the minimum membership of 5 (with one external Professor) is met.
 - b. Members of the P&T Committee have the right and obligation to read a candidate's files and take part in discussions and votes about annual progress reviews and for discussions and votes about tenure and/or promotion. Their primary inputs are the materials provided by the candidate and the Department Head. If any violations of the NMSU ARP by a candidate are found through the evaluation of their materials, this will be reported by the Committee Chair to the Department Head.
 - c. Any member of the department, College, or University who wishes to convey unsolicited opinions about a candidate's suitability for promotion and/or tenure should discuss their opinions with the Department Head.
 - d. If requested, the P&T Committee will meet with the Department Head, Dean, and/or other comparable administrator to discuss procedural matters.
- 6. The applicant for promotion and/or tenure is responsible for supplying relevant materials to the Department Head and to the committee, following the College guidelines and timeline.
 - a. The NMSU ARP provides guidelines for application portfolio preparation in Chapter 9. The department can provide samples of portfolios, and will seek the written permission of previous portfolio preparers prior to making their samples available to the applicant.
 - b. The applicant may not add to, subtract from, or modify application portfolio contents once the materials have been delivered to the P&T Committee for its

evaluation, at a date agreed to by the Committee Chair and Department Head. Late-breaking developments can be communicated to the P&T Committee through the applicant's individual Promotion and Tenure Canvas page.

- c. If the Department P&T Committee would like to receive additional information from the applicant, the Committee will prepare a letter addressed to the Department Head indicating the additional information desired and a justification for its request for the information. The Department Head will consider the request, and, if in agreement, will convey the request to the candidate, who will have one week to provide the requested information or provide a response indicating why the information cannot or will not be provided.
7. The applicant for promotion and/or tenure may request to review all items included in the portfolio assembled prior to the review by appropriate committees, administrators, and/or external reviewers. Any concerns with the portfolio contents by the candidate should be addressed in writing to the Department Head and the Chair of the P&T Committee, and all responses to the candidate by the Department Head and/or Chair should be in writing.
8. The Department Head will request additional written opinions by obtaining at least three (3) external letters of reference from professional peers and colleagues of the applicant; all solicited letters that are received by the deadline should be included in the package. These letters are not confidential. The letters should address the candidate's research qualifications, and, if applicable, other factors. Candidates may be requested to provide a list of potential outside reviewers to the Department Head, but may not contact the external reviewers regarding the tenure and/or promotion process. External reviewers should be checked to be free of real or perceived conflicts of interest. The Department Head is responsible for determining conflicts of interests. Assuming no conflict of interest exists (where conflict of interest is defined in the NMSU ARP Sections 3.02 and 9.35), at least one of the reviewers provided by the candidate shall be asked to provide a letter. The candidate may also provide a list of external reviewers to *not* contact. Selection of suitable reviewers will primarily be based on the research area of the candidate, but may also include other factors if appropriately documented and explained by the P&T Committee Chair. The selection process of external reviewers will be documented in the recommendation on tenure and/or promotion to be forwarded to the College. It is acceptable if external letters are weighted more towards assessment of research performance than, e.g., to teaching performance. Potential reviewers will be contacted by email or mail, and will be provided instructions:
 - a. to provide a brief statement regarding the individual's qualifications for serving as a reviewer;
 - b. to provide a statement indicating the relationship between the candidate and reviewer;
 - c. notification that the candidate may have an opportunity to read the letter of assessment;

- d. notification that third parties may review the letter in the event of an EEOC or other investigation into a promotion or tenure decision.
- 9. Unsolicited external letters, should they be received by the department prior to or during the department P&T Committee evaluation, will not be provided to nor considered by the Committee.
- 10. The Department Head and the P&T Committee will each submit written recommendations on promotion and/or tenure applications to the Dean with supporting materials. Any minority reports will be included. All materials supplied by the applicant or by the committee will be maintained in a file and will be available for inspection in accordance with college guidelines.
- 11. Additional Promotion and Tenure Application Procedures
 - a. University policies regarding promotion and tenure supersede College and Department policies should there be any difference among the policies of the different units.
 - b. The University's criteria for promotion and tenure are described in Section 9.25 of the NMSU ARP.
 - c. As stated in the NMSU ARP Section 9.35.2 and Section 2.2.2 of this document, extension of the probationary period (number of years prior to applying for tenure) is possible for specific situations as described in that section. A request for an extension must be initiated by the faculty member.
 - d. Per University policy, a faculty member may request a mid-probationary review. This request should be made in writing to the Department Head, following the same timeline as submissions of portfolios for promotion and/or tenure (i.e. request for the mid-probationary review made in the spring, portfolio submission to Department Head in early fall, portfolios reviewed at the department level and submitted to the College in mid-fall).
 - e. All materials submitted by a faculty member seeking promotion and/or tenure are considered confidential, as are the deliberations conducted by the department P&T Committee. Department policies to ensure confidentiality of a candidate's materials include restricting access to the materials on Watermark to only Committee members, and verbal reminders from the Committee Chair at the start of each meeting of the confidential nature of the materials and the discussion.
 - f. The Department's Promotion and Tenure criteria and evaluation methods as articulated in this document are to be reviewed and, if necessary, updated, every five academic years. This review will be initiated and conducted by the Department Head, in consultation with the rest of the faculty. If policies and or methods are changed, then-current faculty who have not yet earned tenure or promotion may select to retain the prior policies for the purpose of their evaluation, or they may choose to accept the new policies. Faculty members will

indicate their choice in response to a letter of inquiry provided to them by the Department Head.

- g. During the evaluation process of a faculty member's application for promotion and/or tenure, the Department Head will meet with the departmental P&T Committee to discuss procedural policies the Committee will follow.
 - h. The deliberations and votes of the departmental P&T Committee will be conducted in closed session and will remain confidential.
 - i. When departmental P&T Committee members vote on applications for promotion or tenure, the member voting **MUST** be present in the meeting room or participating virtually but synchronously, and individuals' votes will be secret (either electronic or written per agreement with the Chair), and the numeric outcome of all votes (number of YES, NO, or ABSTAIN) will be recorded and retained by the Committee Chair.
 - j. The department P&T Committee Chair will prepare a letter, intended for delivery to the Department Head, which reflects the majority view of the Committee in regard to the application being considered. The letter should contain a numeric indication of the outcome of the vote. The letter should contain specific commendations, concerns, and recommendations addressing the department's criteria in each of the areas assessed in the evaluation process. Dissenting opinions should be acknowledged in the letter, with specific indications of which aspects of the criteria apply.
 - k. The Department Head will meet with the applicant and present a copy of the Committee's letter as well as the Department Head's own letter indicating their decision with regard to the application.
 - l. At any time during the application evaluation process, the candidate may withdraw the application for further consideration, as spelled out in the NMSU ARP Section 9.35.7.
 - m. The Department will implement a post-tenure review process in conformity with the University's process as outlined in Section ARP 9.36 of the NMSU Policy Manual.
 - n. If an applicant wishes to appeal one or more aspects of the application review process, the policies outlined in the NMSU ARP Sections 3.25 and 10.60 will apply.
12. Revisions to this document shall be conducted by the P&T Committee in collaboration with the Department Head.
13. With regard to the procedures of meetings of the P&T Committee,
- a. Members of the committee may attend meetings virtually using a modern videoconferencing tool with the permission of the committee chair.

- b. If a vote is to be taken, only committee members who are present (either in person or, if remote, then participating synchronously) may submit a vote. Votes should be confidential and tallied only by the chair of the committee. If votes are submitted to the chair via electronic means, the votes must remain confidential.
 - c. The recommendation letters formulated by the committee should express the majority view, but must also present minority and/or dissenting opinions, if any.
 - d. Conflict of interest policies should be reviewed by all members of the committee annually.
14. The candidate has seven (7) days to provide rebuttal, for the purpose of correcting factual errors only, after receiving recommendations from the Department P&T Committee and the Department Head.
15. The candidate has seven (7) days to provide rebuttal, for the purpose of correcting factual errors only, after receiving recommendations from the College Faculty Affairs Committee and the Dean.

Appendix 1: Faculty Mentoring Guidelines

Mentoring junior faculty is a priority for the entire department. It eases the transition to the department for new faculty and creates a greater sense of community. It is a service to the department and university that should be provided by senior faculty. Mentors play an important role in fostering the professional growth of junior faculty by providing guidance and support in all areas of the professoriate (teaching, research, service and outreach). This can result in the creation of a more welcoming work environment, increased retention, and enhanced skill development.

All tenure-track, college-track, and research-track faculty members hired at the Assistant Professor level will be assigned a mentor (a senior faculty member in the Astronomy Department) by the Department Head. The mentor-mentee relationship normally lasts until a tenure-track faculty member receives tenure, or a college- or research-track faculty member is promoted to the Associate level. At any point a mentee may request a new mentor to be assigned by the Department Head.

There is no single formula for a successful mentor-mentee relationship. Rather than providing a prescriptive list and schedule of required activities for all Astronomy Department mentors and mentees, below is a *suggested* list of topics and a notional schedule for their discussion. Mentors and mentees are expected to meet at least four times during the first year of a junior faculty member's appointment (more if both parties agree!). Beyond that, the meeting cadence and topics should be agreed upon by each mentor-mentee pair at the start of each academic year.

Example topics:

- Effort Allocation
- Familiarization with Watermark
- Department Functions & Criteria document
- Graduate student mentoring
- Research
 - grant proposals (create a list of grants to apply for, including Cottrell, foundations, early-career opportunities, etc.)
 - APO proposals
 - other commitments
 - prioritization: how to get grant proposal submitted and first-author papers published in first years
- Teaching
 - Canvas familiarization

- ideas on efficient grading
 - managing expectations from students
- The role of collegiality as it pertains to teaching, scholarship, service and outreach
- Work-life satisfaction

Example meeting schedule:

1. late August - early September
 - Effort Allocation (review whatever was negotiated w/Department Head)
 - graduate student mentoring: scheduling, research scope, expectations
 - research, esp. APO proposals & fall grants
2. late November - early December
 - work-life satisfaction
 - interactions with different constituents within the academic environment
 - ASTR teaching (sub-topics above)
 - Check in on research progress, prioritization
 - Functions & Criteria Document
 - Watermark
3. February (after having started teaching)
 - ASTR teaching (sub-topics above)
 - re-prioritizing admin/teaching/research while Instructor of Record
4. April - May
 - Check in on research progress
 - graduate student mentoring: successes & failures
 - work-life satisfaction

NMSU Department of Astronomy

Functions and Criteria

Enrico Pontelli
Dean
College of Arts and Sciences


Enrico Pontelli (Aug 16, 2026 13:42:13 MDT)

Jason Jackiewicz
Department Head
Astronomy



16-Aug-2026