

3.5.7 Guidelines for Establishing and Filling Positions in the Professor of Practice Title Series

Executive Summary

- A. Definition
- B. Establishment of a Position
- C. Initial Appointment
- D. Areas of Activity
- E. Academic Rank and Criteria
- F. Performance Evaluation
- G. Terms and Continuation of Appointment
- H. Dismissal
- I. Noncontinuation of Appointment
- J. Conditions of Appointment
- K. University Membership
- L. Change from Nontenure-Track to Tenure-Track Faculty
- M. AAUP Guidelines

Executive Summary

As it has for many of our aspirational peers, the creation of the Professor of Practice nontenure-track title will enhance the educational mission of Auburn University. Students and faculty alike will benefit from the presence of both part-time and full-time professionals who can bring a wealth of practical and specialized experience from their professional careers. This title is unlike other nontenure-track title series in that it (1) is not limited to full-time assignments, (2) does not provide for tenure or promotion, and (3) is specifically designed to bring highly qualified professionals with a depth of practical experience into the university to better enable our students and faculty to succeed in their respective roles. Moreover, professors of practice are common in many academic and professional programs, such as journalism or entrepreneurial programs that engage entrepreneurs to mentor student start-up companies in research park incubators.

- A. **Definition:** Appointees in the Professor of Practice series are distinguished professionals, either practicing or retired, who have significant professional experience. They may be distinguished as leaders in technology, business, government, the military or other professional fields. Professors of Practice may promote the integration of academic scholarship with practical experience and may provide faculty, undergraduate students, and graduate students with an understanding of the practical applications of a particular field or discipline. Professors of Practice may teach courses (for which they have the proper credentials based on accreditation requirements), advise students and faculty, and collaborate in areas directly related to their expertise and experience in their fields or disciplines including research and outreach. This is a non-tenurable appointment in either a full-time or part-time position. No unit is required to create Professor of Practice positions.

Professors of Practice, though distinguished professionals, either practicing or retired, do not have traditional academic backgrounds, so they would generally not meet the criteria to be appointed in Auburn's current Clinical, Lecturer, Research, or Instructor title series.

Rather than focusing on traditional academic topics, courses taught by Professors of Practice would enhance students' understanding of practical applications of the relevant fields of study and would advance the integration of academic scholarship with practical experience by drawing upon the extensive applied experience of distinguished professionals.

Professors of Practice will not teach courses that are part of Auburn's core curriculum. They will teach only courses that relate directly to their particular areas of expertise and professional experiences. These courses could usually be offered only by appointing a Professor of Practice.

- B. **Establishment of a Position:** To establish a Professor of Practice position, the initiating unit shall (1) prepare a proposal demonstrating the need for such a position, including a clear indication of why the Professor of Practice is needed rather than a clinical, research, lecturer or tenure track title, and indicate the source, amount, and term of funding [note that Professor of Practice positions should not be used to replace or as a substitute for tenure track positions]; (2) prepare a job description and identify any physical space that is needed for the performance of the practice; and (3) obtain approvals of the proposal by the chief administrative officer of the concerned unit, the dean of the college/school, and the provost. Each unit will decide (with approval from the Office of AAEEEO) to advertise the position locally, regionally or nationally, depending upon what the unit faculty determine to be most appropriate for the position. The proposal shall be transmitted to dean of the college/school by the department head/chair or unit head with his or her indication that faculty have approved the position. Joint appointments require the approval of all deans involved.

Professor of Practice salaries will be set by the hiring units but units are encouraged to protect the funding for current faculty positions so as not to disadvantage clinical, research, lecturer or tenure track funding sources.

- C. **Initial Appointment:** Colleges, Schools and other units have some flexibility in establishing the procedures most appropriate for their particular circumstances. The unit might act as a committee of the whole or smaller screening committees might be used; a recommendation by a search committee might be transmitted to the department or unit as a whole for further consideration and then transmitted to the department head/chair or unit head: or or or it might be transmitted directly to the department head/chair or unit head. Whatever the procedure, it should be established in advance of need by the department or unit as a whole. The dean or unit head, in consultation with his or her faculty, should decide on the positions needed and the qualifications a successful candidate must have. Together they should develop a position description to be supplied to the candidates.

The unit head and the search committee shall be guided by the Provost's Office and Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Office in framing an advertisement for the position, in seeking permission to advertise, and in recommending an appointment. Guidelines from the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Office help ensure compliance with federal law and help ensure an open and fair search.

When making recommendations for appointments in the unit, the head/chair or unit head shall confer with all available members of the department holding professorial ranks or, if the unit does not include professorial faculty, with those faculty holding continuing appointments. He or she shall then transmit a written summary of the reactions of these faculty members along with appointment forms, through the appropriate dean and/or director, to the provost. Where the faculty members do not concur in an initial appointment, the head/chair or unit head may submit a recommendation for appointment with his or her justification and a report of non-concurrence of the faculty.

Each initial appointment must be confirmed by the appropriate department head/chair/unit head

or dean in a written notice to the appointee after proper administrative approvals have been obtained. This letter constitutes the faculty member's terms of initial employment.

- D. **Areas of Activity:** Two areas of activity are important in the evaluation of individuals for appointment as Professors of Practice: (1) documented evidence of effective practice; and (2) documented evidence of other appropriate endeavors as relevant to the position.
- E. **Academic Rank and Criteria:** The Professor of Practice is the only academic rank title in this series. Although it is not feasible to specify exact criteria for evaluating the credentials of an individual for appointment, the following statements are provided as guidelines.

Professor of Practice: This nontenure-track faculty appointment is designated for those with an emphasis on the teaching, research, outreach, or mentorship at Auburn University who are qualified in their discipline/field. The appointments are not tenurable and are generally made on an annual basis with no right or expectation of employment beyond the period specified in the letter of appointment. These appointments may be renewable contingent upon availability of funds, the need for services, and/or evaluation of performance.

There is no promotion possible beyond professor of practice and; therefore, this title may be less desirable than the clinical, research or lecturer title series options.

- F. **Performance Evaluation:** Each department will have an annual evaluation system that includes student, peer, and administrator input. Evaluation metrics should be parallel to department faculty with similar duties and should be determined by the individual department or college.

All department heads/chairs and unit heads, such as center and institute directors, shall conduct at least one annual evaluation as described in this *Faculty Handbook* with each faculty member to evaluate his or her performance and to discuss his or her future development.

For the review, the faculty member will provide a current vita and any supporting material the head/chair or unit head or the faculty member deems appropriate.

The head/chair or unit head shall prepare a written report covering the major points of the conference. A copy of the report shall be provided to the faculty member within a week of the conference. The faculty member shall be asked to sign it as confirmation of having seen it. If the faculty member does not agree with material in the report, he or she may write a response to be appended to the report. One copy of the signed report and response, if there is one, is to be retained for the faculty member's departmental personnel file and copied to the Office of the Provost; another copy is to be given to the faculty member. This report is to remain confidential to the extent permitted by law, available only for the use of the concerned faculty member and appropriate University officials.

- G. **Terms and Continuation of Appointment:** Professors of Practice will be appointed with annual written contracts. The following principles outline the policy on continuation of the contract for Professor of Practice faculty members:

Professor of Practice positions are normally two semester contracts that may be renewed annually or, if for a lesser period of time, the period of funding from the contract, grant, or other designated funds.

Renewal is contingent upon need for services, the availability of funding and satisfactory performance.

All department heads/chairs and unit heads shall conduct at least one annual review before April 30th with each faculty member to evaluate his or her performance and to discuss his or her future development.

In order to review the faculty member fairly, the head/chair or unit head shall request a current vita and any supporting material the head/chair or unit head of the faculty member deems appropriate prior to the review. More frequent reviews may be conducted at the discretion of the faculty member or the department head/chair.

The initial letter of appointment should clearly define the length of the appointment, benefits, and duties/responsibilities. The offer letter should make clear that continuation of appointment is subject to the availability of funds, the need for services, and satisfactory performance.

In addition to annual review by the department or unit head/chair, unit faculty will also periodically review the Professor of Practice holders (e.g. after the first appointment is concluded and then every 2 to 3 years thereafter).

Letters containing commitments not consistent with these procedures are not enforceable unless authorized in writing by the president of Auburn University.

- H. **Dismissal:** Termination of Professor of Practice during the contract term shall be effected by the University only for lack of funding or adequate cause. If termination during the contract term is for reasons other than lack of funding, then Chapter 3, Section 9.2 of this *Faculty Handbook* provides that “Rights of due process shall also apply to a nontenured faculty member dismissed before completion of his or her contractual term.” Dismissal shall not be used to restrain faculty members in their exercise of academic freedom or other rights of American citizens.
- I. **Noncontinuation of Appointment:** The standard contractual period for Professor of Practice faculty is two semesters and the university retains the right to continue or noncontinue the appointment of a Professor of Practice faculty member.
- J. **Conditions of Appointment:** A faculty member on full-time appointment as a Professor of Practice is eligible for benefits as provided for in this handbook or in other applicable University policies, with the exception of tenure, de facto tenure, and professional improvement leave. University contributions toward retirement, social security, annual and sick leave, and insurance benefits shall be covered through the contract, grant, generated income, or other designated funds that provide support for the position.
- K. **University Membership:** A full-time Professor of Practice may be eligible to vote on faculty matters according to department and/or school/college governance rules; this may include the ability to serve on committees. If they teach, Professor of Practice faculty members are encouraged to improve their instructional qualifications and are eligible for departmental/college resources earmarked for such purposes; this may include eligibility for travel and other resources.
- L. **Change from Nontenure-Track to Tenure-Track Faculty:** An appointment of a Professor of Practice to tenure-track faculty may only occur through standard, institutionally endorsed hiring procedures for tenure-track positions. Professor of Practice time will not count toward years in rank for tenure and promotion purposes.

M. **AAUP Guidelines:** Auburn endorses AAUP guidelines stating that no more than 15 percent of the total instruction within an institution and no more than 25 percent of the total instruction within any department should be provided by faculty with nontenure-track appointments. In Auburn University's efforts to adhere to these guidelines, any exceptions to these percentages must be approved in writing by the provost.

Approved 4/11/19 by President Leath