



## **Toward best practices for promotion to full professor guidelines at research universities**

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### **Abstract**

Many scholars that study the professoriate and faculty careers have found a lack of clarity regarding policies for promotion to full professor at American colleges and universities. This issue is significant and needs further investigation because various studies have reported evidence of faculty career stagnation as a growing number of associate professors are not being promoted to the rank of full professor. This stagnation particularly affects women and people of color. Full professorship is often viewed as an important prerequisite for future opportunities and professional growth in academic leadership. The purpose of this study was to identify best practices in presenting clear promotion guidelines for the rank of full professor at U.S. research

universities. Utilizing content and rhetorical analysis as research methodologies, the authors analyze the promotion to full professor policies at institutions classified by as R2: Doctoral universities with high research activity.

Keywords: Professor, Full Professor, Faculty, Promotion Guidelines, Research Universities

## Introduction

Across research universities in the United States, the standards and qualifications needed for promotion to full professor vary in language specification (Williams, 2016). It is not always clear what factors into the decision-making process to advance associate professors to the rank of full professor. Research shows that policies for promotion to associate professor and tenure are more clearly expressed. Kulp, Wolf-Wendel, and Smith (2019) posit that this is the case because the reality of not earning tenure can have a more detrimental impact on a faculty member's career (i.e. faculty member loses their position; may be seen as less desirable as a potential faculty member at a different institution because they did not receive tenure at their previous institution, etc.).

Although there continues to be a dearth of scholarship on the topic of advancement to full professor positions (Finnegan, & Hyle, 2009; Geisler, Kaminski, & Berkley, 2007; Olsen, Kyvik, & Hovdhaugen, 2005), recently there has been a burgeoning literature base that addresses this issue (Buch, Huet, Rorrer, & Roberson, 2011; Chambers & Freeman, 2020; Crawford, Burns, & McNamara, 2012; Freeman & Chambers, In-Press; Gardner & Blackstone, 2013; Gardner & Blackstone, 2017; Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011). However, the authors of this manuscript were unable to find literature directly addressing policies that impact the advancement to the rank of full professor. The purpose of this study was to identify best practices in presenting clear promotion guidelines for the rank of full professor at U.S. research universities. To discern trends in promotion to full professor policies, we identified promotion guidelines from 134 institutions that were classified as R2: Doctoral Universities with High research activity in the United States and existing literature on the topic of promotion to full professor.

Without transparent language on rank advancement, mid-career faculty members can become stagnant in their positions (Wilson, 2012). While pre-tenured faculty may have a sense of what to do to attain tenure status, the absence of clear guidelines for promotion to a full professorship can leave associate professors in a vulnerable position, particularly faculty who have been in the rank of associate for an extended period of time. Notably, what is considered *an extended period of time* to be an associate professor is not fully clear; however, there is a general, though unofficial, expectation that any time beyond six or seven years may be longer than what is considered ideal (Baker, 2020). These realities can result in faculty having no sense or clear way of knowing how to advance to the rank of full professor. This includes the unwritten expectations and rules that are not explicitly articulated within college, school, department, or program handbooks, but are still otherwise expected to be adhered to (i.e. the body of evidence (the dossier's contents) considered in making promotion decisions)(Kulp et al., 2019; Matthews, 2016). Women and people of color are disproportionately affected by this, as they are already typically underrepresented in academia, especially in higher ranks (Chambers & Freeman, 2020; Freeman & Chambers, In-Press; Kulp et al., 2019; Williams, 2009). The absence of clear

language on the subject then creates loopholes that can make the advancement of these minoritized groups more difficult than what is experienced by white colleagues.

It takes an average of 3.5 years longer for women to be promoted to the rank of professor than men, despite holding similar qualifications (Modern Language Association of America, 2009). Similarly, while 75% of all U.S. full-time faculty are White, they represent 81.5% of all tenured faculty (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). When criteria are not explicitly defined and are purposefully vague, it can unintentionally or intentionally operate as a barrier for promotion in rank. As Williams (2016) wrote, “the path that scholars must follow to join their ranks [full professor] is hardly clear-cut, which can make it more difficult for some people — particularly women and minorities — to get there” (para. 2).

The importance of this research is primarily for mid-career faculty looking to advance to the rank of full professor and academic administrators and faculty who influence and/or determine the language used in guidelines for advancement. Determining what clarity should be in terms of guidelines for career advancement and using that to determine clearer criteria for said advancement removes lack of transparency as a barrier. Another factor of importance is that without advancement to full professor, future opportunities are blocked. For example, without being able to advance to full professor, some faculty members are unable to serve on important committees within their university, serve in some administrative capacities, and receive the salary raise that is generally associated with such a promotion (Academia, 2013). This stagnation, in some circumstances, holds mid-career faculty back from serving on high level executive committees within their field and disciplinary associations (as this rank signals that a faculty member is a senior scholar) (T. E. Dancy, personal communication, September 12, 2017).

### **Methods and Findings**

We used both document and rhetorical analysis as the research methodologies for this project. According to Bowen (2009), “document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material” (p. 27). In this study, the physical evidence documents that were evaluated were faculty handbooks that include policies that guide the promotion process for candidates for full professor. The other methodology that we used in this study was rhetorical analysis which enabled us to make sense of the intentions of the writer, discern who the audience of the document was, and interpret the actual message that was sent (Smith, n.d.). This was done to determine what ideas are transmitted and the level of clarity of the message (i.e. promotion policies). Both methodologies are appropriate for this study because each helped us address the purpose of the study, which was to identify best practices in presenting clear promotion guidelines for the rank of full professor at U.S. research universities.

We, the authors, will be presenting our methods and findings in an atypical fashion. First, we present the steps of our analysis process and then we will present the results we found in direct response to each step within the analysis processes. For example, in the next section we describe what document analysis is and then we share what we found in completing that step. Notably, some of the headings that we draw from O’Leary’s (2014) process below may be less common language than what is typical in many research articles; for example, consistent with step 4, we include a section called *research skill*. We also share a *backup plan*, which is consistent with step 8.

## **Document Analysis**

We used O’Leary’s (2014) eight step process as a guide to engage in the initial document analysis process, which were:

1. Gather relevant texts (i.e. policies for promotion to full professor).
2. Develop an organization and management scheme; with attention to linguistic or cultural barriers.
3. Acknowledge and address biases (Authors’ Positionalities).
4. Develop appropriate skills for research.
5. Consider strategies for ensuring credibility.
6. Know the data one is searching for.
7. Consider ethical issues (e.g., confidential documents).
8. Have a backup plan.

Below we will describe how we applied and addressed each step to this study.

## **Relevant Texts**

After completing an initial literature review, we started the document collection process by accessing faculty handbooks of 134 institutions that were classified as R2: Doctoral Universities with High research activity in the United States and examined the language used in guidelines for promotion to full professor. This sample was determined by utilizing the list of institutions described and identified by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions (2017) as R2: Doctoral Universities with High research activity. We accessed these documents by reviewing institutional websites using search terms such as “faculty handbook,” “faculty and staff handbook,” and “faculty promotion and tenure guidelines”.

## **Organization and Management Scheme**

We collated information on an excel sheet of all 134 research institutions. We assigned and placed each institution into one of three categories. The first category’s websites provided no information on faculty promotion expectations due to the fact that the link or website required a login/password/residency for that specific institution. The second category listed the websites that provided some general information with few specifics or distinctions between expectations for promotion to full professor. And category three included the website links to the faculty handbooks that provided little to no information regarding the expectations of faculty promotion to full professor. We initially identified 134 institutions; from that sample, 85 of those institutions have very little or no information on faculty promotion expectations. This left us with 49 possible institutional handbooks to review. Then as we evaluated the remaining handbooks, 38 of them had some general information yet had few specifics and/or distinctions between expectations for tenure, promotion to associate professor or full professor. The remaining 12 handbooks provided clear procedural instructions (timelines, committee composition, etc.) and 11 provided explicit policies for promotion to full professor.

## **Annotation and Authenticity of Documents**

All of the institutional websites associated with our listing were visited. We were able to assess the authenticity of the website links to verify the documents were retrieved from each R2: Doctoral Universities’ websites. Once we identified information that addressed faculty promotion guidelines, we printed out paper copies of the originals for annotation.

### **Authors' Agenda and Biases**

The first author of this manuscript is a tenured associate professor who studies issues related to the advancement of faculty careers and also plans to apply for promotion to full professor in the future. The second author is an associate professor who is also currently working toward full professor in the future. The third author is a masters student and research assistant. This indeed informs our perspective regarding this topic and paper. To ensure that their analysis of the data was reliable and credible, the first author had the third author assist with the initial analysis. After which, an external expert reviewed the authors' analysis process to confirm and validate the findings.

### **Research Skill**

The first author is an established and experienced research methodologist, having taught both courses that included qualitative and quantitative research methodologies at the graduate level. He has also been trained in historical and indigenous research methods. This background prepared him to conduct the analysis with the third author who was developing and enhancing their research skills through this project.

### **Credibility**

We utilized an unobtrusive method to obtain the documentation for this study. To establish and safeguard the credibility of the data for this study, we only used official documentation (faculty & staff handbooks) retrieved from university websites. Documents derived from these sources were deemed credible sources.

### **Data Search**

We searched university websites to find information explaining policies and guidelines that addressed expectations for faculty promotion to full professor. Although we were unable to access the policies of all R2 institutions, of the ones we were able to access and assess, the guidelines were found in their faculty and staff handbooks.

### **Ethical Issues**

Given that we used an unobtrusive approach to collect the documentation to analyze, one of the potential limitations is “not take(ing) into account the subtleties of meaning” (Trochim, 2006, para. 13). To address this challenge, we also conducted a rhetorical analysis to make sense of the nuances and meanings of words utilized in the construction of each policy and guideline.

### **Backup Plan**

If we were unable to find significant documentation that included policies at R2 institutions, our backup plan for this study was to find a way to evaluate the policies at R1 institutions. However, the backup plan was not needed or used.

### **Rhetorical Analysis**

We assessed and analyzed the information by hand coding and triangulating the findings amongst the co-authors and one colleague to ensure reliability and validity of the information (Golafshani, 2003). We engaged in the rhetorical analysis process by applying the following questions which were informed by Smith's (n.d.) work to the policies outlined by each institution. The questions included the following:

- a. Where is this published? What does that say about the importance of the policies?

- b. What did we expect to see that was not in the policies?
- c. How were the policies presented? Was it neatly done? Was the information written with clear and precise language?
- d. Are expectations clearly presented? Are these expectations strong, obvious?

**Where were the policies published? Who produced the policy?**

We were able to discover who and from what office produced the documents that detailed the expectations for promotion to full professor. Many of the documents were easily accessible as we drew them from institutional websites. However, finding specific language related to guidelines for promotion to full professor were not. This aligns with what some scholars have found,

I often hear from mid-career faculty that a big issue is lack of clarity about where to even find this information and how well labeled the relevant information is within the document in which promotion to full criteria are noted (V. L. Baker, personal communication, April 25, 2020).

This information was often provided within the faculty handbooks, as part of the introduction section. There were 5 categories that each of the remaining 38 universities’ documents fit into: Office of the Provost, Office of the President, Faculty Senate, Human Resources, and a Specific College/School. It was important to identify who or what office produced each document in order to understand the intent behind the information. Almost 80% of the policies were located on their office of the president or provost websites. This signaled the importance of these documents and the policies within them to executive level leadership.

**Table 1: Production of Documents**

<b>WHO PRODUCED THE DOCUMENT?</b>	<b>NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES</b>
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST	17 Universities   45%
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT	11 Universities   29%
FACULTY SENATE	4 Universities   10%
HUMAN RESOURCES	3 Universities   8%
SPECIFIC COLLEGE/SCHOOL	3 Universities   8%

After reviewing the information regarding promotion to full professor, we went through the policies to see when they were last revised or updated. We divided this information into two categories: updates or revisions within the last 5 years (2014-2019) and updates or revisions outside of 5 years (X-2013). It was important to identify when the policy was last updated to ensure its accuracy and relevancy (if it was a present application) in the current structures of the universities.

**Table 2: Updated Date**

<b>5&gt; Years [X-2013]</b>	<b>5&lt; Years [2014-2019]</b>
<i>9 Universities   24%</i>	<i>29 Universities   76%</i>

**How were policies presented?**

We were able to narrow down the number of universities which provided expectations for the rank of professor/ full professor by searching for universities that provided specific/detailed expectations by rank. The specific/detailed expectations that we looked for were required years of service, types of publications, and/or a specific number or range of productivity. Of the 38 universities, 24 (63%) of universities qualified as providing one or more of the expectations listed above.

We went through each document to discern which universities provided explicit expectations for the rank of professor or full professor. We discovered that 38 universities provided some general information with few specifics and/or distinctions for the promotion of full professor. Of the 38 universities, 34 (89%) universities provided enough expectations to understand what was required for the rank of professor/full professor. We were able to identify these 34 (89%) universities because they provided vague yet high expectations around teaching, service, leadership and/or research without any explicit requirements such as length of service at that specific university, number of publications needed or range of productivity, etc.

We examined the tone of the language used in the documents that outlined the expectations for the rank of professor/full professor. This proved to be the most complicated aspect of the study, as we were concerned that the terms that were used were both specific and yet encouraging/inviting. Specifically, the language was supportive of those considering and/or wanting to pursue promotion to full professor. Yet, the complexity emanated from the use of terms such as “must” and “shall”. These terms can be used in a verb form such as, “faculty *must* have at least 5 years at the rank of associate professor,” which is disinviting because usage of “must” in this sentence is restrictive. However, although it is restrictive, it provides clarity because such terms lead to and gives the reader clear expectations. While terms such as “may” can seem more inviting on the surface, they are less definitive and can be subject to different interpretations.

**Provides explicit procedural steps for promotion**

After reviewing all documents, we were able to ascertain the number of promotions to full professor guidelines that also provided explicit procedural steps for the promotion. Out of the 38 institutions that provided some general information regarding expectations for tenure, promotion to associate professor or full professor, 12 (32%) of the universities incorporated explicit procedural steps along with the expectations for the promotion to full professor. The procedural steps for the promotion to full professor included but were not limited to the personnel or committees involved, the timeline, and/or the application or documents required; of particular

note, institutions such as Baylor, Chapman, Cleveland State, and Clark Universities, provided specific dates as benchmarks describing such information.

### **Clarity of expectations**

Out of the 38 institutions that provided some general information regarding expectations for tenure, promotion to associate professor or full professor, 11 provided what we believed to be clear expectations for guidelines. For the sake of this study, we defined clarity of promotion guidelines for full professor to be when a policy provided explicit expectations and criteria that faculty would need to meet to earn the rank of full professor. For instance, we looked for examples of institutions providing transparent policy information, such as specific criteria for years of service, number and type of publications, and quantitative and qualitative measures for teaching, service and outreach in order to be considered for promotion to full professor.

Toward an understanding of our assessment criteria for clarity in this study, we provide one example of an institution that provides clear policies, East Tennessee State University (ETSU). We found that ETSU met our definition of clarity for promotion in the following ways, a) they provided specific quantitative expectations for publication output, b) provided specific quantitative and qualitative expectations for teaching, c) provided specific criteria for number of years of service, and d) provided examples of various ways that each set of criteria could be met.

The strength of their handbook was that all of the promotion to full guidelines across the university were in one place and accessible, which was in one 500-plus page faculty handbook. In addition to the university-wide guidelines, specific departments and/or colleges and schools also provided their own guidelines. However, all guidelines were open and transparent as a faculty member could access the guidelines easily. Additionally, the university-wide guidelines and guidelines at the lower levels (program, department, school or college) were clear and explicit about their expectations. In table 4, we provide the promotion guidelines to full professor ETSU's department of Counseling and Health Services.

**Table 3: ETSU (2017) Department of Counseling & Human Services' Guidelines for Promotion from Associate Professor to Full Professor**

#### **Qualitative Expectations in Teaching**

1. A clearly articulated statement describing the evolution of the faculty member's teaching philosophy and pedagogical development, including what has informed this development, and a self-evaluation of how the teaching philosophy has been pragmatically applied.
2. Consistently good/positive written evaluations from students (both formally and informally obtained).
3. Consistently meets and/or exceeds expectations in teaching as evidenced by written evaluations from the Chair of the Department and Program/Department peers (Peer Review/Evaluation of Teaching).
4. Documented participation in activities leading to improvement or innovation in pedagogy and/or teaching effectiveness within their subject area. Documentation of the integration of feedback and new learning from any of the following into pedagogy, teaching methods, and skills over the period of review is expected:



<p>(a) participation (enrollment/attendance) in courses, conferences, and/or seminars reflecting effective and innovative teaching strategies and/or pedagogy, (b) participation in seminars/courses focused on technology use in the classroom, (c) consultation regarding course development and teaching methods,</p> <p>(d) provision of presentations/workshops on pedagogy delivery, teaching, and learning strategies within the subject area,</p> <p>(e) creation and teaching of new courses,</p> <p>(f) conversion and teaching of face to face courses to online delivery (or vice versa),</p> <p>(g) observations and assistance in professional development of new professors or other colleagues,</p> <p>(h) awards for teaching.</p>
<p><b>Quantitative Expectations in Teaching</b></p> <p>1. Formal Instructor Ratings (e.g., from the SAI's) in the range from agree to strongly agree in at least 80% of the tenure-review period.</p> <p>Qualitative Expectations in Research and Scholarly Activity</p>
<p><b>Qualitative Expectations in Research and Scholarly Activity</b></p> <p>1. A clearly defined research and scholarly activities plan (perhaps broadly defined within one's primary discipline), complete with a focus on what kind of voice the person wishes to have and what kind of contribution the person wishes to make to her or his field.</p>
<p><b>Quantitative Expectations in Research and Scholarly Activity</b></p> <p>1. During the five years between achieving the rank of Associate Professor and the Application for Full Professor, at least five articles, chapters, or grants* (or any combination of five) published, accepted for publication, or awarded a grant in national or international refereed journals, national publishers, or external grant-funding agencies, respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For those who apply more than five years after receiving promotion to Associate Professor, the quantity expected for promotion shall be at least five articles, chapters, or grants* (or any combination of five) published, accepted for publication, or awarded in national or international refereed journals, national publishers, or external grant-funding agencies, respectively, in the previous six years.</li> </ul> <p>*Equivalencies:</p> <p>1) A nationally published book or textbook in which the faculty member is a first or second author will count as the equivalent of two articles, chapters, or grants.</p> <p>2) Any two of the following shall count as the equivalent of one of the five-plus required articles, chapters, or grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) serving on an editorial board of a national or international refereed journal; (b) Presentation of a refereed paper or a competitively selected poster or convention presentation at a national or international professional meeting;</li> <li>(c) article in state or regional refereed journals;</li> <li>(d) submission of an external grant;</li> <li>(e) professional audio or video tapes;</li> <li>(f) development of computer software related to the person's discipline or other technology related to academic life;</li> <li>(g) the attainment of an internal research grant.</li> </ul> <p>3) Should a publication of research or scholarly work be recognized by other professionals in the field as a seminal work making a significant contribution in the field through any of the following documentation:</p>

- (a) extensive citation of the work in other research and scholarly work in the profession,
- (b) recognition of the work through national award(s),
- (c) independent review of the work by at least three reputable members of the faculty member's discipline, will count as the equivalent of one of the five-plus required articles, chapters, or grants.

\*\*The following items may be added to supplement the above requirements, but they are in no case a substitution for the above requirements in research and scholarly activities:

- A review by two people from the faculty member's discipline is helpful in validating that the articles, chapters, or grants associated with the faculty member make a professional contribution to the field of study.
- Serving on editorial boards for state or regional professional journals.
- Presentations of papers at local, state, or regional professional meetings.
- Research or scholarly efforts in progress, but not yet accepted for publication.
- Support for and mentoring of student research, theses, or dissertations.
- Articles, chapters, or books published in newspapers, local journals, or privately/personally.

### **Qualitative Expectations in Service**

1. A clearly defined service plan, complete with a focus on meeting the needs of the program, department, college, university, and professional discipline.
2. Active participation and responsibility in three of the following:
  - a. the faculty member's assigned Program area, (Note: Student advisement is considered an element of Program service.)
  - b. the Department
  - c. the College
  - d. the University area,
  - e. Professional associations,
  - f. the Community area.
3. Leadership in 1 area listed in #2.
4. Support letters that specifically address quality of service in any professional area in which service is offered.

### **Quantitative Expectations in Service**

1. Documentation of service involvement through
  - (a) number of advisees, examples of advisement records, etc.;
  - (b) minutes;
  - (c) brochures;
  - (d) surveys conducted;
  - (e) recruitment letters;
  - (f) PowerPoint;
  - (g) committee rosters;
  - (h) newsletters; etc.
2. Membership in one (1) professional organization related to discipline.
3. Documentation (e.g., evaluation data, presentation materials, etc.) from non-refereed professional presentations.

The first thing that ETSU does well is that they specifically separate and label a section within their faculty handbook, *To Gain Promotion from Associate Professor to Full Professor*. Second, they provide both quantitative and qualitative metrics that provide clear expectations for those aspiring to full professor to be able to review. Third, the quantitative options are specific, particularly for publications. For instance, under the section, *Quantitative Expectations in Research and Scholarly Activity*, it says,

For those who apply more than five years after receiving promotion to Associate Professor, the quantity expected for promotion shall be at least five articles, chapters, or grants (or any combination of five) published, accepted for publication, or awarded in national or international refereed journals, national publishers, or external grant-funding agencies, respectively, in the previous six years.

And lastly, ETSU provides what they describe as “equivalencies” to accommodate disciplinary differences.

### **Limitations**

As with any research study of this nature, there are some limitations. We engaged in document and rhetorical analysis processes based on written policies exclusively. Given time and resource constraints, we were unable to survey or interview faculty or academic administrators who were impacted by these policies to ask their opinions regarding the clarity and effectiveness of the policies. But the authors recognize this is the logical next iteration to this study.

### **Discussion and Implications**

This study provides an example of an institution providing explicit expectations for promotion to full professor. East Tennessee State University outlines qualitative and quantitative expectations for teaching, research and scholarly activity, and service. Within these expectations, there are clear requirements of years of service, number and type of publications, and scholarly work in order to be considered for promotion to full professor. Other higher education institutions and faculty can learn from institutions such as ETSU regarding developing or enhancing their expectations and guidelines for promotion to full professor. Particularly, it is useful to have all guidelines in one overarching handbook that is accessible via the university website. With explicit expectations and guidelines clearly outlined in university policy, faculty can fully understand what is required of them to receive the promotion to full professor.

When policies are explicit with clear expectations for promotion to full professor, it doesn't contribute to the already existing barriers that may discourage potential aspirants. Promotion to full professor policies can especially effect female faculty and faculty of color, who already face barriers with mid-career advancement.

Baylor, Chapman, Cleveland State, and Clark Universities are notable examples of institutions that provide their faculty with procedural steps that include information such as the personnel or committees involved, the timeline, and/or the application or documents required. Faculty senates at other higher education institutions can advocate for changes and improvements to promotion

to full professor policies; because promotion policies affect the faculty, faculty senates should become aware of how these policies negatively and positively impact all faculty, including female faculty and faculty of color. Offices of the President, Provost and Faculty Senates are in the positions to become aware of existing barriers to the attainment of the rank of full professor and change these policies so that they are clearer. With a hands-on approach, faculty can request that policies have explicit expectations that are clearly understood to candidates trying to get the promotion to full professor.

### **Recommendation and Conclusion**

We provide the following as a model/initial first steps for academic administrators, faculty developers, and personnel committee members to consider when seeking to revise and enhance their campus policies, associated language, etc. related to promotion to full professor.

1. Convene a committee which could include full professors, academic administrators, faculty developers, and personnel committee members to review all institutional policies related to promotion to full professor.
2. Use as a criteria and principles for revision that promotion to full guidelines need to provide explicit expectations for years of service, number and type of publications, quantitative and qualitative measures for teaching, service and outreach.
3. Recognize that promotion to full professor guidelines should be clearest at the program, unit, and/or department levels, meaning that the criteria should be field and discipline specific. School, college, and university-level expectations for promotion to full professor guidelines should be less prescriptive. However, continuity between all levels of guidelines should be maintained.
4. Present expectations for full professor to all faculty. Instead of just introducing promotion guidelines to faculty once they indicate interest in promotion to full professor. Expectations should be explained and presented to all faculty to create a culture of transparency and expectation that the institution expects and desires that their full-time faculty set achieving the rank of full professor as a career goal.
5. Lastly, the promotion to full professor criteria could be integrated into faculty annual reviews post tenure. Although we recognize that not all associate professors desire to become full professors, we believe it is important that they are aware of the opportunity for them to achieve that rank, if they so choose. Department chairs/heads should also be responsible with orienting and reminding their faculty of the opportunity and expectation for promotion during these annual reviews.

Academic administrators and faculty who influence and/or determine the language used in promotion policy need to advocate for clear criteria and transparency for promotion to full professor. This will remove barriers for mid-career advancement and enable professors to earn higher status within in their disciplinary fields and institutions and receive the salary raise most often associated with promotion to full professor (Weyland, 2015). Additionally, it is important to reiterate that there is a dearth of scholarship on this topic and limitations in what is shared on university websites related to full professor promotion policies. As such, in addition to the recommendation above, we strongly recommend that more research is needed in this area that

accesses the voices and experiences of faculty and administrators related to full professor promotion guidelines. Moreover, there isn't a lot of information on university websites about full professor guidelines, and some would say that this is intentional (Williams, 2016); hence the need in future research to directly access the perspectives of faculty and administrators who must navigate this intentionally vague context.

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