Guidelines for Instructor Promotion
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Virginia Tech

Overview
The purpose of this document is to present guidelines for the process and criteria for promotion within the instructor ranks for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Promotion of an instructor to a higher rank is granted to those who have demonstrated excellence in instructional responsibilities, show significant evidence of teaching scholarship, and participate substantially in fundamental department activities related to teaching. Eligibility for promotion is limited to instructors on regular (rather than restricted) contracts. Faculty who are currently on restricted positions and cannot participate in the current two-year window of opportunity to receive promotions to either rank will be treated as new hires if their positions are later converted to regular positions. Their previous service to Virginia Tech and other institutions will be considered and they will be eligible for appointment to all ranks based on their achievements and service as indicated in the instructor career path document approved by the VT Board of Visitors.

Introduction
The job responsibilities of a person appointed to one of the instructor ranks in an academic department are focused on undergraduate education, with the individual having at least a 50 percent teaching appointment. For instructors with responsibilities in extension and/or research the promotion process will consider their contributions and achievements in these areas. A master’s degree is the usual minimum educational credential for an appointment to the instructor ranks. While the initial appointment is typically at the entry rank, prior experience may be considered for a recommendation of appointment at a higher rank with the approval of the appropriate departmental committee and head. Up to three years of similar instructional service at another institution may be counted toward the designated period required prior to review for promotion in rank. Tenure will not be awarded at any of these ranks and all service at any instructor rank will be excluded from the probationary period should the faculty member later be appointed to a tenure-track position.

Rank Definitions
Instructor. The instructor rank is the initial rank for appointment of a full- or part-time faculty member whose primary responsibilities are to the instructional program. Assignments may vary depending on the faculty member’s expertise and experience and departmental needs, but typically include at least a 50 percent responsibility teaching courses, advising students, developing or revising courses and curricula, and fulfilling other instructional, administrative, or service responsibilities at the undergraduate level. Appointment at this rank consists of a series of one- or two-year renewable appointments with a minimum of five years of completed service before consideration for promotion.

Advanced Instructor. Consideration for promotion to the rank of advanced instructor may be requested by the instructor or recommended by the department based on excellence in instructional responsibilities, significant evidence of teaching scholarship, and substantial participation in fundamental department activities related to teaching. Mentoring junior colleagues or graduate teaching assistants, student advising, course or curriculum development,
or exemplary service are examples of ways in which instructors can make valuable contributions to the instructional programs in a department.

Advanced instructors are expected to demonstrate mastery in teaching with significant impact on student learning and the department’s undergraduate programs. Publications are not typically an assigned responsibility of instructor’s teaching appointments, but teaching scholarship to enhance teaching skills of the instructor and/or peers is expected as part of the evaluation for promotion. Promotion to the advanced instructor rank is generally accompanied by a renewable three-year contract. A minimum of five years of completed service at the advanced instructor rank is required before consideration for promotion to senior instructor.

**Senior Instructor.** Senior instructor is the capstone instructor rank and promotion to this rank denotes exemplary instruction, demonstrated continued teaching scholarship and professional development, and significant contributions to undergraduate education. In addition to teaching courses, senior instructors may have considerable responsibility in mentoring junior colleagues or graduate teaching assistants, substantial student advising, overseeing course development or special instructional initiatives, or other non-teaching responsibilities reflecting their role as instructional leaders. Promotion to the rank of senior instructor is generally accompanied by a renewable five-year contract.

**Constitution of Department Review Committee**
Each department’s Promotion and Tenure Committee will be responsible for reviewing candidates for promotion to the rank of advanced and senior instructors. For the purpose of making decisions regarding instructor promotion, when possible, it is expected that at least one member of the committee should be at the Advanced or Senior Instructor rank. The Promotion and Tenure Committee will pass to the Department Head the results of its vote and a brief written explanation of its deliberation.

The evaluation process for instructors will be the same as that described in the Department’s Policies and Procedures Manual for tenure-track faculty, but reflecting the job expectations of the instructor’s appointment. At the time when the Promotion and Tenure Committee’s meeting is being scheduled, faculty with an instructor’s appointment will be invited to participate in an evaluation for potential promotion. If the invitation is accepted, the candidate will prepare and submit to the committee a professional dossier that follows the Provost’s guidelines for promotion of instructors. The candidate will meet with the committee to discuss his or her program. As necessary, the committee will make recommendations to the candidate about program enhancements to increase the likelihood of promotion in the future. If sufficient time in rank has passed, the committee may deliberate on the merits of the candidate and vote. The Committee will meet the deadlines for submission of Instructor promotion packages set forth by the university and college.

In the case of a mixed vote, a minority report may be written. The department head independently reviews the dossier, consults with persons with awareness of the candidate’s teaching program, and prepares a letter explaining his/her recommendation. If either the head or Promotion and Tenure Committee recommend promotion, the application goes forward to the college review committee. These letters become part of the dossier reviewed at the college levels. The candidate is given the opportunity to withdraw his/her dossier after departmental review.
Criteria for Promotion to Advanced Instructor
In addition to the basic expectations for the Instructor rank, successful candidates for Advanced Instructor should demonstrate evidence of exemplary instruction in their dossier by reference to such items as student evaluations, student responses to supplemental questions, peer reviews, or annual departmental evaluations. The successful candidate must also demonstrate engagement with the department and College program(s) and increasing knowledge of the teaching discipline and departmental missions, as represented by a combination of at least two of the following teaching scholarship and service activities; at least one of the first two items on teaching scholarship must be selected. The strongest cases will show a pattern of these activities throughout the promotion period:

- Evidence of professional development; for example, participation in department, college or university workshops or study groups on teaching, completion of courses or short courses related to pedagogy or subject matter, or participation in professional conferences.
- Course or curricular development or development of new pedagogies; for example, contributing to a textbook or to online teaching materials available to others beyond the instructor’s own classes, preparing a course for online delivery, or teaching a new course title.
- Contributions to the instructional program in the form of advising or mentoring students; for example, academic advising of undergraduate students, GTA advising or mentoring, peer mentoring, or advising student organizations.
- Service related to the instructional mission; for example, organizing or leading an undergraduate conference, diversity initiatives, outreach, or active participation with appropriate department or college teaching committees.
- Departmental service unrelated to instruction: significant contributions to department governance or other activities specified by the department.

Criteria for Promotion to Senior Instructor
Advanced Instructors applying for the Senior Instructor position must demonstrate exemplary instruction as evidenced in the dossier by reference to such items as student evaluations, student responses to supplemental questions, peer reviews, or annual departmental evaluations. They also must demonstrate leadership and significant scholarly achievement in the area of course or curricular development or development of new pedagogies; for example, contributing to textbooks or to online teaching materials available to others beyond the instructor’s own classes, preparing a course for online delivery, or teaching a new course title. The successful candidate must also demonstrate evidence of continuous professional development (for example, participation in department, college, university and professional workshops or study groups related to teaching, completion of courses or short courses related to pedagogy or subject matter, or participation in professional conferences). In addition, they must demonstrate significant accomplishments in at least two of the areas outlined below since their last promotion.

- Substantial contributions to the instructional program in the form of advising or mentoring students; for example, academic advising of undergraduate students, GTA advising or mentoring, peer mentoring, or advising student organizations.
- **Service related to the instructional mission**: for example, organizing or leading an undergraduate conference, diversity initiatives, outreach, or active participation with appropriate department or college teaching committees.
- **Departmental service unrelated to instruction**: significant contributions to department governance or other activities specified by the department

**Instructors with Extension and/or Research Expectations**
The responsibilities assigned to those to the rank of instructor are varied and due consideration must be given to their assigned responsibilities. For those instructors with responsibilities in extension and/or research, the evaluation of their performance will follow the expectations for these activities within their instructor's home department. The following provides a general guideline for the types of extension and research activities undertaken by an Instructor with an extension and/research appointment.

**Extension**. Extension activities include dissemination of information outside of the traditional classroom to help improve the knowledge and skills of clientele. Examples of these activities include: (a) organizing/leading workshops or training sessions for VCE staff and external clientele groups, (b) developing, acquiring, organizing, interpreting, and disseminating information in written, electronic, or oral forms in response to client needs, (c) serving on agencies or boards, and (d) conducting applied research to support their program. They display leadership and initiative, are creative in the practical application of knowledge, and demonstrate a high level of disciplinary expertise as well as the ability to assist clients. Extension scholarship is judged by the influence on clientele behavior, quantity and quality of written and electronic publications, invited presentations, seminars and workshops organized and/or led, client evaluations or rating of extension programming and events, and awards.

**Research**. Research includes contributions that are appropriate to the Instructor's areas of specialization and are respected by peers within and outside the University. Examples include: (a) pedagogical research and analysis related to instructional design and effectiveness, and (b) applied research that is of interest to Virginia clientele. Scholarship resulting from research is documented through means such as articles published in peer-reviewed journals, invited seminars, books or chapters in books or edited volumes, competitively-awarded grants, conference presentations, and professional awards.

**Constitution of the College-Level Review Committee**
All Departments that have instructors will send one representative to the College Committee. It is recommended that the Committee representatives be elected among Advanced and Senior Instructors and Associate or Full Professors with primary or significant teaching responsibilities. In addition, the Dean, in consultation with the CALS faculty Association, will appoint one faculty member to the Committee. It is recommended that this faculty appointee have significant teaching responsibility. The procedures presented in the operational procedures for College promotion of Instructors will guide the College Committee’s actions.

These guidelines were prepared by an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of: Saied Mostaghimi (chair), Kevin Boyle, Elizabeth Grabau, Joseph Marcy, Kenney Web and Stephanie White on January 28, 2008