

Policy on Academic Tenure for Faculty

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Tenure appointments at Nashville State Community College are made on the basis of this policy, consistent with TBR Policy [5:02:03:70](#) on Academic Tenure for Community Colleges. Changes to this policy must be approved by the TBR Office of Academic Affairs prior to implementation on the campus.

Beyond the point, the content of this policy that is published in *italics* is content specific to Nashville State Community College. All non-italicized content, unless noted otherwise, is taken directly from TBR Policy [5.02.03:70](#). The Nashville State Tenure Application Procedure and Timeline are located at the end of this policy.

I. Introduction

Tenure is awarded only by positive action by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), pursuant to the requirements and procedures of this policy. The award of tenure is in recognition of the merit of a faculty member and of the assumption that he/she would meet the long-term staffing needs of the division or academic program unit and the college. The continued professional growth and development of faculty is necessary for institutions of higher education to continue to provide educational programs in accordance with the college's mission, goals, and the changing needs of the institution. Tenure is awarded only to those members of the faculty who have exhibited professional excellence and outstanding abilities sufficient to demonstrate that their future services and performances justify the degree of permanence afforded by academic tenure.

The quality of the faculty of any community college is maintained primarily through the appraisal, by faculty and administrative officers, of each candidate for tenure. Tenure at a TBR community college provides eligible full-time faculty with the assurance of continued employment during the academic year until retirement or dismissal for adequate cause, financial exigency, or curricular reasons, as further discussed herein. TBR does not award tenure in non-faculty positions. The following TBR policy on tenure is applicable to all community colleges within the system. These are minimum provisions and should be implemented in a manner appropriate to the individual missions, traditions, and needs of the colleges.

II. Definitions

The following are general definitions of terms used in this policy. They are further defined in the subsequent sections of this policy.

A. Academic Tenure – a personnel status is an academic division or academic program unit pursuant to which the academic or fiscal year appointments of full-time faculty who have been awarded tenure are continued at a community college until the expiration or relinquishment of that status, subject to termination for adequate cause, for financial exigency, or for curricular reasons.

B. Adequate Cause – a basis upon which a faculty member—either with academic tenure or on a tenure-track, term, or temporary appointment—prior to the end of the specified term of the appointment may be dismissed or terminated.

C. Financial Exigency – the formal declaration by TBR that one or more of its community colleges faces an imminent financial crisis, that there is a current or projected lack of sufficient funds (appropriated or non-appropriated) for the campus as a whole to maintain current programs and activities at a level sufficient to fulfill educational goals and priorities, and that the budget can be balanced only by extraordinary means that include the termination of existing and continuing academic and non-academic appointments.

D. Faculty Member – a full-time employee who holds academic rank as an instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor. A further definition can be found in Section 5:02:01:00 of TBR Policy.

E. Probationary Employment – period of full-time professional service by a faculty member for whom an appointment letter denotes a tenure-track appointment in which he/she does not have tenure and in which he/she is evaluated by the college for the purpose of determining his/her satisfaction of the criteria for a recommendation for tenure. Probationary employment provides an opportunity for the individual to assess his/her own commitment to the college and for the college to determine whether the individual meets its perception of quality and projected need. Faculty appointments are defined in a separate TBR policy.

III. Consideration for Tenure

A. Tenure Appointments

- 1) Recommendations for or against tenure shall originate from the division or academic program unit in which the faculty member is assigned.
- 2) The recommendation for tenure must be made by the President to the Chancellor and by the Chancellor to the Board of Regents. In the event that tenure is awarded by TBR, the President shall furnish to the faculty member written confirmation of the award.

No person [other than the President] shall have any authority to make any representation concerning tenure to any faculty member. Failure to give timely notice of non-recommendation of tenure shall not result in the granting of a tenure appointment, but shall result in the right of the faculty member to another year of service at the college, provided that no tenure appeals remain outstanding due to lack of cooperation and/or appropriate action on the part of the candidate in completing the appeal process.

B. Minimum Eligibility Requirements

Tenure may be awarded only to regular full-time faculty members who:

- 1) Hold academic rank as an instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor.
- 2) Have been employed in a tenure-track appointment and have completed the minimum probationary period of service and/or as agreed upon in writing and signed by the President or his/her designee.
- 3) Have been determined by the college to meet the criteria for tenure and have been so recommended.

C. Length of Probationary Employment

Probationary faculty may be employed on annual tenure-track appointments for a probationary period that may not exceed six (6) years. The faculty member may apply for tenure at the beginning of the sixth year of service, following a probationary period of not less than *five* years, provided that exceptions to the minimum probationary period may be under special circumstances upon recommendation by the President and approval by the Chancellor. Upon approval of such an exception by the Chancellor, the faculty member's recommendation for tenure will go forward to the Board as meeting the requirements for the probationary period.

D. Calculating the Probationary Period

Only full-time continuous service at a college will be included in determining completion of the probationary period unless a break in service is approved. Employment during summer terms and in part-time positions shall not be credited toward satisfying the probationary period.

- 1) **Credit for Prior Service.** The minimum probationary of five years may include credit for prior service when agreed to by the President. The credit is subject to the maximum permissible credit for prior service as noted below:
 - a) Credit toward completion of the probationary period may at the discretion of the President be given for a maximum of three years of previous full-time service at other colleges, universities, or institutes provided that the prior service is relevant to the institution's own needs and criteria. Any credit for prior service that is recognized and agreed to must be confirmed in writing at the time of the initial appointment to a tenure-track position.
 - b) Credit toward completion of the probationary period may, at the discretion of the President, be given for a maximum of three years or previous full-time service in a temporary faculty appointment or term appointment at the same institution or in an earlier tenure-track appointment at the same institution that has been followed

by a break in service. Any credit for prior service in a temporary full-time faculty appointment at the same institution or in an earlier tenure-track appointment (at the same institution) that has been followed by a break in service must be recognized and confirmed in writing in the appointment letter to a tenure-track position.

- 2) **Leave of Absence.** The period of approved leave of absence shall be excluded from the required probationary period. A faculty member may apply for a maximum of two, non-consecutive, one-year leave increments. Exceptions may be granted by the President of the college in writing prior to the leave of absence. Exceptions may include:
 - a) crediting the leave periods to the probationary period and/or
 - b) granting more than two, non-consecutive one-year increments. Exception (b), per TBR policy, requires approval of the Chancellor of TBR.
- 3) **"Stopping the Tenure Clock".** A faculty member may request to "stop the tenure clock" during his/her probationary period when circumstances exist that interrupt the faculty member's normal progress toward qualifying for tenure. In such cases, the faculty member may request to "stop the tenure clock" for one year, if he/she demonstrates that circumstances reasonably warrant the interruption. Reasons will typically be related to a personal or family situation requiring attention and commitment that consumes the time and energy normally addressed to faculty duties and professional development. Examples may include childbirth or adoption, care of dependents, medical conditions or obligations, physical disasters or disruptions, military deployment, or similar circumstances.
- 4) **Administrative Appointment.** A faculty member appointed to an administrative position may remain eligible for tenure consideration. The faculty member must: 1) qualify for tenure under the college's guidelines and 2) maintain significant involvement in academic pursuits including teaching, service/outreach, and scholarship/creative activities/research.
The time (or prorated portion of time) spent in the administrative position may be credited toward the completion of the probationary period.
- 5) **Transfer to another Division or Unit.** When a faculty member is serving a probationary period in a division or an academic program unit and is subsequently transferred to another division or unit, the faculty member may—with the approval of the President—elect to begin a new probationary period on the date on which the transfer occurs. If he/she does not so elect (and confirms this in writing to the President), time spent in the first appointment shall count toward establishing the minimum and maximum probationary period.

IV. Criteria to be Considered in Tenure Recommendations

Criteria for tenure relate to the college's three traditional missions: teaching, service/outreach, and scholarship/creative activities/research. In the community college setting, effective teaching is of paramount importance. *Faculty must assign a weight to each category that determines the relative importance of each in comparison to others within the following guidelines: Teaching (60%-70%), Service and Outreach (10%-30%), and Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research (10%-30%). Total category weights should sum up to 100%.*

Performance Criteria: Teaching

Teaching activities shall constitute 60% to 75% of the weight of the total tenure decision, as determined by the applicant.

- 1) Effective teaching is an essential qualification for tenure, and tenure should be granted only with clear and documented evidence of a candidate's teaching ability and potential for continued development.
- 2) Each of the items listed below must be submitted as evidence of effective teaching and be included in the teaching portfolio.
 - a) Evidence of ability to organize and present subject matter in a logical and meaningful way,
 - b) Evidence of effective strategies to motivate and stimulate student learning,
 - c) Statement of teaching philosophy
 - d) Course materials (i.e., course syllabi, handouts, exams/evaluation, instruments, instructional materials), and
 - e) Results of student evaluations for every course evaluated during the probationary period
- 3) Additional types of documentation may also include:
 - a) Open-ended or other student input,
 - b) Student products,
 - c) Teaching recognition/awards,
 - d) Evidence of professional development in teaching,
 - e) Evidence of disciplinary or interdisciplinary program or curricular development,

- f) Alumni surveys,
- g) Student exit interviews,
- h) Evidence of supervision of student projects and other forms of student mentorships, and
- i) Evidence of excellence in teaching or mentoring, or both.

Performance Criteria: Service and Outreach

Service and outreach activities shall constitute 10% to 30% of the weight of the total tenure decision, as determined by the applicant.

- 1) Service and/or outreach encompass a faculty member's activities in college service, outreach or public service, and professional service.
- 2) Evidence of performance in one or more of the following activities should be submitted. Weight and magnitude of importance will be directed by the college's policies and guidelines.
 - a) College service refers to activities other than teaching and scholarship performed at the department or college level. It is expected of every faculty member; indeed, colleges could hardly function without conscientious faculty who perform committee work and other administrative responsibilities. College service includes, but is not limited to, serving on departmental committees, advising students, and participating in college activities and on college committees. More extensive citizenship functions such as membership on a specially appointed task force, serving as an advisor to a college-wide student organization, and membership on a college search committee should be taken into account in consideration for tenure.
 - b) The outreach or public service function is the college's outreach to the community and society at large, with major emphasis on the application of knowledge for the solution of problems with which society is confronted. Outreach primarily involves sharing professional expertise and should directly support the goals and mission of the college. A vital component of the college's mission, public service must be performed at the same high levels of quality that characterize the teaching and research programs.
 - c) Professional service refers to the work done for organizations related to the faculty member's discipline or to the teaching profession generally. Service to the profession includes activities such as service on statewide or TBR committees, guest lecturing on other campuses, and other appropriate activities.

Performance Criteria: Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research

Scholarship, creative activities, and research shall constitute 10% to 30% of the weight of the total tenure decision, as determined by the applicant.

- 1) Candidates for tenure must present documented evidence of their scholarship, creative activities, and/or research.
- 2) While each item listed as required under "Teaching" must be included, the weight and magnitude of evidence required for activities in scholarship or creative activities or research will be directed by the college policy and guidelines.
- 3) Such evidence should cite typical professional development activities such as presentations at a professional meeting, journal editorship, article and grant proposal review, performances, exhibitions, creative activities, as well as completing books, journal articles, or monographs, and other appropriate activities.
- 4) The scholarship of teaching is a valid measure of research capability. It goes beyond doing a good job in the classroom; creative teachers should organize, record, and document efforts in such a way that their colleagues may share their contributions to the art of teaching. Authoring appropriate textbooks or chapters within a book, writing educational articles, making presentations, and using innovative contributions to teaching, constitute scholarship of teaching.
- 5) Performances, compositions, and other artistic creations are an example of appropriate creative activities. Documentation of such activities might include written reviews and evaluations by qualified peers.
- 6) Publications in journals or media of similar quality are considered indicators of professional and/or scholarly activity.
- 7) Publications that are reviewed by peers are more significant than those that are not subjected to such rigorous examination. It should be emphasized that quality is more important than quantity.

V. Expectations to Minimum Rank Qualifications

The minimum rank qualifications should be met in every recommendation of tenure, appointment to academic rank, and promotion in academic rank.

For more information on changes in tenure and tenure-track status, Nashville State employees should refer to TBR Policy [5:02:03:70](#) on Academic Tenure for Community Colleges.

Nashville State Tenure Procedure

The tenure process at Nashville State Community College is as follows:

- 1) In the spring semester, before the tenure application process begins, the faculty member may choose to have a preliminary review ad-hoc committee to aid them in the creation of a tenure application. This preliminary review ad-hoc committee shall be composed of the faculty mentor, from within the candidate's academic unit who will act as chair of the preliminary review ad-hoc committee, one tenured faculty from outside the academic unit, and the chair or dean of the academic unit where tenure will be granted. The preliminary review ad-hoc committee serves in an advisory capacity only, and their approval of the faculty member's tenure packet in no way guarantees that the faculty member will be granted tenure. Faculty members interested in a preliminary review ad hoc committee should contact their Instructional Dean who will work with the faculty member to create the committee.
- 2) The individual faculty member will initiate the official request for tenure by notifying their Instructional Dean in writing of their intent to apply not later than the third Monday of September in the term in which they intend to apply. The faculty member may apply for tenure during their last year required in their probationary period. The Instructional Dean will verify that the faculty member has served the minimum number of years in a probationary period to be eligible.
- 3) After choosing to apply for tenure, the faculty member will prepare a tenure application to be submitted to their Instructional Dean no later than the fourth Monday in October. The tenure application should include documentation on all of the following three categories: Teaching, Service and Outreach, and Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research.
- 4) At any step in the tenure application process, those responsible for reviewing the application may contact the applicant for needed information or clarification of material in the application notebook. Faculty applicants must not approach members of the Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee for information. Faculty members who serve on these committees as part of their professional service to the college must not discuss the deliberations of the committee.
- 5) Tenure applications will be reviewed by a Peer Review Committee from the applicant's division. The role of the Peer Review Committee is to support the applicant by reviewing their materials and making suggestions for improvements that can be made to the application prior to their submission of the application to the Instructional Dean. This Peer Review Committee will consist of three to five tenured faculty members elected annually from the division. No individual can serve on both the Peer Review Committee and the Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee at the same time. The Peer Review Committee will make a recommendation regarding the tenure application and provide the application, with their recommendation, to the Instructional Dean by the fourth Monday in November.

- 6) The Instructional Dean and, in consultation with an off-campus Director as needed, will evaluate the candidate's application and make a recommendation regarding tenure and submit the application to the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) by the third Friday in December.
- 7) The VPAA will distribute applications for tenure to the Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee by the first business day in January. The Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee consists of six tenured faculty members, one representative from each of the five divisions, and one representative elected from the Faculty Senate. The members of the Campus-wide Tenure Committee serve staggered two-year terms. No faculty member will serve on both peer review and campus-wide tenure review committees at the same time.
- 8) The Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee selects its own chairperson. The Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee will determine the distribution of assignments in order to manage its workload appropriately. The Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee might decide, for example, that each application will be reviewed by three members and presented to the entire Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee by those reviewers. In no case should an application be reviewed by fewer than three members of the Campus-wide Tenure Review committee. The Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee makes a recommendation concerning the tenure of the faculty applicant and submits the application to the VPAA by the second Monday in February.
- 9) The VPAA makes a recommendation concerning the tenure of the faculty applicant and submits the application to the President by the First Monday in March.
- 10) The President makes a recommendation concerning the tenure of the faculty and the faculty member is notified of the President's decision by the last Monday in March.
- 11) A faculty member wishing to appeal the President's recommendation relative to his or her tenure request must do so in writing by the first Monday in April. The applicant must state the basis for the appeal and provide evidence that the appeal is justified in writing at the time of the appeal. Appeals may be based only on improper evaluation or unfair and biased evaluation of the application.
 - a) Improper evaluation shall mean that the decision made was based upon inadequate consideration of materials provided in the portfolio or from determination of inaccurate information provided in the portfolio.
 - b) Unfair and biased evaluation shall mean that the decision was based on factors other than the tenure criteria as stated in this policy.
- 12) If an appeal is filed, a three-person tenure appeal committee will be formed to consider the appeal. Tenure appeal committee membership will consist of one administrator appointed by the President, the Faculty Senate Chair, and an additional faculty Senator appointed by the Faculty Senate Chair. A member of the tenure appeal

committee may not have submitted either a tenure or promotion application in the same year or have served in the tenure review process of the candidate filing the appeal in any capacity.

- 13) The tenure appeal committee will review the appeal request and all tenure recommendations to determine if the decision was reached in accordance with college policy.
- 14) The tenure appeal committee will submit a report of its findings to the President within five working days after the tenure appeal committee reviews the appeal. After receiving the report from the tenure appeal committee, the President will determine whether or not to rescind or uphold the original recommendation and notify the faculty member of the final decision.
- 15) The President makes a recommendation concerning the tenure of the faculty applicant to the Chancellor during the third week of April.
- 16) The Tennessee Board of Regents receives the recommendations and decides regarding the tenure of the faculty applicant during their Board meeting in June.
- 17) If approved, tenure will become effective in the following year.

Tenure Application Calendar

Date	Deadline
Spring Semester Prior to Application	Applicant may request a preliminary review ad-hoc committee
4 th Monday in October	Applications due to Division Deans for distribution to Peer Review Committees
4 th Monday in November	Recommendations due to Deans from Peer Review Committees
3 rd Friday in December	Recommendations due to VPAA for distribution to the Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee
First business day in January	Applications available to Campus-wide Tenure Review Committee from VPAA
2 nd Monday in February	Recommendations due to VPAA from the Campus-wide Tenure Review
1 st Monday in March	Recommendations due from VPAA to President
Last Monday in March	Recommendations from President due to applicant
1 st Monday in April	Last day for Faculty Applicant to file an appeal
3 rd Week in April	Campus recommendations due to Tennessee Board of Regents
June	Action by the Tennessee Board of Regents

Changes approved by TBR June 2021.