

**Department of Geography, University of Connecticut**

**Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures**

**APPENDIX 2: Merit Review Procedures and Standards for Tenure-track Faculty**

Adopted September 3, 2014. Majority vote of faculty.

Amended December 3, 2020.

Amended Fall 2021.

**The Merit Process**

1. The following procedures apply only to tenure track faculty members. Merit review for non-tenure track (CIRE) faculty is addressed in a separate appendix. The total merit pool of the department is divided into two parts, one for tenure-track and one for non-tenure-track faculty. This division of the pool is done in proportion to ratio of total tenure-track to total non-tenure track salaries on the department's merit roster for that year.
2. To be eligible for merit, the Head must first determine that a faculty member has performed satisfactorily in research, teaching, and service during the period for which merit is determined. Normally, this implies having an active research record as evidence by publications, presentations, or grant submissions, attending to assigned teaching responsibilities in a professional and responsible manner, participating in faculty meetings, and likewise meeting assigned service responsibilities in a professional and responsible manner.
3. The Merit Advisory Committee has four members. Three members of the committee are selected by the faculty by vote during the spring term. The Head appoints one member of the committee, also assuring that at least one member is a non-tenured faculty member and that the diversity of research interests within the faculty is reflected in the Committee's composition. Members serve on a rotating two-year basis with two members changing each year so that, through time, all members of the

## **Department of Geography, University of Connecticut**

### **Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures**

faculty serve on the merit committee. The Head serves as the non-voting chair of the committee.

4. All faculty wishing to be considered for merit must submit their requests to the Department Head in digital form using the deadline set annually for submitting their Husky DM report. The merit request consists of a short, one or two-page narrative that identifies and justifies outstanding activities in the previous 12 months (generally June 1 through May 31) with reference to the following merit rubric, as well as a copy of the report generated by the Husky DM system, using a format and style agreed upon in advance. A template will be developed and updated each year for guidance. See also the section below on "What Counts for Merit."

In preparing the report, particular attention should be paid to making sure that items are not repeated from previous years, unless they represent continuing activity in that category (e.g., editorship of a journal, a multi-year grant, etc.). If a publication has ever been listed as published in a previous year then it cannot be listed again in a subsequent year.

5. The Head transmits the merit applications to the Merit Advisory Committee and makes these reports available to all faculty in the department. Each member of the committee reads and rates merit applications with reference to items in the merit rubric. Committee members will not evaluate their own merit application. Only documented materials relating to research, teaching and service should be used in rating applications. The committee can ask for clarifications and additional materials from faculty members as needed. The members of the committee submit their ratings to the Head.
6. The Head compiles all the ratings, reports individual committee member scores to the other committee members in an anonymous manner, and calls a meeting of the committee to discuss the ratings. Committee members may not be involved in the discussion of their own applications. Following the discussion of all applications the merit scores will be recast

## **Department of Geography, University of Connecticut**

### **Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures**

and tallied by the Head. It is the second set of scores that will be used to allocate merit pay.

During its discussions, the committee may also seek to identify particular individuals and activities that may be deserving of additional merit pay from the Dean or Provost.

7. The merit scores are summed across all faculty and a percent is calculated for each applicant (Individual Merit Score/Sum of all Merit Scores \* 100). The total merit pool that has not been allocated to non-tenure track faculty and staff (see #1) is allocated on the basis of this percent. In years in which no merit pay is available, the merit review procedure will proceed as scheduled, unless directed otherwise by the Dean or Provost. In such cases, the department will follow AAUP guidelines for awarding merit in subsequent years.
8. Merit scores will be provided to each faculty member in an anonymous manner, but in such a way that all faculty members can see their scores in relationship to the others in the department.
9. If an applicant feels that their score does not reflect their contributions, they can write to the Head and ask to have their score reviewed by the Merit Advisory Committee. In this situation, faculty members should detail why they disagree with the score.
10. Revised scores and resulting merit awards will be provided to the individual faculty in an anonymous manner, but in such a way that all faculty members can see their scores in relationship to the others in the department.

## **Department of Geography, University of Connecticut**

### **Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures**

#### **The Rating System**

This section describes the criteria used to judge faculty productivity in research, teaching, and service. The goals of this rating system are to: 1) Reward colleagues for exceptional, meritorious accomplishments; 2) Encourage colleagues to strive toward the highest possible goals from year to year; 3) Support faculty in advancing their career plans; and 4) Continue to build a strong graduate and undergraduate program.

#### **Research**

Research productivity is central to mission of the department, college and university and critical to the professional development and career advancement of every faculty member. At the same time, in a discipline like geography, judging research productivity involves weighing a number of factors that can vary from subfield to subfield. For example, single-author research publications are the norm in some subfields, whereas multi-authored works are the standard in others. Peer-reviewed articles are important in almost all subfields, but peer-reviewed academic books can be essential to career advancement in some. Geography also varies considerably in the types and amount external grant funding that is available to researchers in different subfields.

Issues such as these mean it can be difficult to compare research productivity from one subfield of geography to another. So, rather than trying to create a "one size fits all" checklist, we have tried here to articulate some of the factors we see as important in judging research productivity. These include the type (article, book, proposal, presentation, etc.); quantity; quality; placement; and the leadership role involved in various research projects, as well as research awards.

Given the challenge of evaluating these many factors, we have chosen to have these issues discussed each year among a committee of peers. It is also important to acknowledge that annual merit reviews are only one of the ways we assess contributions to scholarship and research. Tenure and promotion reviews as well as research awards are a different means of judging the longer-term impact our work.

In considering the various components of research productivity, the general rule is that more is better than less. But, "more" is not simply a question of quantity, but rather involves other factors as discussed below.

## Department of Geography, University of Connecticut

### Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

Perhaps more importantly though, merit review is more than a system for rewarding the past year's accomplishments. Its intent is to encourage everyone to push toward greater research challenges that advance science and scholarship; support and promote career advancement; and increase the strength of the department, college and university.

Among the factors the Merit Advisory Committee should consider in awarding merit in judging research productivity are:

**Type.** Research productivity includes the publication record; grant activity; and presentations and participation in sessions organized at professional meetings and symposia. The publication record is generally the most important of these, especially articles and books vetted through the peer-review process.

Grant activity provides a public scrutiny of timeliness and value of one's research. It funds research; provides funding for students, post-docs and staff; and helps support the research infrastructure of the department, college and university. The expectations for grant activity is that, within the opportunities and constraints of funding in particular subfields, faculty should strive to make one substantive grant submission or have one substantive grant in force annually.

Presentations provide a permanent record of public exposure of one's research to academic peers and ensure that the findings of our research are disseminated to relevant audiences. Such participation also keeps us informed about research trends and new developments. For presentations, the expectations are that all faculty members will make at least one major presentation each year at a national or international meeting.

**Quantity.** Generally, the more publications, grants (by number and size) and presentations in a given year, the higher the merit score. However, merit ratings should not be based solely on summing the number of articles, books, grants and presentations or adding up published pages or grant dollars. The quality and significance of the research accomplishments (e.g. quality of the journal, the source of grant funding)--not just quantity--must also be considered.

## Department of Geography, University of Connecticut

### Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

**Quality.** Double-blind or single-blind peer-review is the most widely used means of assessing the quality of research. Peer-reviewed articles, grants, books, and other research products should be weighed more heavily in merit assessment. Non-refereed products (e.g. journal notes and letters, book reviews, extended abstracts, blogs, reports, and conference proceedings) can also be important and should also be considered in merit review, but are not generally valued as highly as peer-reviewed work.

**Placement.** Faculty should make every effort to make their research available to the largest and most relevant audiences at the local, national and international levels. This means publishing in the top journals in geography, its subfields, in related disciplines, and in interdisciplinary journals. The Merit Advisory Committee should take into account that there are varying methods for rating journals such as impact factor; immediacy index; number of submissions and rejection rates for manuscripts; number of subscribers; size of publishing association; reputation of the publisher, editor or editorial board; and so forth. All of these indicators have strengths and weaknesses and should be considered carefully in merit review. Generally we wish to encourage publication in journals that reach large audiences and have high impact factors such as the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *The Professional Geographer*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Science*, and *Nature* as well as the major journals in the various subfields of geography and leading interdisciplinary journals. We recognize that in some subfields of geography it is of critical importance for career advancement to publish in the most rigorously reviewed and widely read journals in those subfields even if those publications do not have the highest impact scores in the discipline in a given year. Increasingly, open-access publishing is changing the standards for academic publishing. Faculty may discuss their reasons for choice of publishing venue in their statements to the Merit Advisory Committee and the committee should remain open to arguments about the relative significance of both traditional new publishing outlets.

In terms of grant funding, weight is given to the largest and most competitive agencies and foundations, such as NSF, NIH, Department of Energy, Department of Education, NEH, Guggenheim, ACLS, and others. But funding is available from many others sources at the local, state, national and international levels. Such opportunities should also be considered in evaluating merit. Additionally, efforts to secure funding should be recognized

## **Department of Geography, University of Connecticut**

### **Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures**

by the Merit Advisory Committee even if declined. Such efforts provide experience and practice for future efforts.

**Leadership.** We value leadership in research and scholarship and this is generally indicated by the order of authorship of research products or the order of principal investigators (PIs) on grants. We tend to weight sole-authored, first-authored and lead PI projects more highly in our merit review system. However, sometimes leadership relationships are not clear from the listings of authors and PIs, in which case some discussion of responsibilities should be included in the report provided to the Merit Advisory Committee. For example, you might indicate that among the co-authors, you contributed 50% or 75% of the work.

**Awards.** Credit should be given when colleagues receive awards and special recognition for their research accomplishments. These may involve awards at the department, college, university, local and state levels, as well as those awards bestowed by national and international associations and agencies.

Not all types of research can be described using the criteria listed above. For this reason, individuals should note in their statement to the Merit Advisory Committee if other factors should be employed in assessing their work. Given the breadth of scholarly expertise within the department, research will be evaluated within the context of the individual's research discipline whenever possible. **The Merit Advisory Committee will rate faculty research productivity on a scale of 0 to 10.**

## **Department of Geography, University of Connecticut**

### **Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures**

Generally 1 to 3 Points: Strong research productivity as reflected in as reflected in activities such as:

- Takes a leadership role in a least one high quality publication published in a major, highly-ranked journal in geography or a related field;
- Several research presentations, including perhaps an invited or keynote address;
- Takes a leadership role in grant submissions (including internal grants);
- Awarded small research award from internal or external source.

Generally 4 to 6 Points: Excellent research productivity as reflected in as reflected in activities such as:

- Takes a leadership role in several quality publications published in major journals or leading academic publishers;
- Publication of an edited or co-authored book with a major academic publisher;
- Award of substantial research grant from major external source;
- Submission of numerous research proposals (funded or declined);
- Many national and international research presentations, some of which may be invited;
- May have earned a research-based award (Fulbright, CLAS or UConn Awards, AAUP Awards, AAG Specialty Group, etc.);

Generally 7 to 10 Points: Exceptional research productivity as reflected as reflected in activities such as:

- First-authored publications in more than one top journal (or equivalent);
- Sole or lead author on a peer-reviewed book or research monograph;
- A major grant as a PI from major funding agency (e.g., NSF, NIH, NEH, Ford Foundation, etc.);
- A major research fellowship (e.g., Guggenheim, ACLS, etc.) ;
- A major research award (e.g., AAG Honors, Member National Academy of Sciences, or American Academy of Arts and Sciences).

### **Teaching**



## Department of Geography, University of Connecticut

### Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

Teaching is essential to the mission of the department at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Yet effective teaching involves more than classroom contact. Teaching involves course preparation and revision; curriculum development and design; recruiting, retaining, advising and mentoring students; staying abreast of new developments in the theory and practice of learning and teaching through workshops and other professional development opportunities; acquiring funds and grants for equipment, materials and staff to serve pedagogical needs; engaging in outreach, research and publication with students; and, as possible, seeking awards that recognize these accomplishments. Faculty are also encouraged to research and publish articles and publications on their teaching and pedagogical innovations, although such efforts are generally credited under "Research" above.

All faculty are assessed in terms of their contractual teaching responsibilities in a given year. Generally, this is four courses per year for tenure-track faculty, but in-residence faculty teach additional courses and some tenure-track faculty teach fewer as specified in their contracts or as negotiated with the Head for particular periods of time. Such arrangements should be noted in the merit request to the Merit Advisory Committee. Summer and inter-session teaching which is compensated separately from fall and spring semester teaching is generally not counted toward merit except in special circumstances where faculty are asked to assume additional responsibilities because of department needs.

Advising and mentoring at both undergraduate and graduate levels is considered and recognized as part of teaching activities and faculty should strive to serve on graduate committees and serve as a the primary advisor for a graduating master's or doctoral student every 2 to 3 years. Additional teaching activities such as new course development or the creation of new curriculum, certificates and programs should also be credited for merit.

Given this diversity of teaching tasks and responsibilities, this rubric is slightly different than the one pertaining to research. Instead of a 0 to 10 continuum, scores for teaching are awarded in various categories reflecting the diverse range of our roles and responsibilities. **A maximum of 6 merit points can be awarded across all of the following teaching activities.** Guidelines for the potential distribution of points are outlined below.

## **Department of Geography, University of Connecticut**

### **Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures**

Generally about 1 point, but more can be awarded up to the maximum of 6:  
Commitment to updating and improving the quality of one's own instruction as reflected in activities such as:

- Shows significant improvement in teaching evaluations that respond to changes in subfield; pedagogical developments; and institutional needs;
- Substantial updates to existing courses;
- Develops or teaches new course or courses;
- Takes advantage of opportunities to improve teaching;
- Development of course materials such as a textbook or laboratory manual primarily for use at UConn.

Generally about 1 point, but more can be awarded up to the maximum of 6:  
Significant contribution beyond own contracted or compensated (summer and intersession) courses as reflected as reflected in activities such as:

- Teaching additional courses and laboratory sections in a given year to help meet department needs;
- Teaching a greater than average proportion of large enrollment courses that serve the department's GenEd courses or other program needs.

Generally about 1 point, but more can be awarded up to the maximum of 6:  
Significant individualized instruction as reflected in activities such as:

- Advising master's and doctoral students to graduation, generally a point per graduating student.
- Publishes with undergraduate and graduate students (recognizing that research publications with students will also be credited under "Research" (above);
- Strongly involved in education beyond normal teaching and advising responsibilities, such as advising honors students; internships; and independent study credits;
- Primary advisor for substantial numbers of graduating master's and PhD students.

## Department of Geography, University of Connecticut

### Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

Generally about 1-3 points, but more can be awarded up to the maximum of 6: Exceptional contributions to teaching and learning as reflected as reflected in activities such as:

- Major curriculum development effort--new certificate, degree plan, major curriculum revision;
- Major university or professional teaching award (e.g., AAUP, NCGE, AAG, etc.);
- Funding or grants acquired to improve courses or curricula and also to develop new facilities and programs.

### Service and Outreach

Service provides a record of commitment to the department, college, or university at the national or international level. Service is also a means of building, improving and expanding programs and a key way for faculty members to network and work together toward common goals. All faculty members are expected to perform service activities within the department, college, university and discipline although these can vary substantially by rank and subfield. The minimum expectation is active contribution in one substantial departmental, college or university committee each year as well as continuing active participation in at least one national or international professional society or association.

Judging contributions to service and outreach is sometimes difficult. We are, of course, always interested in recognizing active, substantial involvement in these activities rather than in just logging "seat time" in committee meetings. But, in some cases, "seat time" is also critical to our work since it helps keep us abreast of new developments and changing policies and also makes sure our interests are represented to audiences outside the department. As necessary, please note in your report to the Merit Advisory Committee your particular contributions to the service and outreach activities listed below.

As in the assessment of teaching, scores for service are awarded in several categories reflecting the diverse range of roles and responsibilities involved in service activity. **A maximum of 6 merit points can be awarded across all of**

## Department of Geography, University of Connecticut

### Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

**the following categories of service and outreach.** Guidelines for the potential distribution of points are outlined below.

Generally about 1 point, but more can be awarded up to the maximum of 6:  
Significant service to the department, CLAS or UConn as reflected as reflected in activities such as:

- Chair of major departmental committee (PTR, Undergraduate Coordinator, Merit, Search, etc.)
- Chair or active member of major college or university committee (Senate, C&C, College PTR, etc.)
- Leadership role in interdisciplinary major program or research center/institute

Generally about 1 point, but more can be awarded up to the maximum of 6:  
Significant service or outreach to the general public or non-academic communities at the local, state, national or international levels as reflected as reflected in activities such as:

- Significant public outreach through presentations and testimony
- Work or research that result in presentations, reports, exhibitions, and other products not covered under research

Generally about 1 point, but more can be awarded up to the maximum of 6:  
Significant service to the discipline as reflected in activities such as:

- Elected or appointed member of a significant professional committee
- Serving as external reviewer for a geography program reviews
- Serving as a referee for one or more promotion reviews
- Chair of professional committee such in a national organization
- Member of granting agency panel (e.g., NSF, NIH, etc.)
- Involvement in *ad hoc* peer review process
- Membership in editorial boards of journals
- Guest editor of a major journal (although this may also count under "Research")

## **Department of Geography, University of Connecticut**

### **Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures**

- Significant number of book reviews and similar publications
- Organizer of a significant conference, workshop or meeting (e.g., NESTVAL, specialist meeting)
- Editor of a journal or book series
- Officer or leader of professional organization
- Leader or active member of a major national or international committee (e.g., NRC, IPCC, IGU, etc.)

#### **What Counts for Merit**

Merit review assesses faculty accomplishments within a 12 month period (generally June 1 through May 31) unless instructed otherwise by CLAS under the AAUP/UConn contract. However, scholarly, scientific and academic work does not always fit neatly into this schedule and any discrepancies should be noted in the report to the Merit Advisory Committee, for example articles that carry an earlier or later publication date than year in which they were released.

In judging research accomplishment, we assess published articles, books, presentations, proceedings, and contributions made within the 12-month review period, that is, that appear in public with final page and volume numbers, DOI or URLs. Works in progress, in review, or accepted for publication should be included in the annual report (and are important for documenting research progress), but research accomplishments should be credited during the year in which they appear in print or in public. As noted above, once a publication has been counted as published, care should be taken that it is not listed again for merit in subsequent years.

For tenure-track assistant professors, please note that this rule is different from the one used for updating the UConn PTR form each year. The PTR is a running total of all publications and accomplishments during the pre-tenure period. The merit process is a one-year snapshot of activity.

Grants are credited toward merit in the year in which they are awarded as well as in the subsequent years of the grant. This is true of other research and service commitments that extend over multiple years.