

# Academic Track Overview

Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM) predominantly employs five academic tracks for appointment of individuals to the full time faculty. These tracks are complementary in that they are designed to accommodate faculty who engage in the wide variety of activities supporting the School's mission, including research, teaching, and clinical and administrative service. Significant accomplishments in any of these areas represent important contributions that warrant careful consideration in the evaluation of faculty nominated for appointment or promotion. This website has been designed to assist faculty members in understanding the criteria required for appointment and promotion on the major academic tracks and to assist in the preparation of the supporting documentation used by the School in its evaluations. The following are links to web pages describing the specific criteria for appointment and promotion on the five academic tracks used by VUSM. Additional general information about appointment and promotion to the senior ranks can be found below.

1. The **Basic Science Investigator/Physician Scientist Investigator Track** (tenure track and tenured) is used for faculty with major efforts in research and teaching. Appointments and promotions to senior ranks on this track are subject to review by the processes defined below.
2. The **Basic Science Educator/Clinician Educator Track** is used for faculty with major efforts in teaching and service. Appointments and promotions to senior ranks on this track are subject to review by the processes defined below.
3. The **Clinical Practice Track** is primarily for faculty whose primary contributions are to the clinical service mission of the School. Appointments and promotions to senior ranks on this track are subject to review by the processes defined below.

4. The **Research Track** is appropriate for faculty involved in time-limited research programs with no or minimal teaching responsibilities. Appointment and promotion on this track are recommended by the chair of the department, and approved by the Dean's Office.
  
5. The **Assistant/Associate Track** is for faculty whose discipline is not formally represented in the departmental organization of the VUSM (e.g., social work, nursing), but who contribute to the mission of the school. Appointment and promotion on this track are recommended by the chair of the department, and approved by the Dean's Office.

## Appointments and Promotions to Senior Ranks

The **Basic Science Investigator/Physician Scientist Investigator (tenure) track**, the **Basic Science Educator/Clinician Educator track** and the **Clinical Practice track** are the most commonly used tracks for appointments to the full time faculty.

Approximately 90% of all full time appointments are on one of these three tracks. Appointments and promotions to the senior ranks on these three tracks are initiated within the faculty member's department and are evaluated by the **Committee on Faculty Appointments and Promotions** in the School of Medicine. This committee makes recommendations to the Dean and the Executive Faculty through the Executive Committee of the Executive Faculty (see Process of Appointment and Promotion, below).

On both the **Basic Science Investigator/Physician-Scientist Investigator (tenure) track** and **Basic Science Educator/Clinician-Educator track**, teaching is an important criterion for appointment and promotion to senior ranks. Teaching is one of the core missions of the School of Medicine, and it can take numerous forms and involves a variety of learners. Teaching occurs in lectures, small discussion groups,

during clinical rounds and procedures, and in the context of research training and mentoring. Faculty members may participate in the education of medical and graduate students, allied health professionals, residents and post-doctoral fellows, practicing physicians, faculty investigators, and others in the community. Faculty on both of these tracks make scholarly contributions to the institution and are awarded identical titles - Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor of the Department of appointment (e.g., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Assistant Professor of Pharmacology). The distinction between these two tracks relates to the different criteria required for promotion to senior academic ranks.

The **Clinical Practice track** is appropriate for faculty within the clinical departments whose primary contributions occur within in the clinical realm and for whom teaching is performed predominantly in the course of clinical duties, rather than in lieu of clinical duties. Faculty on the Clinical Practice track are identified by similar rank titles: Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor. However, in the case of the Clinical Practice track, the term "Clinical" is inserted just before the department designation (Ex: Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics). Again, the distinction between the **Clinical Practice track** and the **Basic Science Investigator/Physician-Scientist Investigator (tenure track)** and **Basic Science Educator/Clinician-Educator track** centers upon the different criteria required for promotion.

## Probationary Period to Tenure

In the School of Medicine, appointment as an Assistant Professor on the investigator tenure track requires that the faculty member be evaluated and approved for tenure within **nine** years of the time of initial appointment. The awarding of tenure usually accompanies promotion to the rank of Associate Professor for faculty on the tenure track. Appointment renewals recommended for Assistant Professors on the tenure track must include a departmental statement affirming the faculty member's progress toward being proposed for promotion and tenure.

There are no time limits for promotion to Associate Professor on the **Basic Science Educator/Clinician Educator track** or the **Clinical Practice track**. Likewise, there are no time limits for promotion from Associate to full Professor on any track. Note that appointment to the **Basic Science Educator/Clinician Educator track** does not preclude the attainment of tenure if qualifications for tenure are met within the time limit defined in the *Faculty Manual* by the probationary period for tenure.

## Process of Appointment and Promotion

Recommendations for appointments and promotions on all tracks originate with department chairs, who act with the advice of Departmental Appointments and Promotions Committees. These committees consist of all full-time tenured full professors within a department or in the case of large departments at least six full-time tenured full professors. Recommendations from the chairs are forwarded to the Dean, who seeks the advice of the School of Medicine's **Committee on Faculty Appointments and Promotions**. This committee consists of eleven faculty members at the rank of Professor representing diverse disciplines within the School of Medicine and representing the three major tracks. Upon a favorable recommendation from this committee, the Dean forwards the recommendation to the Executive Faculty of the School of Medicine, which acts on behalf of the faculty of the School of Medicine in reviewing and endorsing the recommendation. Recommendations acted on favorably are forwarded to the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs. In the case of faculty on the **Basic Science Educator/Clinician Educator track** or **Clinical practice track** the Vice Chancellor gives final approval or disapproval. In the case involving a recommendation for award of tenure, the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs obtains a procedural review of the recommendation by the Medical Center Promotion and Tenure Review Committee. The Vice Chancellor then forwards recommendations for tenure to the Chancellor, who requests endorsement by the Board of Trust. Appointments to tenure are not official until approved by the Board of Trust. Negative decisions for promotion on either track may be appealed by the department chair or by the faculty member according to

the procedures in the *Faculty Manual*.

## Supporting Documentation

### 1. **Standardized Form of the Curriculum Vitae**

The Committee on Faculty Appointments and Promotions has developed a **standard form of the curriculum vitae** that must be used by faculty and departments in supporting recommendations for appointments and promotions on all the academic tracks. Use of the standard form will assure that all information needed by the committee is present and will expedite the review of recommendations.

### 2. **Documentation of Teaching Effectiveness**

It is required that the **Documentation of Teaching Form** (PDF or MSWord or the VUSM electronic educator's portfolio) be used to specify the teaching activities of the candidate on the **Basic Science Investigator/Physician-Scientist Investigator (tenure) track**, the **Basic Science Educator/Clinician-Educator track** and the **Clinical Practice track**. Specific assessments of the candidate's teaching effectiveness should be submitted in reference to the candidate's primary mode of teaching. Such assessments might include peer assessments by colleagues who have observed the teaching, or trainee assessments including student assessments as compiled by the Student Curriculum Committee, or those provided by individual trainees who have worked in a more direct relationship with the candidate (e.g. graduate students, residents, fellows).

### 3. **Critical References**

For candidates whose promotion on the tenure track is based on their research accomplishments, up to five references to publications representing the candidate's most significant contributions should be identified. If the candidate is not first or last author, the specific contribution of the candidate to the referenced work should be described. The Faculty Appointments and Promotion Committee developed the

**Critical Reference Form** (PDF or MSWord) on which to provide this information. It is helpful to the committee if copies of these key papers are submitted as part of the candidate's dossier.

#### 4. **Letters of Evaluation**

Guidelines for Letters of Evaluation