



▫ ***The Promotion  
Process***

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## *What is the APT?*

- VSoE **A**ppointments, **P**romotions and **T**enure committee
  - 1 member (full professor) chosen by each department
  - 5 at-large (associate professor) members, elected by whole VSoE faculty
  - 2 Research-track faculty, 2 Teaching-track faculty
- Responsible for making recommendations on appointments, promotions and tenure decisions to Dean of Engineering & Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs
- APT's decisions are advisory not obligatory, but a strong recommendation for or against a candidate is “usually” adopted at higher levels
- APT's role is to provide
  - A uniform standard across VSoE departments
  - A 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion that might offset unusually critical or lenient Department decisions
  - Independent check on accuracy & completeness of Department's information

## Promotion process – candidate's role

- For tenure-track faculty, starts in summer at end of 5<sup>th</sup> year of full-time service (or earlier by request, but generally cannot be later without special authorization)
- Candidate provides information to departmental committee
  - CV
  - Statement of research and teaching accomplishments & plans
  - Mentoring record (e.g., Ph.D. students)
  - Service (Department, School, University, external) – external shows that you are known & respected by your peers
  - Examples of key publications (≈ 5)
  - Sometimes candidates may recommend names of persons to write evaluation letters, more often Department selects all evaluators
- All information goes into a “black box” – no further input from or discussion with candidate
- Suggestion: study UCAPT manual and Viterbi supplement (these are the **rule books** for the promotion evaluation process):

<https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/University-Committee-on-Appointments-Promotions-and-Tenure-Manual.pdf>

[https://16mhp3atvadrdnpip2kwi9or-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/VSoE-APT-Guidelines\\_finalized-01-23-18.pdf](https://16mhp3atvadrdnpip2kwi9or-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/VSoE-APT-Guidelines_finalized-01-23-18.pdf)

# Promotion process – Department role (1/2)

- Department chair appoints Departmental committee – 3 members (for Research or Teaching Track promotions, will include such faculty members) (committee usually not revealed to candidate)
- Departmental committee duties
  - Recommend external evaluators (subject to approval by Dean’s Office)
    - » “Arms length” – no formal relationship – most important
    - » Mentors & collaborators – not arm’s length – lesser “weight”
    - » More “weight” given to evaluators at top-10 US universities & NAE members
    - » Referee letters describe the impact of your work and your stature within the field – **most important single set of information**
  - Collect quantitative information
    - » Web of Science and/or Google Scholar (papers, citations, H-index)
    - » Research / teaching funding
    - » Teaching evaluations
  - Identify peer group for quantitative comparison – may include peers mentioned by evaluators
  - Prepare report and provide recommendation to Department

## **Promotion process – Department role (2/2)**

- Department's tenured faculty (plus research-track or teaching-track faculty, as appropriate) discuss report / recommendation & votes
- Department Chair prepares memo
  - Candidate's fit with the Department
  - Summary of Department's discussion and result of vote
  - Chair's personal recommendation
- **Department faculty vote is 1 of 2 "binding" votes (not just "recommendations")**

# Promotion process – APT role – tenure-track

- APT Chair (elected by APT committee) appoints subcommittee for each candidate – 3 members
- Evaluates dossier prepared by Department
  - Candidate's input
  - Department Subcommittee report & supporting information
  - Department Chair's memo
- APT does not collect additional information, but may ask for clarifications or corrections to data in dossier
- Prepares report and provides recommendation to full APT
- APT discusses report / recommendation & votes - **members of your Department will not vote at the APT level because they voted at the Department level**
- APT Chair prepares memo for Dean
  - Summary of discussion
  - Result of vote

# ***APT role – Research & Teaching Tracks***

- Evaluated by APT “Executive Committee” only
  - APT Chair
  - 2 other tenured full-professor APT members
  - 2 Research or Teaching faculty members as appropriate
- Executive Committee discusses dossier prepared by Department & votes on candidate
- APT Chair prepares memo for Dean
  - Summary of discussion
  - Result of vote

## What's next?

- Dean prepares recommendation based on outcomes of Department and APT actions + his/her own opinion
- For Research-, Teaching-, or Clinical faculty, the VSoE Dean's Office is always the last step
- **For tenure-track faculty, the Dean's vote is 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 "binding" votes**
  - If the vote is negative at both Department and Dean's levels, the process stops
  - If at least 1 of 2 "binding" votes is positive, the process continues to the University-level APT committee (UCAPT, within Provost's office) who conducts another evaluation of the information and makes a **recommendation** to the Provost
  - **Provost makes the final decision**



## ***Expectations for promotion***

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- Be recognized by leaders in your field as a “likely future leader”
- Continue your Ph.D. and/or postdoc work, but have at least one identifiable new area of strength started at USC
- Collaborations are fine, but have work that is uniquely yours
- Be at least in the middle of your peer group in terms of quantitative metrics (papers, citations, h-index)
  - **Do your own peer group comparison - faculty at top-25 US universities in your field who recently received the same promotion**
- More funding is always better, but key factor is, “is the candidate’s funding (past, current, and forecasted) sufficient to support his/her agenda?”
- Have at least average teaching evaluations
- Show some Department, School or University service
- Show some “presence” in your community

## ***Associate to full professor promotion***

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- Unlike Assistant → Associate promotion, no set timeline but typically 5 – 6 years later
- Process essentially same as Assistant → Associate
- Expectation is that you have established yourself as a leader in your field, rather than just showing that potential
- Also expectation of considerable service record

## Suggestions

- **Every year**, ask your Department Chair for a candid evaluation of your performance relative to expectations
- Attend as many conferences as possible; present any quality work you have, shake hands, network – **establish yourself as a ‘player’ in the field** (and don’t annoy people...)
- Ask officers in relevant professional society (IEEE, ASME, ASCE ...) to appoint you to conference program and technical subcommittees
- Volunteer to be your department’s seminar coordinator and **invite people who may be good evaluators for you**
- Ask relevant NSF (or other funding agency) program officers for invitation to be a panel reviewer – **learn how panel review system works and what ‘sells’**
- Come to my workshop on “Writing Compelling NSF Proposals” – (Wednesday Oct. 5, 12:00 noon); see Center for Excellence in Research website: <https://research.usc.edu/events/>