

Guidelines for Distinguished Professor Appointments

I. Introduction

The University of Mississippi (UM) acknowledges outstanding faculty by conferring the honorific title of Distinguished Professor. Appointment as a Distinguished Professor is reserved for only the very best faculty members at UM in recognition of sustained excellence, as outlined below.

II. Criteria for Appointment

Appointment as Distinguished Professor is a special honor conferred only to full-time professorial (tenured or non-tenure track) faculty members in recognition of an extended period of exemplary accomplishments in a combination of

- research or creative achievements,
- teaching, and
- professional and public service and/or service to the institution.

As evidence of exemplary accomplishments in research or creative achievements, a candidate should have achieved a significant degree of national or international recognition in his or her field.

To receive this recognition, a faculty member must hold the position of full professor, with at least six years of service at UM. Ordinarily, a candidate must serve six years in the rank of full professor before being reviewed for promotion to the Distinguished Professor title. In exceptional circumstances, applications or nominations may be made after fewer than six years at UM and/or fewer than six years in rank.

At the time of initial employment, a faculty member whose preceding employment included a faculty rank or title of distinguished professor may be granted the title of distinguished professor at UM if so approved by the provost and chancellor based on recommendations of the departmental faculty, department chair, dean, and graduate dean.

The title of Distinguished Professor is intended to be a permanent title through the active employment of the recipient at the institution. The honorific title may continue upon retirement (e.g., Distinguished Professor Emeritus), if approved by the provost. However, as a consequence of annual reviews, a department chair or dean may recommend to the provost that a title be rescinded. In such cases, the provost will refer the issue to an appropriate faculty committee.

To ensure that the title remains a high distinction, no more than five percent of eligible faculty may be appointed as new Distinguished Professors in a given academic year. This number of potential new Distinguished Professor appointments does not include any that might occur during a hiring process.

III. Policies and Timing

Applications or nominations for appointment to as a Distinguished Professor will follow the procedures in the Promotion of Faculty policy, including the timeline for reviews. The tenured and tenure-track faculty of each school or college shall establish criteria/guidelines and procedures for use in considering nominees for Distinguished Professor within that school or college. Individual departments may establish criteria for their discipline or may use criteria established by the school or college. Selection guidelines will not be in conflict with, nor be less rigorous than, the criteria for appointment stated in this document. Selection guidelines are subject to approval through normal channels within each school or college and the provost.

IV. Process

A. Any UM faculty member meeting the criteria in Section II may nominate himself or herself for appointment as Distinguished Professor. Alternatively, any tenured or tenure-track member of the faculty or any department chair or head, college or school dean, the Provost, or the Chancellor, may nominate a Professor for appointment as Distinguished Professor. A letter of application or nomination must set forth the achievements of distinction that warrant the appointment and must be submitted to the nominee's chair.

B. Applicants, nominees, or nominators shall prepare a dossier, similar in format to promotion dossiers. This will include the requirement for external letters of recommendation, in addition to any internal nomination letters. The nominator will ordinarily be responsible for soliciting external letters of recommendation. If a faculty member applies for the title, his or her immediate supervisor will be responsible for soliciting letters. In the latter case, it is acceptable for the applicant to provide names of reviewers.

C. The tenured full professors in a unit will vote on forwarding the application of individuals being considered for the title of Distinguished Professor.

D. The dossier will then be reviewed by the respective department chair, dean, and the graduate dean.

E. The provost, in consultation with the Faculty Senate, shall then appoint a committee composed of full professors from diverse disciplines to assist in the final review and selection of the strongest candidates for the title of Distinguished Professor.

F. The provost will recommend a number of candidates not exceeding five percent of the eligible faculty, with the final decision made by the chancellor.

G. For faculty members holding affiliations with multiple academic units, nominations/applications must be considered by each academic unit. If granted, the honorific title will apply to each academic area.

H. At any point prior to the chancellor's recommendation, the nominee may withdraw his/her name from further consideration.

I. The title of Distinguished Professor will apply at the beginning of an academic year.

J. As a result of an annual performance review or post-tenure review, a department chair or dean may recommend to the provost that the title of Distinguished Professor be rescinded beginning the next academic year. The provost will then follow the procedure in paragraph "E" to arrive at a recommendation to make to the chancellor. If the faculty member wishes to appeal the recommendation of the provost, the procedures under Appeals Process in the Tenure Policy shall apply.

V. Benefits

Any benefits associated with the title should be consistently applied, to the extent possible.