

Proposal for implementation of the title Research Professor
by the College of Veterinary Medicine
Revised and approved by faculty November 3, 2016

A. Justification. A proposal for adoption of the Research Professor title shall include a statement offering justification for adoption of the title within the originating college or school and explaining why existing titles for non-tenure-track faculty are insufficient for staffing and recruitment. The practices of peer schools and the impact of available titles on recruitment efforts may be of particular relevance in this regard.

A1. Why existing non-tenure track titles are insufficient: The current set of titles used by the College of Veterinary Medicine, Research Scientist and Principal Research Scientist, constitute a subtle, but significant challenge to the recruitment and retention of the highest quality scientists devoted exclusively to research activities. Individuals titled as Research Scientist or Principal Research Scientist are consistently subject to reviews of research proposals by peers who are unfamiliar with these titles. This includes not only proposals for federal funding, but also those from foundations such as the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association. Despite extensive explanations of the titles and standard language indicating that they are equivalent to the Research Professor title at other institutions, reviewers are often suspicious of the actual responsibilities and university commitment to these titles. In addition to challenges with reviewers on scientific panels, individual NIH Institutes have expressed concern about the title. In one very recent example, efforts to secure the R00 phase of an NIH Mentored K award required multiple letters to the NICHD to provide assurances that the Research Scientist title was the equivalent to the Research Professor title in other universities and had similar impact. The Institute was unfamiliar with this title and questioned why these individuals were not considered professorial faculty (to them a sign of lack of institutional commitment).

Recent examples of recruiting challenges include three dual career recruitments in which the Research Scientist titles were greeted with similar skepticism by the recruited spouse. While it is difficult to quantify the overall effect that this one issue has in a complex recruitment, and we are certainly successful with many, it is a constant factor in our recruitment discussions, usually with the recruited partner expressing uncertainty and concern relative to the impact on funding applications. Despite the obvious outstanding overall environment for research at Cornell, the initial discussions with faculty surrounding Cornell's titling options and the reluctance of the institution to place "Professor" in the title of research faculty are subject to misinterpretation as evidence of a less than robust support for research and discovery by our administrative bodies. At the least this colors our initial recruiting discussions and may provoke a less than favorable comparison with peer universities.

A2. Practices of peer schools: Use of the Research Professor titles will align the academic titles of the College of Veterinary Medicine with those of Weill Cornell Medicine, as well as with those of many schools of veterinary and human medicine. A survey of the top-ranked veterinary schools (other than Cornell) reveals that seven of the nine institutions use research professor titles, as do eleven of fifteen top-ranked medical schools.

B. Description of Position. *The proposal shall describe as precisely as possible the functions and responsibilities of positions bearing the title and the anticipated distribution of such positions within the college or school.*

B1. Functions and responsibilities: Research professors are responsible for initiating new research activities; creating and managing research laboratories; seeking funding opportunities, submitting proposals, and fulfilling the terms of research grants and contracts; planning, conducting and reporting on original research; and representing their research groups externally. Persons appointed to these titles may serve routinely as principal investigators on grants and contracts. There is an expectation that these positions be self-sustaining and not rely on College of Veterinary Medicine resources, once the individual is established. Teaching or service responsibilities are typically not associated with Research Professor appointments.

To qualify for the title, Assistant Research Professors are expected to have achieved significant stature in the scholarly discipline, to have demonstrated the quality of research accomplishment appropriate to initiating an independent research program, and to have demonstrated a trajectory that promises a continued high level of achievement. Associate or full Research Professors are expected to have a sustained record of research productivity, a proven ability to lead a research program, and a track record of receiving external grant funding.

B2. Distribution of positions within the College: The anticipated distribution of positions within the College of Veterinary Medicine is based on 10% of the tenure-track appointments within the College or 10% of the tenure-track appointments in a department. Departments may “round up” the number of positions to the nearest whole number. When deploying these positions across the College, our intent is to maintain a healthy balance among tenure-track, research-track, and other specialty titled faculty appointments. We anticipate the following distribution, based on current numbers of tenure-track faculty (number in parentheses).

- Biomedical Sciences 3 (28)
- Clinical Sciences 4 (41)
- Microbiology and Immunology 2 (21)
- Molecular Medicine 2 (15)
- Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences 2 (20)

C. Terms of Appointment. *The proposal shall include a summary of the terms on which candidates will be appointed and reappointed to such positions and promoted from one to another. These terms should include: the nature of the search by which applications will be elicited; the credentials required by holders of these positions; the levels (department, college, university) at which approval for individual appointments is necessary; the length of appointments; the possibilities open to appointees for movement between non-tenure-track and tenure-track paths; and procedures for renewal and promotion open to appointees.*

C1. Appointment

Ia. Nature of search: A formal rigorous national search, subject to affirmative action regulations, will be conducted in the manner employed for tenure-track positions. Searches will be conducted by the department in which the appointment will be made, with oversight from the Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Waiver of search will require approval of the Provost. Search procedures should follow those used by a department to fill professorial positions. For internal candidates, department chairs may nominate a qualified individual for appointment on the Research Professor track. Appointment will require approval by the departmental faculty and the dean. A dossier-based review must be conducted for the initial appointment. The dossier shall include a CV, research statement, letters of evaluation from confidential external referees (not recommendations), letters from participants in a current or recent research program, a statement outlining the financial support for the position, a report of departmental faculty vote, recommendation of the chair, and a report of an ad hoc advisory committee (if one was appointed by the dean).

Individuals that currently hold a research professor title at another institution that are transferring to Cornell and that are accompanying a faculty hire will undergo a dossier-based review by the department. The dossier will be assembled as described above except only internal letters of evaluation are required.

Ib. Credentials: Research Professors must hold a Ph.D., D.V.M. or equivalent degree in a field appropriate to the position. They must have a minimum of three years of postdoctoral or equivalent experience.

Ic. Levels of approval for individual appointments: Creation of new positions and naming of individuals to research professor titles will require approval by the departmental faculty and the Dean.

Id. Length of appointments:

Terms of positions bearing the Research Professor titles shall normally be up to five years, with the exception of the initial appointment of Assistant Research Professors, which will normally be for three years. Following a rigorous departmental performance review of the first three years, the Assistant Research Professor may be re-appointed for a term of up to five years. The appointments may be renewed indefinitely pending availability of funding or other constraints as described below. The process for promotion to Associate Research Professor will normally be initiated in the sixth year of appointment, however there is no requirement for this process.

While there may be a transition period before research funding supports the position, appointments normally are expected to be supported largely by such funds; other funding sources are permitted. The offer and appointment letters should include notification that the appointment may be terminated early or modified if funding is withdrawn or reduced. Nonrenewal or early termination of appointment also may occur on the basis of other significant resource constraints, unreliable funding prospects, seriously diminished interest in the research area or relevance to the appointing unit's research mission, or performance.

1e. Possibilities for movement between research and tenure-track career paths: Faculty members in either research or tenure-track appointments may apply for open positions in the alternate track for which they are qualified. A faculty member in a tenure-track appointment may not move into a research-track appointment after a negative tenure decision in any circumstance. Similarly, a research professor may not move into a tenure-track appointment after a negative reappointment or promotion decision.

C2. Procedures for renewal and promotion: Appointments and promotions for faculty with research professorial titles will closely follow University guidelines and policies on academic appointments for tenure-track faculty as outlined in the Cornell University Faculty Handbook: [Chapter 2.0. Academic Appointments, Reappointment, Tenure, & Promotion.](#)

2a. Reappointment at Assistant Research Professor. Most commonly, a person entering a research track academic career path is given a three-year appointment at the Assistant Research Professor level. The faculty member must review his or her progress each year with the department chairperson. In the third year, a thorough performance review that includes endorsement of the departmental faculty by vote is conducted. If the outcome is positive, it is normal for renewal for a second term of up to five years to be recommended for approval by the Dean.

If the outcome of the three-year review is negative, the faculty member must be given a terminal appointment that allows him or her to serve two full academic terms after the notice of non-renewal. If the faculty member clearly is not meeting expectations, the notice not to renew the appointment may be given earlier than the third year and the required two terms of notice must be provided.

2b. Appealing a decision not to reappoint. Procedures for appealing a decision not to reappoint a faculty member who holds an initial probationary-status appointment will follow those in Appendix Three of the Faculty Handbook ([Procedures for Appealing a Decision Not to Renew a Non-tenure Appointment](#)) with the exception that the appeals process ends at the college level.

2c. Promotion to Associate Research Professor. The University Faculty Handbook provides general guidelines for promotion of tenure-track faculty that are applicable in determining the fitness of research-track faculty for promotion to Associate Research Professor. The basic criteria for promotion are excellence in carrying out the responsibilities of the position and promise of continued achievements. Faculty evaluation will take into account the specific position responsibilities described in the faculty member's appointment letter, as modified during periodic reviews.

The initial appointment to the College faculty of a highly qualified person who is already credited with significant achievements may be at the rank of Associate Research Professor or even Research Professor, in probationary status. Such appointments are for a limited term of not more than two years. Successful formal review as described below (Section 2d) is required for movement from probationary status to a renewable appointment of up to five years.

2ci. Review Process for Promotion to Associate Research Professor. The processes for review for promotion from Assistant Research Professor to Associate Research Professor will be closely modeled upon those used for the equivalent promotion in the tenure-track. Permission to initiate a review for promotion to Associate Research Professor must be obtained from the Dean.

A dossier is compiled by the candidate, including a curriculum vitae, list of publications, copies of relevant publications, and a narrative describing research accomplishments and plans. Letters of evaluation from trainees, colleagues in the University, and outside experts are collected by the Department Chair. Assembled documentation is made available to tenured faculty members, Associate Research Professors and Research Professors of the department. A meeting is held to discuss the performance and potential of the candidate and a vote on promotion is conducted. The chairperson represents the department in making and explaining to the Dean the department's recommendation for or against promotion.

A negative review is communicated first to the candidate, prior to the Dean, and the candidate has an opportunity to request reconsideration by the department. The procedures for this will be modeled on those in Appendix Five of the Faculty Handbook ([Procedures for Appealing a Negative Tenure Decision](#)) with the exception that the appeals process ends at the college level.

After the department's initial review and any reconsideration are completed, the Dean reviews the decision at the college level. If the department's recommendation is positive, the Dean may approve the promotion or may appoint an ad hoc committee of faculty members from college departments other than the home department of the candidate, to evaluate the evidence and advise him or her in reaching a decision. Even if the department's recommendation is negative, the candidate may still request that the Dean appoint the ad hoc committee.

2cii. Appealing negative promotion decisions. The faculty member may appeal a decision not to conduct a promotion review. The procedures for such an appeal will be modeled on Appendix Four of the Faculty Handbook ([Procedures for Appealing a Decision Not to Conduct a Tenure Review at the End of the Ordinary Tenure Probation Period on the Basis of Factors Other Than Candidate Performance](#)) with the exception that the formal appeals process ends at the college level.

If the promotion dossier reaches the Dean's office and the Dean reaches a tentative decision that is negative, the Dean communicates it to the candidate and the department, to provide an opportunity for rebuttal of the reasons and a request for reconsideration at the college level. The candidate has an opportunity to appeal at the college level. The procedures for this will be modeled on those in Appendix Five of the Faculty Handbook ([Procedures for Appealing a Negative Tenure Decision](#)) with the exception that the formal appeals process ends at the college level.

If the ultimate outcome of the review for promotion to Associate Research Professor is negative, the faculty member may retain his/her appointment as Assistant Research Professor, subject to satisfactory performance reviews commensurate with the Assistant Professor level, and the constraints on continuation of appointments described in Section 1d.

At all times during the appeals process the faculty member has access to the [University Ombudsman](#).

2d. Time Period for Review for Promotion to Research Professor. Associate Research Professors are normally considered for review for promotion to Research Professor following their fifth year of appointment at the associate rank. At that time, the chairperson of the department convenes a meeting of the tenured Professors and Research Professors to decide whether a formal review for promotion should be initiated. If the Professors and Research Professors decide not to initiate a review, the chairperson will discuss their decision with the candidate. The candidate may request a formal review at that time, and his or her request will be granted automatically. If the candidate agrees to postponement, the chairperson will, at the beginning of the following year, consult the tenured Professors and Research Professors again, and initiate a formal review unless the candidate requests that the review be postponed. If the candidate has not been reviewed at least once after serving as an Associate Research Professor for seven years, the chairperson will consult the candidate at least triennially and initiate a formal review unless the candidate does not want one.

If a candidate has received a formal review that has not culminated in a recommendation of promotion, the candidate may, after two or more years have elapsed, request a second review, and this request will be granted. (If the first review was unsuccessfully appealed, the two years are measured from the time of the decision on the appeal.) There is no upper limit to the time a faculty member may serve in the rank of Associate Research Professor.

2e. Review process for Promotion to Research Professor. The processes for review for promotion from Associate Research Professor to Research Professor will be closely modeled upon those used for this promotion of faculty in the tenure-track.

The criteria for promotion from Associate Research Professor to Research Professor are excellence in research and scholarly achievement, and a judgment on whether the individual has fulfilled the promise on which promotion to Associate Research Professor was originally granted.

The department procedures applicable to the promotion to Research Professor are the same as those outlined above for promotion to Associate Research Professor, except that the vote is limited to the Professors and Research Professors in the department. The documentation need not be as extensive as it is for promotion to Associate Research Professor, and the charging of an ad hoc committee is at the Dean's discretion unless the recommendation of the department is negative and the candidate requests such a committee.

The Dean is not bound by the recommendation of the department as expressed by the chairperson. If the Dean disagrees with the judgment of the department, he or she will—if this has not already been done—set up an ad hoc committee and receive their input before reversing the department decision. Appeal at the departmental and College level will be modeled on those in Appendix Six of the Faculty Handbook ([Procedures for Appealing a Negative Decision on Promotion to Full Professor](#)) with the exception that appeals process ends at the college level. At all times during the appeals process the faculty member has access to the University Ombudsman.

D. Percentage Limitation. *The proposal shall include a statement restricting the creation of positions in the proposed titles to a certain percentage of the tenure-track faculty of the originating college and of the tenure-track faculty in those departments or programs where those positions are located.*

The number of Research Professor positions within the College of Veterinary Medicine will be limited to 10% of the number of tenure-track faculty in the College or to 10% of the tenure-track faculty within any department. A higher percentage may be afforded for an individual department if the relevant department makes an overpowering argument showing that (1) there is need for the higher percentage; (2) the Research Professor positions in question would not replicate the functions of positions ordinarily held by tenured or tenure-track faculty; and (3) any additional Research Professor positions in question would not detract in any way from the potential for adding tenured or tenure-track positions in that department.

E. Voting and Other Rights. *The proposal shall define the rights and responsibilities of appointees in the proposed titles, including their voting status in their departments and colleges or schools, and their access to grievance and appeals processes available to tenure-track faculty.*

E1. Voting status and other privileges: Research Professors of all ranks are members of the college faculty and are eligible to serve on University, College and Department committees. In addition, they have voting privileges at the department and college levels, with the exception of decisions regarding promotion above their rank, or tenure and promotion of tenure track faculty.

Research professors are eligible for general or minor membership on the Graduate Faculty if their responsibilities qualify them or if their supervision of graduate students makes them eligible. A general member of the Graduate Faculty may serve as chair or minor subject member of any special committee in any subject that he or she represents.

Consulting activities of Research Professors will have oversight according to policies of the College and University.

Research professors are not eligible for emeritus status or sabbatic leave.

E2. Grievance and Appeals: Research professorial faculty will have access to established [faculty grievance procedures](#) within the College of Veterinary Medicine. The General Committee of the Faculty is the College grievance committee. [Chapter 5 of the Faculty Handbook](#) describes expectations for College-Level Grievance Procedures and provides a link to the relevant part of the University Policy website. The procedures that should be followed, at the University level, when academic misconduct is thought to have occurred are described in [Chapter 5 Academic Policies and Responsibilities of the Cornell Faculty Handbook](#), Academic Misconduct. A grievant may also wish to consult the [University Ombudsman's office](#).

Appeals processes that apply to reappointment and promotion are described in Section C.

F. Impact Statement. *The proposal shall contain an appraisal of the impact of creating the new positions on existing tenure-track and non-tenure-track academic titles and their holders. This appraisal should indicate whether and in what ways current holders of non-tenure-track titles will be eligible for appointment to the new positions and whether their current positions will be protected against elimination by the new positions.*

At present there are four Research Scientists in the College of Veterinary Medicine, in three different departments. Given that the College of Veterinary Medicine has capacity for up to 13 appointments in the Research-track titles, there will be opportunities for new appointments if the current holders of the Research Scientist titles choose to convert their appointments with approval of the department and the Dean. The search process will be waived for these individuals should they choose to convert from their existing titles to these new titles. Should these individuals not choose to convert to the new titles, they can remain in their current titles.