

RESEARCH FACULTY

1. BACKGROUND

Research is an essential component of postbaccalaureate education. It is the critical ingredient that distinguishes graduate from undergraduate education. Outstanding research and scholarship are required for any institution of higher learning to have a distinguished graduate education program. Rice University is committed to excellence in higher education at all levels, including postbaccalaureate. This policy establishes a program designed to enhance the research aspects of graduate education at Rice University.

In many areas of research a need has developed for multiple investigator research teams (e.g., National Science Foundation Engineering and Science-Technology Centers). For Rice to compete for and successfully maintain this kind of funding, the University needs the ability to attract and keep extremely high quality researchers in these areas of focus.

Given Rice's small size and limited resources and the desire to maintain a University-wide programmatic balance among tenure-track faculty, it is not practical for Rice to commit large numbers of new tenure-track faculty positions for these center activities. Moreover, it may not be wise to use tenure-track positions in this way, since areas of national research interest and support change, sometimes quite rapidly.

To meet these needs, Rice University has established research faculty ranks designed to attract and keep people of high research competence and visibility, yet without taxing the fiscal resources or academic balance of the University. Research faculty will contribute to graduate education in several ways: by securing funding for and directing graduate thesis research projects; by collaborating in research and engaging in mutually beneficial interactions with tenure-track faculty, graduate students, research associates, and research staff; and by enhancing Rice's reputation and stature as a leading research institution.

2. DEFINITION

Research professor ranks are designated as assistant research professor, associate research professor, and (full) research professor in ascending order of seniority. These positions are not eligible for tenure. They are typically twelve month, full-time positions. Faculty in these positions are not required to perform any classroom teaching, and there is no obligation for financial support from the University.

3. TERM OF APPOINTMENT

Appointments to any ranks of research faculty are made for a specific period of time, usually no less than three nor more than five years. Renewals of appointments are contingent upon satisfactory performance as determined by the members of the center, institute, laboratory, or department as appropriate. In addition, the availability of external funds to support the research is also required. Assistant research professors are expected to be promotable to the rank of associate research professor within six years. Failure to be promoted from assistant research professor to associate research professor results in dismissal from the research professor ranks.

4. DUTIES

A. **Research.** The principal duty of a research faculty member is to conduct research related to the academic program of the department, center, institute, or laboratory in which the research faculty member works. The research program may also involve students, research associates, other faculty, and staff, and may be conducted either on or off campus, as dictated by the nature of the research.

B. **Research Funds.** Individual research faculty members are responsible for securing external funding to support their research program. Research faculty of all ranks may serve as principal investigators on research funding proposals, which are subject to the usual review and approval by the appropriate center or institute or laboratory director, department chair and University administration.

C. **Supervision of Student Research.** Research faculty may direct theses and/or chair committees, as appropriate, for undergraduate and graduate research projects subject to the usual department approval; they may also serve on thesis committees for other advanced degree candidates in accordance with University policy on graduate studies.

D. **Teaching.** Although classroom teaching is not required of research faculty, from time to time a research faculty member may teach a course at the graduate or undergraduate level. In such cases, a temporary appointment as lecturer must be made in addition to the research faculty appointment. University compensation for such teaching duties will be arranged on a case-by-case basis.

E. **University Service.** While research faculty are not required to serve on University standing committees, they are eligible to serve in such positions subject to any constraints placed by the funding agencies. Research faculty are not eligible to serve on the University Council or on its Promotion and Tenure Committee. They are, however, entitled to attend department and University faculty meetings and to vote on matters arising therein except those pertaining to tenure and exclusively undergraduate curriculum and affairs. Within a department this right may be modified by vote of the tenure-track faculty of that department.

5. COMPENSATION

All compensation paid to research faculty to support their research efforts is to be provided by external research funds, although the amount of compensation is established by the University.

A. **Salaries.** Research faculty salaries should in general be compatible with salary levels for tenure-track faculty of equivalent rank in the same school or division.

B. **Benefits.** Research faculty are eligible for benefits. They will be governed by the same vacation policy that applies to staff, such as benefit time, short-term disability, and medical and dental insurances. Leaves of absence for research faculty are allowed, provided no commitment for support from the University is implied.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

A. **Department Affiliation.** Although research faculty may be affiliated with a center, institute, laboratory, or other such interdepartmental or extradepartmental entity, each individual research faculty member will have a primary affiliation with a specific academic department. Research faculty positions shall comprise neither more than one-fourth of the total (tenure-track and non tenure-track) faculty positions in a given division or school, nor more than one-third of the total (tenure-track and non tenure-track) faculty positions in any given department.

Recommendations for initial appointments, promotions, salary adjustments, or other personnel actions shall be initiated by the appropriate department in a manner that parallels that of the tenure-track faculty. Availability of space and support facilities will be addressed at each level of approval.

B. Initial Appointments. Available positions must be appropriately advertised. Recommendations for initial appointments to the research faculty must demonstrate that the research record and research potential of the candidate are at least at the level expected for appointment to the tenure-track faculty at the equivalent rank. Documentation must include a complete résumé with list of publications or other scholarly works, letters of recommendation from recognized distinguished researchers in the candidate's field of expertise, and a description of the search and selection process. Approval for these appointments must come from the dean and provost in a manner parallel to that for tenure-track faculty. All appointments must satisfy the equal opportunity guidelines and affirmative action policies of the University.

C. Promotions. Recommendations for promotion of research faculty must be accompanied by a dossier essentially identical to that prepared for tenure-track faculty. The steps taken and the approvals required for promotion are the same as for the tenure-track faculty. Research faculty are appointed for specified terms. Promotion is based on performance, not on time in rank. Performance in classroom teaching and University service are not required but may be considered if applicable. To be eligible for promotion to associate research professor, an assistant research professor must have demonstrated the ability both to attract external funding and to develop a research reputation, as measured by standard indices, that would indicate the same stature in the field of research expected for promotion of tenure-track faculty to tenured rank.

Promotions from the rank of associate research professor to (full) research professor are made only for truly outstanding, internationally recognized researchers. This stature must be unequivocally demonstrated in a parallel manner to that for tenure-track faculty. As is true with tenure-track faculty, research faculty have the right to appeal procedural aspects of promotion decisions to the Appeals and Grievance Committee of the Faculty Senate.



David W. Leebron, President

Policy History

Issued: September 28, 1990

Revised: April 18, 2007

Revised: May 12, 2016