

Frequently Asked Questions regarding Promotion to Distinguished Professor

Q: Where in the faculty handbook is there information on the Distinguished Professor rank and process?

A: UNM Faculty Handbook Sub-Section B 2.2.5 describes the nature of this rank and the decision-making process.

Q: May nontenured faculty be nominated for Distinguished Professor?

A: No. Distinguished Professor is listed under sub-section B 2.2 Tenure-Track Ranks and Titles of the Faculty Handbook. It is tenured rank, superior to Professor.

Q: May faculty self-nominate?

A: No. Nominations originate at the department level, and “must have the recommendation of departmental and/or college faculty.”

Q: Is appointment as a Distinguished Professor considered a promotion?

A: Yes.

Q: Can a candidate’s nomination be put forth by a faculty member outside the academic home department?

A: Nominations originate at the department level, or in the case of a non-departmental college, at the college level. If a faculty member from another unit wishes to participate in nominating, a voting faculty member inside the academic unit should co-nominate.

Q: Are individual faculty members’ recommendations (“votes”) regarding a Distinguished Professor nomination confidential?

A: Yes

Q: May faculty members make anonymous recommendations (“votes”) regarding a Distinguished Professor nomination?

A: No. Recommendations must be identified and signed.

Q: May I abstain from making recommendations (“voting”) on a Distinguished Professor nomination?

A: Abstentions should only be used when there is a clear conflict of interest that would create bias that would interfere with a faculty member’s ability to fairly assess the dossier. Individuals who choose to abstain must refrain from commenting on the case.

Q: Should faculty who have been asked to make individual recommendations (“votes”) on a Distinguished Professor nomination use the individual faculty recommendation form/ballot on <https://provost.unm.edu/promotion-and-tenure/distinguished-professors.html>?

A: Yes. The questions on the form differ from those used in other milestone reviews, reflecting the special criteria for the Distinguished Professor rank. Individual recommendations must be made in writing.

Q: How should the Chair's letter address the faculty vote?

A: In some situations, it is appropriate to include additional faculty from outside the department in making recommendations, such as when the nominee's research program is extensively interdisciplinary and where faculty outside the department are best positioned to evaluate the impact of the work. In very large departments, it may be appropriate for the Chair to seek recommendations from one or more divisions rather than the entire department. The Chair's letter should make explicit which (and how many) faculty were asked to vote and why, and should summarize the results, noting abstentions as well as positive and negative votes.

Q: If a department chair is nominated as DP, how should the process be different?

A: If a faculty departmental faculty colleague nominates their chair for the rank of Distinguished Professor, then someone other than the nominee/chair should oversee the consultation with department faculty, aggregate the written recommendations/ballots, and write the "chair's" letter. Generally, the person overseeing this process should be from outside the department, ideally an associate dean. The dean would then review and approve the request for external review letters as usual, and the assigned associate dean or other would oversee the process of obtaining external reviews.

Q: The call states that "External reviews may not be solicited from individuals who have conflicts of interest with the candidate (i.e., co-authors, relative, collaborators on sponsored research, former students, etc.)" Is there any statute of limitations on co-authorship and collaborators on sponsored research?

A: There's no specific time limit for research collaborations with respect to the Distinguished Professor candidate review process. However, the longer in the past the better, and the frequency of co-authorship with any reviewer should be quite limited. If an external reviewer were a frequent and recent co-author, there could be questions about whether the reviewer is in effect partly assessing the impact of their own work. It is helpful to the Distinguished Professor Advisory Committee if the chair's letter provides context regarding selection of reviewers.