

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
University Distinguished Professor Selection Criteria and Procedure

Approved by the Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, July 19, 2021

Revised on July 16, 2021

June 28, 2021

CRITERIA

A recipient of the University Distinguished Professor (UDP) award should be a recognized scholar in their field and in the top echelon of that field in achievements. Accomplishments relative to attaining and maintaining this include a record demonstrating many of the following with the bolded ones being essential:

- **Evidence of a transformational contribution that changed the direction of research or scholarship in at least one area of his/her field of study. This would be documented by**
 - a) Strong evidence indicating how this shifted thinking and direction in the field of study.
 - b) Letters from leading national and international scholars attesting to this (with letter writers drawn from top universities, research institutes and, if possible, NAS members).
 - c) Citations or some other relevant metric of professional reliance on work demonstrating the professional redirecting nature of the transformational contribution (possibly including such evidence as total citations in Google Scholar for the candidate in the thousands plus hundreds or more to at least one paper in a transformational area).
 - d) A contribution discussed in terms of redirection of the field of study or opening of a new field.
- **Evidence that the individual is in top 2% of their field. This could involve**
 - a) Recipient of internationally and nationally recognized awards from professional societies and agencies.
 - b) Designation as a fellow of a scientific society in the field of study where the honor is given to about 2% of the membership.
 - c) Evidence of a strong role in National and International scientific organizations (National Academy of Science, science advisory boards, etc.).
 - d) Excellent record of publications in top journals in his/her field as well as impacting the broader science community with it being desirable to have publications in the very top journals (Science, Nature, PNAS).
 - e) Record of invited presentations, journal articles, and seminars internationally and nationally.
 - f) Evidence of cutting-edge scholarship and working relationships with top scholars.
 - g) Evidence of continuing contributions to his/her field of study.
 - h) Leadership roles in professional societies, editorships and board membership.
 - i) Record of invitations to serve in prestigious professional roles such as editorships, editorial boards, professional subject matter task forces etc.
- Strong record of success in securing funding from competitive extramural funding programs such as NIH, NSF and USDA NIFA/AFRI.
- Documented national/international or multidisciplinary reliance on developed scholarly materials.
- A record showing a Texas A&M appointment of longer than one year.

PROCEDURE

Pre-nomination Process

- A call for pre-nominations will be issued by the Office of the Dean in the spring to all faculty through Department Heads, with a link to this document.
- Pre-nominations can be originated by a department head, a UDP, a department awards committee, or a petition from three or more faculty. All UDP pre-nominations within a department should be submitted to the department head who will evaluate the candidates before forwarding the pre-nomination to the dean. The evaluation by the department head will accompany the pre-nomination of the faculty member to the dean. Although there is no limitation on the number of pre-nominations submitted by a department, best practice is to only submit pre-nominations of well-qualified individuals based on the criteria and strive to include those from traditionally under-represented groups.

Selection Process

- Pre-nominations will be evaluated by a UDP review committee that includes all willing COALS UDPs and up to 4 other members appointed by the dean to expand diversity and subject matter representation. The UDP review committee will review and evaluate all pre-nominated candidates and recommend potential college nominees to the dean.
- The dean will select up to three college nominees based on the recommendation of the UDP review committee and evaluation of the pre-nominations.

Preparation of the Full Nomination Packets

- Designated UDPs will work with the nominators of the college nominees and their respective departments to develop high quality full nomination packets to be submitted to the university.
- Each full nomination packet will be submitted through the head of the department of the nominee. The head of the department shall forward the nomination to the dean along with an independent evaluation of the candidate.
- For each full nomination, a written, consensus evaluation will be prepared by the college's UDPs, which will be included as part of the college's nomination packet. At least three UDPs must be involved in each evaluation, which should focus on the strengths and weaknesses of each case. This evaluation by the college's UDPs is not a recommendation of the candidate, but rather an independent evaluation of the candidate's qualifications.
- UDP nominations are the sole prerogative of the dean, and each nomination must include a letter of affirmation and support from the dean.

NOTES ON THE FULL NOMINATION PACKAGE

A package should exhibit:

- Identification of the transformative contribution with a very clear statement on its nature as a transformative contribution to the candidate's field of study.
- Strong documentation of that contribution through means such as statements in letters of support, citations, and awards.
- Identification and coverage of transformative contributions should generally be limited to one or two. Documents claiming multiple contributions often are not viewed favorably.
- An identified contribution that is much more than a new finding using preexisting findings and approaches. For technical advances, the contributor should be recognized as the "inventor" not simply the "ambassador".
- Strong backing by nominators.
- Summary tables on awards, publications, presentations, citations (total and papers amassing large counts), and grantsmanship.
- Strong supporting quotes from outstanding scholars that recognize and address the major transformative contribution.
- A focus that fundamentally dwells on the scholarly contributions in the national/international professional stage.
- Awards broken out into categories like professional associations; TAMU versus non TAMU, industry, national vs international.
- For external awards, description of the criteria and prestige (e.g. number of awards given relative to the number of eligible individuals)
- No coverage of a) administration, b) teaching, c) student advising (including roles with PhD students and postdocs), d) outreach activities or e) personal accomplishments outside of the professional arena. These should **not be included** as such materials are not of direct value in advancing the case.
- Citation counts and perhaps lists of highly cited papers.
- While lists of publications are essential, long lists of presentations, awarded contracts, visitors, consultancies, and routine committee roles **are unnecessary**. Supporting summary tables should be used for reporting such items:
 - Funding by sponsor (with identification of particularly prestigious ones)
 - Numbers of publications and other professional outputs by type. This includes a table summarizing number of journal articles, books, book chapters, invited papers/presentations (separated into domestic and international), professional presentations, and seminars. Ordinarily lists detailing titles, dates and places of contributed professional presentations, and seminars are not needed, just summary numbers.
 - Text highlighting key accomplishments, such as articles in leading journals in the discipline and leading journals with broad impact, prestigious awards, or receipt of highly competitive funding from well-regarded sources.
 - Although being a recipient of the university level Distinguished Research Achievement Award is a good indicator, receipt of prestigious awards from professional societies is almost essential to document top 2% standing. Some societies give very few awards, others more so. There is substantial documentation that women and URM receive fewer awards in STEM disciplines than male colleagues, which should be taken into consideration in the college UDP nomination process.