Tenure and Promotion Guidelines
Department of Physics

Our department members work together to create an atmosphere of collaborative learning for all students, majors and non-majors alike. We hire faculty who share our interest in nurturing this community - in teaching at the undergraduate level, working closely with students, and doing research with undergraduate collaborators. As the Faculty Handbook makes clear, successful candidates for tenure will present strong records in three areas: teaching, research, and service.

Teaching:
The Department expects its faculty to be excellent teachers. Effective teaching, which includes the candidate’s ability to communicate effectively in the classroom and to motivate students to think deeply about physics, may be demonstrated in the following ways:

- Faculty observations, including both formal classroom visitations and informal observations such as discussions of pedagogy;
- Engagement of students in a variety of learning experiences such as office hours and the Senior Project;
- Student letters, both solicited and random;
- Student teaching evaluations; and
- Course materials (e.g., exams, assignments, syllabi) that indicate creative and pedagogically valuable approaches.

We expect that these sources of information are consistent with one another. Should there be substantial conflict between these sources, we will tend to weight our own observations and the student letters more heavily than the course evaluations. In reading course evaluations, we will pay more attention to the written comments than to the numerical summaries. Evaluation will also take into account the number of times a course has been taught, the range of courses taught, and the difficulty of developing new courses. Development of new courses, especially of courses outside the faculty member’s primary field of expertise, will be considered positively.

Research:
A new faculty member will develop a vibrant research program. Although we embrace different models of scholarship, most faculty build an independent program of which they are Principal Investigator. An alternative successful model is a collaborative program with colleagues at other institutions. In either case, the goal is a vibrant program of research aimed at publication in professional journals. To support new members of the department so that they succeed in this endeavor, we advise faculty to wait until the third year to accept college service appointments, and offer guidance with grant writing.

It is difficult to characterize absolute measures of a vibrant program of research. The following criteria, however, offer a guide to the expected level of productivity in four important categories.

- Publications in peer-reviewed journals,
- Involvement of Hamilton students in research,
- Activity level as evidenced by conference presentations and lectures at other institutions, and
- External funding.

The Department recognizes that the expectations for publication in different sub-fields of physics are variable. The chair and candidates should discuss these expectations during the pre-tenure period. However, the Department expects that at least two peer-reviewed journal
articles should result from work that is initiated after the candidate arrives at Hamilton College. During the pre-tenure years, published articles that report on work largely completed before the candidate arrived at Hamilton add evidence of scholarly depth and are important contributions to the file. However, such articles are not sufficient for tenure. The quality of publications will be assessed by outside evaluators as part of the tenure review; our assumption is that published work that has undergone peer-review is of high quality.

Successful candidates for tenure will have involved Hamilton students in research. Faculty must work with seniors on research projects as part of the senior program. When appropriate, seniors should be involved in the primary area of research. The department is committed to offering summer research opportunities to students. We understand that collaborating with students can slow scholarly productivity rather than enhance it. Untenured faculty should work with the chair and colleagues to determine an appropriate level of participation in the summer program.

It is important that new faculty remain connected with the larger community of researchers. Faculty should take advantage of the College’s support for faculty travel, and should attend a conference regularly, presenting current work. Invited lectures at other institutions also strengthen a candidate’s case for tenure, as they are alternative ways to publicize one’s own work and to exchange ideas.

The process of planning a research project for a grant and sending that grant proposal for external review is beneficial to all scientists. Normally, all new faculty should submit proposals for external funding for their research programs. We recognize that it is more difficult to get funding in some areas than others; as long as a candidate actively seeks funding, the record is adequate in this category.

**Service:**

All members of the Physics department contribute to departmental discussions and decision-making. Tenure-track faculty will serve as advisors, and may choose to stand for election to college committees. We encourage junior faculty to volunteer for committee work in order to make connections with faculty from other areas of the College. However, we are supportive of the choice to postpone major committee service until after the tenure decision. Other forms of service include service to professional societies, refereeing articles for publication in professional journals, etc.

**Promotion to Full Professor:**

After tenure, members of the Physics Department are expected to continue as excellent teachers and productive scholars, and to contribute to the community with service both inside the department and for the general College community. A candidate for promotion to full professor will ordinarily serve in the rank of associate professor for a length of time that is stipulated by the current Faculty Handbook. The chair of the department will provide ongoing feedback during that period about the faculty member’s progress toward promotion. Our Handbook states that successful candidates for promotion will present strong records in three areas: teaching, research, and service. The teaching and service record will be evaluated using the guidelines specified in the Handbook.

**Research and Publications**

Members of the Physics Department are expected to maintain scholarly activity after receiving tenure. The awarding of tenure signifies that the faculty member has succeeded in establishing a productive research program. After tenure, faculty members normally continue as independent
researchers with their pre-tenure research program, and should maintain the pre-tenure publication rate. However, they may choose to switch fields, and a temporary slowing of publication rate often accompanies a change of direction. This is acceptable and should not discourage faculty from trying new ideas.

For promotion to full professor, faculty must continue to be active, productive, and visible scholars. There are many ways of demonstrating scholarly activity, including publishing original work in peer-reviewed journals, attending professional meetings to present current research, and submitting proposals for external support. Normally at least two peer-reviewed journal articles should result from work that occurs after the tenure decision. Successful candidates for promotion will continue to involve Hamilton students in research. Faculty must work with seniors on research projects as part of the senior program. When appropriate, seniors should be involved in the primary area of research. The department is committed to offering summer research opportunities to students and all senior faculty members should participate on a regular basis.

Although grant writing is not required for senior faculty, they are encouraged to seek external funding for laboratory equipment and operating costs when external awards help the productivity of the research program. While we recognize that a number of external factors influence the success of grant applications, awards strengthen the research record, as they indicate reviewers’ positive assessment of the applicant’s record as well as his/her proposed research project.