

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	ACAF Academic Affairs
POLICY NUMBER	ACAF 1.18
POLICY TITLE	Change of Status between Faculty Tracks
SCOPE OF POLICY	USC Columbia and Palmetto College
DATE OF REVISION	May 30, 2025
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	Office of the Provost

PURPOSE

This policy governs the change in faculty appointment status between the tenure track and professional track, or between professional-track faculty titles.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Professional Track: designation for faculty members who are engaged in research, instruction both inside and outside the classroom, service and/or administration but who are not eligible for tenure.

Tenure track: designation for faculty who are engaged in research, instruction both inside and outside the classroom, service and administration and who are eligible for tenure (pre-tenure) or tenured.

POLICY STATEMENT

Tenure-track and professional-track faculty members are defined in policies [ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions](#) and [ACAF 1.16 Professional-track Faculty](#).

This policy governs the change in faculty appointment status between the professional track and tenure track or between professional-track titles. This policy does not govern changes in tenure track status in the event of an administrative appointment or changes to the calculation of the probationary period for tenure (tenure clock extensions). See also policy [ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-track and Professional-track Faculty](#).

All transfers must be initiated at the request of the affected faculty member. Transfers are lateral moves. Transfers onto the tenure track from any professional track rank, however, can only be made to an assistant professor line. Promotions are separate actions governed by unit criteria. In all cases, the administrative unit must consult with the Office of International Services on possible immigration restrictions or implications for non-U.S. citizen faculty changing tracks or titles.

A. Transfer from Tenure Track to Professional Track

A tenure-track faculty member may withdraw from the tenure track during the penultimate year without applying for tenure in order to move to professional track line. Changing the

appointment status of a full-time faculty member to a faculty position not on tenure track (e.g., assistant professor to teaching assistant professor, or assistant professor to clinical assistant professor, etc.) is an administrative decision and does not require a new search. The change, however, does require the vote and approval of the tenured and tenure-track faculty and the chair/director of the affected unit. The request must be approved by the dean and the provost on the Columbia campus or the chancellor of Palmetto College.

A faculty member still in the probationary period will normally submit the request to transfer from the tenure track prior to the beginning of the decision year. Transfer requests submitted after submission of the faculty member's tenure and promotion file will not be approved, except in extraordinary cases as approved by the provost on the Columbia campus or the chancellor of Palmetto College.

Tenured faculty members transferring to the professional track relinquish tenure. Additionally, tenured faculty members at any rank who change their employment status from full-time to part-time relinquish their tenure. See also policy [ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions](#).

B. Transfer from Professional Track to Tenure Track

Changing the appointment status of a full-time faculty member who is on professional track to tenure track is also an administrative decision and does not require a new search, provided a proper search was conducted initially. The change does require the vote and approval of the tenured and tenure-track faculty of the affected unit and the chair/director of the unit. The request must also be approved by the dean and the provost on the Columbia campus or the chancellor of Palmetto College. Professional track faculty may apply for an open assistant professor tenure track position in a competitive search.

Such a change in status may occur under one of the following two circumstances:

1. After having served as a full-time professional track faculty member for not less than two academic years, this faculty member may be considered for appointment as an assistant professor in the tenure track, if faculty member was originally hired as a result of a proper search: or
2. The official offer letter sent pursuant to a proper search may specify that an assistant professor tenure-track appointment is contingent upon satisfaction of contingencies (e.g., documented completion of a terminal degree); otherwise, the initial appointment will be as a faculty member on professional track (e.g., instructor, research professor, lecturer, etc.).

C. Transfer between Professional-Track Faculty Titles

Changing the appointment status of a full-time faculty member who seeks a transfer from one professional track title to another (e.g., senior instructor to teaching associate professor) is an administrative decision and does not require a new search, provided a proper search was

conducted initially. However, this change does require a vote of the faculty in the unit. Requests must be approved through academic channels by the provost.

See also policy [ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions](#).

PROCEDURES

A. Transfer from Tenure Track to Professional Track

1. The unit's tenure-track and tenured faculty should vote, providing a recommendation for or against the change of status.
2. The dean and unit chair (in departmentalized units) provide written recommendations to the provost, including date, outcome, and vote of the unit faculty.
3. The provost may approve, disapprove, or defer a decision on the change of appointment status.
4. The change in appointment takes effect on the date specified in the written approval from the provost.

B. Transfer to Tenure Track Following Two Years' Service

1. The unit's tenure-track and tenured faculty should vote, providing a recommendation for or against the transfer to an assistant professor position.
2. The dean and unit chair (in departmentalized units) provide written recommendations to the provost, including date, outcome, and vote of the unit faculty.
3. The dean certifies that a proper search was conducted at the time of the initial appointment.
4. The provost may approve, disapprove, or defer a decision on the change of status.
5. The change in appointment takes effect on the date specified in the provost's approval letter. The tenure start date will be specified in the provost approval letter.

C. Transfer to Tenure Track for Satisfying Contingency

1. The change in appointment follows when the contingency has been met, provided the faculty member's performance has been satisfactory. The change in the appointment must be approved by the provost.
2. The change in appointment takes effect on either January 1 or August 16, whichever date is first following the date the contingency was satisfied.

D. Transfer between Professional-Track Faculty Titles

1. The unit faculty should vote, providing a recommendation for or against the change of status.
2. The dean and unit chair (in departmentalized units) provide written recommendations to the provost, including date, outcome, and vote of the unit faculty.
3. The dean certifies that a proper search was conducted at the time of the initial appointment.
4. The provost may approve, disapprove, or defer a decision on the change of status.
5. The change in appointment takes effect on the date specified in the written approval from the provost.

D. Notification of Change

The Division of Human Resources must be notified regarding any changes in faculty titles, tenure or appointment status, following the required approvals outlined above.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

[USC Columbia Faculty Manual](#)

[Palmetto College Campuses Faculty Manual](#)

[ACAF 1.00 Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track and Professional Track Faculty](#)

[ACAF 1.06 Academic Titles for Faculty and Unclassified Academic Staff Positions](#)

[ACAF 1.16 Professional-Track Faculty](#)

[ACAF 1.31 Extension of Faculty Tenure-Track Probationary Period](#)

[CR 1.00 Policy Against Discrimination Harassment & Sexual Misconduct](#)

[CR 2.00 Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#)

[HR 1.90 Job Reference and Background Checks](#)

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
February 1, 1995	New policy approval
October 31, 2016	Policy reviewed October 2016. No substantive changes needed
June 3, 2021	Reformatting to new template; change non-tenure-track to professional track; clarify procedures for transfer to tenure track.
May 30, 2025	Policy revised to reflect current practices and to clarify procedures for transfers, including adding a section describing transfers between professional-track faculty titles.