

# Department of Geography and Planning Bylaws Document

(Approved September 26, 2024)

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## I. Structure

The Department of Geography and Planning is part of the College of Arts and Sciences at Appalachian State University.

## II. Policy Authority

The Department's operations are governed by federal and state law and the policies of the UNC System, Appalachian State University, and the College of Arts and Sciences. Department policies must comply with all overarching policies and regulations.

1. **Adoption of Department Bylaws:** These Bylaws shall become effective upon approval by a majority vote of the voting members of the Department faculty through a written anonymous and confidential vote, followed by subsequent approval according to College and University procedures.
2. **Amendment of Department Bylaws:** An amendment may be proposed by submitting it in written form to the Department Chair at least two weeks before a regular meeting or a specially convened meeting to consider the proposal. An amendment shall be adopted upon approval by a majority vote of the Department faculty through a written secret ballot and subsequent approval by the Dean of the College and the Provost.

## III. Membership

The Department has highly trained and dedicated faculty and staff supporting its mission.

1. **Faculty:** The faculty of the Department includes all persons holding appointments at the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, or lecturer; irrespective of modifying adjectives such as adjunct, distinguished, emeritus/emerita/emeritx, research, senior, or visiting.
  - a. Voting privileges: Faculty who are on the tenure-track or tenured, and full-time. Faculty who have served the University for at least three consecutive years in a full-time position shall be eligible to vote on departmental or unit matters (Academic Affairs Standard Operating Procedures (AASOPs)- OP 10.2). A simple majority shall decide voting. Voting shall only take place if a quorum is present. The presence of a simple majority of the voting faculty defines a quorum.
  - b. Items that require Departmental approval include:
    - i. Changes to the Bylaws

- ii. Chair of the Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) Committee
  - iii. Reassigned Time (formerly Off-Campus Scholarly Assignments)
  - iv. International Exchanges
  - v. Curriculum Proposals
  - vi. Appointment of Faculty Senate Representative
  - vii. Renewal of existing Department Chair
2. **Staff:** Department staff includes administrative support specialists and managers of laboratories and computer facilities. All department staff members have the right to participate in department meetings unless explicitly prohibited by superseding documents. Department staff do not have voting privileges on departmental business matters.

#### **IV. Department Representation Expectations**

1. **Participation in Department events and University ceremonies**  
Faculty are expected to attend Department events and University ceremonies to congratulate colleagues and students. It is gratifying as a professor to see students you taught receive the degrees they worked hard to earn. It means a lot to the students (and their families) to shake hands with the professors they know at Department award receptions and graduation. A graduation ceremony also reminds and reinforces everyone in attendance how valuable the university is as an institution.
2. **Faculty and graduate student attendance is expected at each job candidate talk and Speaker Series presentation.**
3. **Faculty are strongly encouraged to participate in one or more of these events each year:**
  1. October [App State Open House](#) for prospective students;
  2. Department Orientation events for incoming undergrad or grad students;
  3. December College Graduation (Regalia can be [rented](#) from the university);
  4. April [App State Open House](#) for prospective students;
  5. May Department Grad Student Hooding Ceremony and Graduation Reception for Undergrad and Grad Students (usually held 2 hours before the graduation ceremony);
  6. May College Graduation (Regalia can be [rented](#) from the university).
4. **Attendance is strongly encouraged at three Department Events:**
  1. Department Welcome event at the beginning of the Fall semester
  2. Winter Celebration event at the end of the semester in December
  3. Department Student Scholarship Awards Ceremony in April
5. **Faculty Meetings**

Department faculty meetings are organized and led by the Chair. The Department will hold monthly meetings from August through May. Attendance is required for all tenure-track faculty unless they cannot attend (provide at least a one-day notice to the Chair). Department meetings may be held more frequently, as deemed necessary by the Chair. Advanced notice of meetings will be given to the faculty, along with an agenda.

The Chair prepares the Faculty Meeting agenda and shares it with the faculty before the meeting. Meetings involve Department business, curricular changes, Departmental policies, and any other matters concerning the Department's mission. All tenure-track faculty members are expected to participate.

## **V. Faculty Handbook**

The [Faculty Handbook](#) is updated annually to incorporate changes approved by the Appalachian State University Board of Trustees. Previous versions of the Handbook are archived, and additional governance procedures are provided through the [Academic Affairs Standard Operating Procedures \(AASOPs\)](#)

## **VI. Department Organization and Leadership**

If faculty or staff have questions or concerns, they should talk to the Chair first. There is a university chain of command all faculty and staff should follow. If a faculty or staff member skips the Chair with a question or concern, the first question the Dean or Academic Affairs will ask is, "Have you spoken to your Chair?" and then communicate directly with the Chair. This system exists because there are over 600 faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences, and over 1,400 faculty members are supervised by the Provost of Academic Affairs. The College and Academic Affairs rely on faculty to understand the chain of command and communicate directly with their Chairs.

The Chair is an Academic Affairs leadership team member supporting the university's broad mission, serving in an administrative at-will appointment (Faculty Handbook 8.5). When faculty or staff have questions or concerns, their first line of inquiry should be the Department Chair. Chairs report to their College Dean and are hired by the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor. Chairs are responsible for leading and managing their Department and working closely with their faculty on teaching, scholarship, and service, supporting student success, and offering direction and management over Departmental resources (AASOPs- OP 8.1).

The Chair's duties are outlined in their contract upon hire/renewal.

### **1. It is the specific responsibility of the Chair to:**

- a) Participate in the development of Department and University policies and be responsible for their communication and implementation at the Department level

- b) Communicate the needs of the Department (personnel, space, fiscal) to the appropriate administrative units
- c) Serve as an advocate for the Department and represent the Department in the University, the community, to appropriate external agencies, and at meetings of learned and professional societies
- d) Provide leadership in the recruitment and appointment of faculty members
- e) Arrange effective and equitable distribution of faculty responsibilities, including teaching duties and committee assignments within the Department
- f) Evaluate and counsel all Departmental faculty members concerning the performance of their duties during the annual review process
- g) Encourage and support good teaching, scholarly activity, and professional development within the Department
- h) Initiate, in consultation with the appropriate faculty committee, recommendations for appointment, reappointment, promotion, tenure, and dismissal following the University and College policy
- i) Make salary recommendations following University and College guidelines
- j) Organize and coordinate the Departmental faculty and staff in developing, implementing, and evaluating short and long-range Departmental goals, objectives, standards, and programs
- k) Work with the faculty to develop standards, curricula, and procedures that provide adequate preparation of graduates for professional or further academic endeavor
- l) Provide appropriate advisement to students majoring in the Department
- m) Provide leadership in supporting equality of opportunity and the protections available to members of the University community under all applicable laws
- n) Manage the Departmental resources, including the budget, by College and University guidelines
- o) Participate in planning capital improvements and maintenance of physical facilities
- p) Endeavor to secure and maintain adequate supplies, materials, and equipment for the Department
- q) Supervise the Departmental support staff
- r) Assign Department spaces that include all offices, classrooms, and labs

## **2. Graduate Program Director**

The Graduate Program Director's general responsibility is to work with the Departmental Chair, graduate faculty, and the graduate school to guide the Department toward its goals. The Graduate Program Director is the primary liaison with the Graduate School and ensures that critical tasks are completed on time. The Graduate Program Director receives a salary stipend and one Spring semester course release.

### **The Graduate Program Director is responsible for:**

- a) Leading the graduate program/admission committee to evaluate graduate applications
- b) Communicating with all graduate student applicants

- c) Managing graduate scholarships and graduate assistantship assignments
- d) Assessing the graduate program
- e) Advising incoming and current graduate students
- f) Completing and signing graduate paperwork and contracts
- g) Organizing graduate student orientations and graduation receptions

### **3. Honors Program Director**

The Departmental Honors Program has one director. The director recruits students, ensures they are coded as honors students in Banner and DegreeWorks, collects honors course contracts and other paperwork, and advises students on the Departmental honors process.

### **4. Planning Program Director**

The Planning Program Director shall be a tenured member of the faculty unless special consideration by the Chair. The Planning Program Director is responsible for convening faculty who teach in the Planning program each semester to discuss course offerings and programmatic initiatives targeted to Planning students. The Planning Program Director shall provide a written statement when Planning faculty are being reviewed for promotion and tenure. The Planning Program Director shall also, whenever possible, serve as Chair of the search committee for new Planning faculty.

**5. Department Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) Committee** - The APT Committee shall consist of all tenured faculty in the Department. The APT Committee Chair will be elected by the Department faculty annually and should rotate among tenured faculty. The APT recommends contract renewal for tenure-track faculty, adjunct status, Emeritus status, affiliated faculty status, graduate faculty status for tenure-track and tenured faculty, permanent tenure, and promotion to tenure-track or tenured ranks. All members of the APT shall complete an APT committee member training and voter justification forms, as required by Academic Affairs. (Faculty Handbook 7.2)

## **VII. Faculty and Staff Annual Reviews**

### **1. Department Policies on Promotion and Tenure and Merit Documents**

Departmental Promotion and Tenure policies and the Merit Document are on the Department website (<https://geo.appstate.edu/faculty-staff/forms-documents>).

### **2. Faculty Annual Reviews by the Department Chair**

The Department Chair meets with all faculty members each spring semester to conduct an annual review. During this annual review process, each faculty member provides a self-assessment of their instruction, service, and research. The Chair sends the faculty an Annual Evaluation Form each Spring to allow faculty to summarize their contributions over the previous calendar year in instruction, research, service, progress toward tenure, and goals

for the following calendar year. The Chair will conduct faculty annual performance evaluations during the Spring semester after the calendar year from January 1 to December 31. The rating system for performance evaluations has three categories: “exceeds expectations,” “meets expectations,” and “fails to meet expectations.” The average rating is “meets expectations.” This rating describes a faculty member who performs their job skillfully, producing the results expected of a highly educated professional. The rating “meets expectations” also describes a faculty member whose performance is comparable to that of a broad range of faculty members within the unit. “Exceeds expectations” should be reserved for faculty who made outstanding contributions in the evaluation year. The faculty member’s self-evaluation should go beyond a list of accomplishments and provide reflections on their strengths and areas for growth or improvement.

The Chair and faculty member schedule a one-hour individual meeting to discuss and provide feedback on their evaluation. Separately, the Chair notes whether the faculty member exceeds, meets, or fails to meet teaching, research, and service expectations. If faculty have comments on the Chair's assessment, they may submit a one-page response to the Chair's assessment with their signed annual review. Following the meeting with the Department Chair, the faculty and Chair sign the yearly evaluation, which is forwarded to the Dean’s Office. For more information, see Faculty Handbook 3.7.

### **3. Staff Annual Reviews with the Chair**

Staff members will write and evaluate professional and personal goals for the year and submit them to the Chair through the appropriate software system for review by Human Resources.

## **VIII. Faculty Contracts**

New tenure-track faculty are typically appointed to the rank of assistant professor for a probationary term of four academic years. Before the end of the third year (typically January or February), the APT Committee evaluates whether faculty are making satisfactory progress toward tenure and promotion (Faculty Handbook 3.9 and Academic Affairs Standard Operating Procedures AASOP-OP 7).

### **Faculty Handbook 3.2.2:**

#### **Initial Appointment/Probationary Periods**

An initial appointment to the rank of Assistant Professor will be for a probationary term of four (4) academic years unless there is credit toward tenure. If a faculty member begins employment in the spring semester (January – May), the first probationary year shall begin in the subsequent academic year. If an Assistant Professor is reappointed at the end of their initial probationary period, the appointment shall be for a second probationary term of three (3) academic years. Under no circumstances should the total length of probation exceed seven (7) years of full-time service except when the probationary period has been extended due to an approved leave or other extenuating circumstances (Faculty Handbook 5 and AASOP-OP3).

### Notice of Non-Reappointment

In the event an Assistant Professor is not reappointed, the final faculty employment decision shall be made by the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor early enough to permit reasonable notice to be given. For a full-time Assistant Professor, timely notice shall be as follows:

- a. During the first year of service, the faculty member shall be given not less than sixty (60) calendar days' written notice before the specified term contract expires;
- b. During the second year of continuous service, the faculty member shall be given not less than ninety (90) calendar days' written notice before the specified term contract expires; and
- c. After two or more years of continuous service, the faculty member shall be given not less than twelve (12) months' written notice before the specified term contract expires.

## **IX. Department Committees**

1. **The Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) Committee** (Faculty Handbook 7.3.4) is responsible for the following:
  - a) Establishing any departmental criteria for appointment, promotion, or tenure of faculty members beyond the minimum qualifications indicated in the Faculty Handbook.
  - b) Reviewing the relevant material and making recommendations regarding the reappointment of probationary-term faculty and the subsequent appointment of Special Faculty
  - c) Reviewing applications for and making recommendations on graduate faculty status
  - d) Reviewing applications and making recommendations on all faculty promotions
  - e) Reviewing applications and making recommendations for the granting of permanent tenure
  - f) Reviewing materials and making recommendations on the credentials of faculty who could be granted tenure upon hire
  - g) Recommending a tenure-track open-ranked position candidate's rank and tenure status to the appropriate Dean for consideration and
  - h) Reviewing applications and making recommendations on Emeritus, Adjunct, and Affiliate faculty status.
2. **Post-Tenure Review (PTR) Committee:** The purpose of the PTR Committee is to provide a comprehensive, periodic evaluation of faculty performance conducted at a maximum of every five (5) years after a faculty member has received tenure. The PTR committee comprises at least three (3) tenured faculty members who will serve staggered, non-renewable, three (3) year terms. Members of the PTR are selected by a vote of the Department's tenured faculty.

3. **Curriculum Committee:** The purpose of the Curriculum Committee is to consider additions, deletions, and changes to courses, programs, policies, or structures within or affecting the department. The Curriculum Committee comprises three faculty members. The Curriculum Committee meetings are held once or twice per semester, usually before a Department meeting. Proposals for course or degree changes are presented at the meeting and passed with a majority vote. If the item passes the curriculum committee, it will be voted on by the entire department. The curriculum committee also helps with annual assessments of department degrees.
4. **Teaching Enhancement Committee:** The purpose of the Teaching Enhancement Committee is to provide resources related to developing and maintaining quality teaching in the Department. The committee also recommends department policies for student reviews of teaching and peer observation of teaching.
5. **Graduate Program/Admissions Committee (year-round):** The committee will meet with the Grad Program Director and read graduate student applications, discuss the applicants, and choose which graduate students to accept and fund into our Graduate Degree program.
6. **Graduate Exam Committee:** The committee will meet and write a graduate-level general comprehensive exam question. After the students complete the comprehensive exam, they will read, discuss, decide, and communicate to the students whether they passed or failed the general comprehensive exam question.
7. **Speaker Committee:** The Speaker Committee can spend up to \$500 annually on Department guest speakers. They will work closely with the Department Administrative Assistant to organize all travel forms and plans. An honorarium is permitted only if approved by the Dean over one month before the travel date.
8. **Honors and Awards Committee:** The purpose of the scholarship committees is to make recommendations on the recipients of Departmental scholarships each year and use all available funds annually.
9. **Faculty Mentors for the Geography and Planning Club (monthly meetings)**
10. **Faculty Senator (monthly meetings)**  
We recommend that only tenured faculty serve on the Faculty Senate. A faculty Senator's term is three years, and there are no term limits on membership. During an academic year when the Senate seat expires or remains unfilled, the Department shall elect a representative by March 15.

## **X. Faculty and Chair Search Procedures**

University faculty search committees are vital in recruiting, evaluating, and recommending the most qualified candidates for our Department. Active and consistent participation from all members is essential to ensure a thorough and fair selection process. Given the typically tight time constraints, members must perform their duties promptly and efficiently, maintaining a strong work ethic throughout the search process.



## **1. Faculty vacancy or new faculty search**

The Department shall vote for a Search Committee of three (3) tenured and one (1) untenured (tenure-track) faculty member. During their first meeting, the Search Committee will vote for their Search Chair. The Search Committee shall be responsible for developing an appropriate search procedure that meets University standards. They will evaluate the qualifications of all candidates, conduct video interviews with a short list of candidates, invite final candidates for campus interviews, organize campus visits, and conduct on-campus interviews with the finalists. All faculty, staff, and students may provide feedback from the candidate campus interviews to the Search Committee. The Search Chair will present a ranked list of the finalists to the Department Chair. The Chair will then begin offer negotiations with the final candidate after approval from the Dean.

## **2. Department Chair search:**

Faculty Handbook 8.6.3 Periodic Reopening/Evaluation of Department Chairs: Department Chairs serve at the will of the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor. Department Chairs shall be appointed for an initial term not to exceed five years. At the beginning of September in the final year of a Chair's initial term, the Dean shall inform the department faculty and staff by email that the Dean is seeking feedback regarding the Chair. After consideration of all annual performance reviews and the feedback received from department faculty and staff, the Dean shall provide a written recommendation to the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor to either reappoint the Department Chair for an additional term of up to a maximum of three years or to seek a new Department Chair through either an internal or external search process.

During September of the final year of a Department Chair's term (typically the fifth year), upon notification from the Dean, the Department of Geography and Planning faculty—excluding the current Department Chair—will convene to deliberate on the Department's future direction and leadership.

1. The Dean will initiate the meeting by outlining the process for reopening the Department Chair position and addressing any related inquiries.
2. This meeting will serve as a platform for an open and confidential discussion regarding whether the Department supports reappointing the current Chair for a new term or to initiate a search for a new Chair.
3. The Chair of the Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) Committee will record the meeting minutes, including the names of all faculty and staff present.
4. During this meeting, voting faculty (OP 10.2) will conduct a written, confidential, and anonymous vote to determine whether to retain the existing Chair or proceed with a search for a new Chair.
5. The APT Committee Chair will compile the Department's vote results and minutes and forward them to the Dean.
6. The Dean will then communicate the feedback to the Department Chair.
7. Should the Department decide to search for a new Chair, the process outlined below will

be followed.

The Department shall vote on the Search Committee for the Department Chair and should consist of four (4) tenured and two (2) untenured (tenure-track) faculty members and a staff member. It shall also include a Department Chair of a similar Department appointed by the Dean. The Dean shall solicit recommendations from the Department Search Committee before appointing that voting member. During their first meeting, the Search Committee will vote for their Search Chair. The Search Committee will determine the acceptable final Chair candidates and communicate directly with the Dean.

All Search Committee members must complete search committee university training and reporting requirements ([University Search Committee training and other requirements](#))

## **XI. Department Mission, Values, and Culture**

### **1. Department Mission**

As one of the departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Geography and Planning specializes in physical geography and climate science, human geography and social justice, health geography, Geographic Information Science (GIS), community and regional planning, and sustainable and environmental planning to provide students with solutions-based critical thinking skills.

The Department of Geography and Planning is dedicated to fostering a dynamic learning environment where diverse faculty and students collaborate to explore and critically analyze human-environment interactions. Our commitment to excellence is reflected in our students' and alums' impressive track record, with over 90% securing employment in their respective fields and gaining admission to highly competitive graduate programs within six months of graduation.

Central to our educational approach is incorporating internships and field experiences, providing students with invaluable real-world experiences. Through internships, our students not only gain practical insights into their chosen fields but also develop crucial skills that make them highly sought after by employers. This emphasis on experiential learning contributes to the success of our graduates in the job market and their seamless transition into advanced academic programs.

Our faculty members are distinguished in their fields and are leaders in regional, national, and international collaborative research. Research opportunities enhance the overall learning experience for our students. Faculty not only lead by example but also include students in funded research initiatives, fostering a culture of shared discovery and mentorship.

Committed to upholding high standards of research productivity, our faculty's dedication is manifested in their continuous contributions to esteemed research journals, the authoring of

influential books, and the delivery of impactful presentations to diverse public audiences.

Collaboration is highly valued and encouraged among peers in our department, university, and beyond. Our goal is to promote the disciplines of Geography and Planning and act as ambassadors of these professional fields. We believe in the power of effective exchange of ideas and information. Therefore, we are committed to fostering an atmosphere free from abuse or harassment, characterized by courtesy and respect. Join us in shaping the future of Geography and Planning as we strive for excellence, collaboration, and a profound understanding of our world.

## **2. Department Culture**

The Department of Geography and Planning is enriched by diverse perspectives, fostering a positive, inclusive, and supportive culture for all members. To achieve this, we emphasize the importance of professional well-being and mutual respect in daily interactions. Clear expectations are set for conduct within the Department, alongside established procedures for reporting any misconduct. This commitment ensures a collaborative environment where everyone can thrive and contribute to the department's success.

## **3. Department and Professional Well-Being**

We show our colleagues that they are valued, that their contributions are meaningful, and that they are provided with the necessary workplace resources and support to ensure their professional success.

- a) Treat others fairly and equitably, with courtesy and respect, and we will foster an inclusive environment.
- b) Departments thrive when faculty members equitably undertake tasks such as developing current curricula, assisting colleagues in enhancing their teaching or research skills, providing exemplary student advising, and representing the Department positively at campus events.
- c) Supporting professional well-being necessitates respect, which is expected to be evident in all verbal and written communications within our Department.
- d) Faculty members are acknowledged for their support of the Department and colleagues through recognition in annual reviews, Promotion and Tenure discussions, and nominations for College and University Awards.
- e) Faculty members are accountable for their behavior. Misconduct should be reported to the Chair, who will document the incident and discuss the situation with the faculty member and the Dean.
- f) While representing the Department of Geography and Planning, we will extend these principles inside and outside our physical space. Professional well-being includes, but is not limited to, conferences and academic gatherings, study abroad settings, field activities, social media engagement for professional purposes, and community outreach initiatives. In these Department-related public settings, we will act professionally, refrain from personally critical comments, and clearly distinguish

professional comments from our personal opinions and views.

#### 4. Expectations for respectful and timely communication for all faculty and staff:

- a) Faculty and staff are expected to respond to emails from the Chair, colleagues, and students within one to three business days during the Fall and Spring semesters (excluding university breaks or holidays).
- b) The following specific actions and uses of University E-mail Facilities are improper ([Policy 908: Section 4.1.7 of the University Policy Manual](#)):
  - i. Concealment or misrepresentation of names or affiliations in e-mail messages.
  - ii. Alteration of source or destination address of e-mail.
  - iii. Use of e-mail for commercial or private business purposes.
  - iv. Use of e-mail for organized political activity or political solicitation.
  - v. Use of e-mail to harass or threaten other individuals.
  - vi. Use of e-mail that defames other individuals.
- c) Appalachian State University does not monitor the content of electronic mail as a routine procedure. The University reserves the right to inspect, copy, store, or disclose the contents of electronic mail messages, but will do so only when it believes these actions are appropriate to: prevent or correct improper use of University E-Mail Facilities; ensure compliance with University policies, procedures, or regulations; satisfy a legal obligation; or ensure the proper operations of University E-mail facilities or the Appalachian State University Data Network ([Policy 908: Section 4.1.9 of the University Policy Manual](#))
- d) Harassment encompasses any communication or conduct (*e.g.*, verbal, physical, digital, written) that fosters a hostile environment. For further information, refer to the ([Policy 110: Discrimination, Harassment, Retaliation and Sex-Based Misconduct in the University Policy Manual](#)).
- e) Actively intervene and report when we witness or otherwise become aware of misconduct or suspected misconduct, including discrimination, harassment, bullying, or other irresponsible behaviors that undermine individuals, the Department, or the University.

#### 5. Reporting misconduct

The Department of Geography and Planning upholds a high standard for respect and professional well-being and is dedicated to fostering a positive working environment within the Department. Should an individual within the Department fail to meet our expectations for respectful departmental citizenship, we must have well-defined mechanisms for identifying, communicating, and addressing such incidents. Reports of misconduct should be made to the Chair, who will then document the incident and discuss the situation with the faculty member and the Dean. This process enables us to learn from these incidents and maintain the integrity of our Department's culture.