

Proposal to Authorize Use of the Research Professor Title

Bowers CIS

Bowers CIS would like authorization to use the [Research Professor](#) (RP) title. This will enable us to carry out our research agenda more effectively and provide new opportunities for researchers across the college.

A. Justification

The RTE faculty in Bowers CIS have a critical role to play with respect to teaching, research, and the realization of college objectives. To recruit and retain the very best individuals for these positions, it is necessary to have at our disposal a set of titles that provide the candidate with incentives for promotion and sufficient status within their professional community.

To enhance our standing within the global research community, Bowers CIS requests permission to use the Research Professor (RP) title for two main reasons:

1. *Professional Development.* The RP track comes equipped with the same promotion sequence that is available to tenure track faculty (assistant-associate-full). If this is properly managed, then it creates a well-defined career path that is essential for retention and a set of incentives that is essential for enhancing the stature of the titleholder, their department, and the college.
2. *External Funding.* Professorial titles have a certain cachet that is appreciated across the research community—a fact of life that can come into play when a proposal is reviewed. This is especially true for center-level proposals that require visionary leadership. We need the RP title to be fully competitive with our peers, many of whom have more attractive opportunities for researchers off the tenure track.

The spirit of collaboration that characterizes Bowers CIS will ensure the total integration of RP titleholders into the overall research mission.

B. Description of Position

Research professor appointments are full-time, soft-money appointments designed for individuals whose research programs are at a level that (a) attracts external funding and (b) strengthens the overall research infrastructure within the college. Their primary responsibilities include initiating new research activities; creating and managing research laboratories; seeking funding opportunities, submitting proposals, and fulfilling the terms of research grants and contracts; planning, conducting and reporting on original research; and representing their research groups externally. Persons appointed to these titles may routinely serve as principal investigators on grants and contracts. It is understood that the host department and Bowers CIS may, on occasion, use their own resources to bridge a funding gap or to facilitate the transition to some new, strategic research initiative.

The title of Research Professor may not be used for positions whose responsibilities substantially replicate those of the TT faculty¹. Accordingly, such individuals normally are not permitted to teach courses for credit. However, it would be acceptable to supervise a research-related independent study for credit as would the running of a seminar that aligns with the titleholder's research agenda, provided there is no "percent of effort" violation associated with the external funding source.

C. Terms of Appointment

C1. Search Methodology

An RP search should be national in scope and require a CV, a research statement, and at least three letters of recommendation. Regarding the submission of a statement of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion, the [university guidelines](#) provided by the [Office of Faculty Diversity and Development](#) for tenure track hiring shall apply to RP hiring.

The initial rank of the candidate will depend on their current research record and will be determined by the chair (in consultation with the unit) with the dean's approval. Recognizing the relevance of expository skills to research impact, the candidate will be expected to give an interview talk similar to what is required for tenure track faculty.

For each research professor appointment, there must be a specific job description and evaluation criteria established for the position. This document will be used in selecting the candidate for the position, as well as in ongoing evaluations of the research professor once they have arrived, including annual evaluations for the salary improvement program.

C2. Expected Credentials

Research professors must hold a research Ph.D. degree (or foreign equivalent) in a field appropriate to the position. To qualify for the title, research professors are also expected to have achieved significant stature in the scholarly discipline comparable to that of a tenure track faculty member of the same rank. Having the potential to fulfill the expectations of a research professor will be essential for an appointment at the assistant RP level. An individual who is appointed at the associate or full level needs to have already demonstrated a capacity for original work and an ability to attract outside funding.

C3. Approval Process

A dossier-based review must be conducted for initial appointment. The dossier shall include letters from confidential external referees and letters from participants in current or recent research programs. The tenured and tenure track faculty vote on the appointment together with other RP

¹ Here and throughout this document, "TT faculty" refers to "tenure track faculty" by which we mean the pool of all assistant, associate, and full professors.

faculty in the department whose rank is no lower than the rank of the proposed appointment. The Chair communicates the result of the vote together with the rationale for the appointment in a letter to the Bowers CIS Dean. If the position is at Cornell Tech, then approval of both the Cornell Tech dean and the Bowers CIS dean is required.

C4. Length of Appointment

Research professor appointments are typically for three or five years, with five years being the upper limit. Funding for the position is expected to be obtained from external grants awarded to the individual as a PI or through an existing center at Cornell.

C5. Appointment, Reappointment, and Promotion

While there may be a transition period before research funding supports the position, appointments normally are expected to be supported by such funds, although other funding sources are permitted. The appointment may be terminated early or modified if funding is withdrawn or reduced. Nonrenewal or early termination of appointment also may occur on the basis of other significant resource constraints, unreliable funding prospects, seriously diminished interest in the research area or a reduction in relevance to the appointing unit's research mission.²

Reappointments are made based on the individual's performance in relation to the pre-set evaluation criteria established for the position. The chair or designate reviews the performance annually with the individual.

Promotion from assistant research professor to associate research professor and associate research professor to full research professor is based on the quality of achievement, productivity, national and international stature in the field, leadership of the independent research program, effectiveness with colleagues and with participants in the research program, and service to the field. Promotion is merit based and is not automatic after a particular number of years holding the title. A formal dossier review is required for promotions and follows the procedures for the promotions of the analogous tenure track ranks.

C6. Switching Tracks²

Because Cornell is a research university, it is necessary to support transitions between the RP track and the Research Associate track and between the RP track and the tenure track *when they make sense*

² From the Research Professor Enabling legislation concerning the relationship to Existing Titles: "Because the Research Professor titles are intended to replace the current Research Scientist, Principal Research Scientist, and Senior Scientist titles, individuals holding such titles may convert, with the approval of the department and the dean, to the appropriate level of Research Professor. An individual currently holding a Research Scientist, Principal Research Scientist, and Senior Scientist titles who is not approved to move to the Research Professor title or does not wish to do so may remain in the current title subject to all applicable conditions. There shall be no new appointments to the Research Scientist, Principal Research Scientist, and Senior Scientist titles. Individuals holding other academic titles, including Research Associate and Senior Research Associate cannot convert to Research Professor titles, but may seek appointment to such titles through the normal appointment processes."

and are consistent with the guidelines that attend the underlying titles. Researchers evolve over the course of their careers and sometimes “outgrow” their job description.

For example, it is possible for a senior research associate (SRA) who has an appropriate record of independent accomplishment to be hired into an advertised RP position. The metrics that are applied to the general pool of applicants will apply to an SRA applicant. In particular, the research record will be reviewed for originality, independence, and potential. As described in Section 3.1 of the Faculty Handbook, “senior research associates normally are responsible to a member of the faculty but may serve, within certain limitations, as principal investigator on a grant or contract.” If excellence is displayed in that direction, then there may be a good match for an RP position where “persons appointed to these titles may serve routinely as principal investigators on grants and contracts” to quote again from the Faculty Handbook.

It is also possible for a current member of the faculty who is on the tenure track to apply for an open RP position. The same set of evaluation metrics apply. A possible situation when this makes sense might be an assistant professor who has an emerging reputation as a brilliant researcher but who lacks interest in teaching and does not wish to submit to a tenure review. It should be noted that a faculty member in a tenure-track appointment may not move into a research-track appointment after a negative tenure decision in any circumstance.

“Track switching” can have unintended side effects that relate to morale and retention, so care must be exercised when this option is in play. Consultation with the dean and the department faculty is essential.

D. Percentage Limitation

As per the legislation passed by the Faculty Senate, the number of RP faculty cannot exceed 10% of the number of TT faculty in the college:

E. Rights

RPs will have voting rights in matters that are directly related to their roles with the department/college such as research and the education of PhD students. The dean shall have the responsibility of identifying those issues that are related to their roles with the college and the department chair shall have that responsibility within the department. In the department, those appointed to this professorial title shall participate fully in hiring decisions of other RPs at or below their rank.

RPs may serve on departmental and college committees as appropriate.

Individuals holding RP titles shall be eligible to be members of their unit’s graduate field with appointment to the field following the same procedures used for the appointment of TT faculty. If

appointed to the field, individuals holding RP titles shall have the same opportunities to be members of graduate committees as other field members.

Regardless of rank, all RPs have [University Voting Rights](#).

An RP is not eligible for sabbatical leave. If the dean, after consultation with the department, decides not to renew the appointment of an RP, the professor is entitled to the same notice of termination to which a tenured or tenure-track professor is entitled. RPs have the same access to grievance and appeal procedures as any other RTE faculty member.

RPs will be eligible for the annual salary improvement program for faculty.

F. Impact

The Research Professor title is not expected to reduce the number of tenure-track faculty in Bowers CIS. The use of the title is expected to strengthen the college and ultimately to contribute positively towards Cornell's ranking in CIS-related areas, notably through increased recruiting success in the many research centers within which the college participates. The 10% cap on the percentage of research professors avoids any risk that the title could somehow be misused to erode the traditional tenure role.