



## **Ball State University: *Beneficence* and Promotion and Tenure**

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Founded as a Normal School in 1918 on land donated by the Ball family, Ball State University has always had a close relationship to the Muncie, Indiana community that surrounds it. This relationship has helped to form a fundamental element of our mission statement:

*We engage students in educational, research, and creative endeavors that empower our graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives enriched by lifelong learning and service, **while we enhance the economic, environmental, and social vitality of our community, our state, and our world.***

Because of our history and strong connection to the community, Ball State is uniquely positioned to reimagine the ways in which community-engaged scholarship allows our faculty to showcase the intersections of innovation, student-focused teaching, high quality scholarship, and community service. Additionally, BSU is guided by the enduring values represented by what we identify as **Beneficence**: Excellence, Innovation, Courage, Integrity, Inclusiveness, Social Responsibility, and Gratitude. The BSU community has used these “Beneficence values” and our focus on community engagement to ensure that our Promotion and Tenure process is in line with both our mission and the 21<sup>st</sup> century educational landscape. Our P&T process is dedicated to training administrators and faculty, supporting the process at various institutional levels, and a continuous review of policies that structure the type of work aligned with our strategic plan and our core institutional values.

Ball State has a rigorous and comprehensive Promotion and Tenure process that includes an annual review of every tenure-track faculty member at the department level, by the Dean, and by the Provost; a fourth year review of every tenure-track faculty member at the department and the college level, by the Dean, and by the Provost; and the opportunity for faculty members to put themselves forward for early promotion and tenure if they have extraordinary accomplishments. Under typical circumstances faculty members are reviewed for promotion to associate professor and tenure in year seven. In addition, all department and college documents are reviewed each year at the department, college, and University level, and the University P&T document is reviewed at the University level by a governance committee that is then approved by Faculty Council and University Senate, the Provost, the President, and the Board of Trustees. This transparent and consistent process allows all of our tenure-track faculty to receive feedback on their materials and progress towards tenure each year, and to correct course if there is a misalignment. In addition, the annual review of documents provides an opportunity for adjustments and innovations that can be integrated into the documents within the existing review process.

As we assessed and reexamined the process, we realized that providing a framework for a variety of policies already in place would achieve the majority of what we needed in order to assure that our P&T process aligns with our mission, our values, and our strategic plan.

In Goal Four of our Strategic Plan, *Scholarship and Societal Impact*, we emphasize that, as a public research institution, our faculty must engage in scholarship “of discovery, integration, application, and teaching—that garners national and international recognition, attracts external resources, and improves lives.” The strategic imperatives that are aligned with this goal include rewarding scholarship that is funded through “federal, state, private and other entities”; rewarding scholarship that is connected to “the vibrancy of the city of Muncie and East Central Indiana in ways that can be replicated in communities around the world”; and rewarding teacher-scholars “who integrate their scholarship with their teaching.”

We have long had in place robust onboarding programming for all of our faculty members. We introduce faculty to faculty success resources regarding teaching, research, and service, and set up informal mentoring networks. This is accomplished in several different ways, including the following:

- **Transition to Muncie:** This includes assistance for new faculty and staff members with relocation information, as well as a program we call the Campus Community Career Collaborative. The CCCC is a program with connections between local businesses and community partners, so if a faculty or staff member is arriving with a spouse or partner that is seeking employment, we can arrange a meeting to discuss a possible match of skill sets. We also have a robust Live Near Your Work website that includes community resources and assets, video testimonials, relocation information, and many other important resources.
- **Alpha Day:** At Ball State we welcome our first-year faculty with Alpha Day experience, and honor our retiring faculty with an Omega dinner. At Alpha Day we provide two full days of programming that include basics such as information about insurance, ID cards, and parking, but also resources including student academic support services, title IX information, community resources, and much more. We also introduce them to their new colleagues, encourage cohort building, offer them walking tours of campus and bus tours of downtown, provide peer connections, and assign mentors.
- **New Faculty Academy:** New Faculty Academy is a comprehensive mentoring program for our tenure-line faculty. Institutional data shows us that in the seven years that we have offered the New Faculty Academy, our tenure-track faculty have identified more coherent goals for themselves, we have retained them at higher numbers (86% of new hires since 2015) , and they have been more successful on the tenure-track. NFA also allows new faculty to make connections across departments and colleges and potentially grow transdisciplinary connections for research and teaching.
- **SPA Fellows and Start Up Packages:** Deans are able to work with the Sponsored Programs Administration (SPA) office, depending on the needs of individual new hires, to create an environment where they have appropriate equipment, lab resources, and research support. The research funding is provided over multiple years with clear expectations and annual benchmarks that must be met by each faculty participating in the program.

Ball State has also recognized the challenges that exist in identifying, training and supporting new leaders, and we support several professional development leadership programs. This is crucial so that accurate and consistent information about the P&T process is shared, and it also allows leaders to brainstorm and facilitate creative program development, teaching opportunities, and mentoring experiences. To onboard new administrators (both external and internal to the University), we meet weekly each fall semester to discuss topics including hiring, classroom management, resources to support teaching, conflict resolution, work/life balance, and a wide range of other topics. These sessions allow us to introduce new administrators to important resources as they need them, provide a safe space for them to ask questions, and build community as they become more comfortable with their new responsibilities. Another important support is a monthly meeting for Department Chairs across campus based in a Community of Practice model, where the group discusses topics and draws on expertise within the members as well as resources around campus.

The faculty at Ball State University have found their research agendas and their mental and physical health affected by the pandemic, as is true across the country, and women and faculty members of color have been particularly affected. As a result, the P&T process has become more fraught for some employees. To address these challenges Ball State implemented several “think groups,” one of which produced a document on Best Practices for Research During COVID that included several specific recommendations for P&T, including:

- Suggestions for opportunities to document disruptions to scholarship
- Guidance for evaluators of P&T materials
- Evidence of disparities for female faculty and faculty of color
- Expansion of “stop the clock” policies
- Information about different types of leaves through HR
- Information about flexibility for grant timelines through Sponsored programs
- Information about bridge funding for grants that needed additional support

Another issue that impacts P&T is the type of work prevalent on our campus. Ball State has a rich history of Community-Engaged Scholarship and Immersive Learning projects that focus on identifying and solving “real world” problems for a community group. To highlight this type of work, in October of 2019 we created an entire month of programming called “Rocktoberfest,” which featured events for every workday of the month. Highlights included sessions showcasing our office of Working Well and Recreational Services, which encourages our faculty to focus on work/life balance, physical and mental health, and personal goal setting; Immersive Learning, which is one of our identified High Impact Practice targets; Community-engaged research and teaching; tools for documenting and disseminating community-engaged work; elements of effective partnerships; accessibility and access to Immersive Learning opportunities; and connections to local businesses and employers. We also featured nationally recognized community engagement scholar and consultant Diane Doberneck as a keynote speaker, who engaged our faculty in conversations about community-engaged scholarship and the P&T process.

There are two recent accomplishments that help us achieve two of our most important P&T goals: more interdisciplinary and innovative research, and more awareness of and appreciation for DEI work. First is the inclusion of a statement on joint appointments that includes a

definition statement as well as a set of procedures for evaluation during the P&T process. The other is the inclusion of an Inclusive Excellence Statement that reads:

*At Ball State University, we recognize inclusive excellence as an integral endeavor to fulfill our mission and our strategic plan. Faculty members who engage in activities that promote inclusive excellence (training, development, intergroup dialogue, pedagogies and curriculum, community and campus partnerships, mentoring, peer-reviewed research, etc.) will receive credit for their involvement as they contribute to the established standards for Teaching, Scholarship and Service.*

This statement appears in the University P&T document, and in all departmental and college documents as well.

Another important DEI initiative with which we have engaged recently is the Aspire Institutional Change Initiative (ICHANGE), which “is designed to catalyze institutional change by providing a comprehensive, systematic approach to organizational transformation using a structured self-assessment process to inform the development and implementation of an action plan.” Our audacious goal is that “the diversity of our faculty and staff will reflect the diversity of our students.” To that end, we have spent the last three years building a plan to diversify our faculty through recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and then mentoring new faculty members. Our action plan states that we will create “a program of careful recruitment, but especially mentoring towards the retention of STEM faculty within the identified populations.” In Spring of 2022, we hosted a Faculty Learning Community to explore best practices for mentoring STEM faculty. This group designed a campus-wide mentoring program; this fall, we have begun to implement recommendations from that group.

We need to ensure we are (a) utilizing the hiring processes outlined above to hire diverse and qualified candidates; (b) supporting and training all new hires on our promotion processes; and (c) tracking and monitoring their success. This will allow us to adapt to future changes that may be needed as our faculty becomes more diverse in identity and expertise.

Finally, looking ahead. We see five immediate goals for Ball State.

- 1) To find a definition for “Innovation” that works for us and aligns with our strategic plan. We feel that this will be key to our continuing work to align DEI efforts with P&T.
- 2) To move forward with implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force for Best Practices during COVID, as we help our tenure-track faculty members find their way despite the interruptions of the pandemic.
- 3) To address a recent, incentivized retirement of ~100 faculty members in Spring of 2022. Our programs and Deans are facing some important decisions in terms of future hiring.
- 4) To think carefully about how we encourage, respect, and reward Trans/Multidisciplinary research, both in teaching, and in our P&T and annual evaluation documents. With the potential for more joint appointments and multidisciplinary collaborations, we may be looking at curriculum revision as well.
- 5) To continue conversations with our P&T candidates and committees on how to prepare materials, how to mentor tenure-track faculty members, how to evaluate materials, and how to avoid implicit bias in the review process.

With the exciting changes we have made to our Promotion and Tenure documents and given the potential we have built into our system, we are poised to continue to work together toward a future that embraces the values of Ball State Beneficence in teaching, research, service, and community engagement through a lens of innovation, excellence, and inclusivity.