Rice University Policy No. 202

HONORARY FACULTY TITLES

I. General Policy

In addition to their faculty appointments, faculty members in the tenure-track and the non-tenure-track ranks may be awarded an honorary title based on past performance and with the expectation of continued exceptional performance.

Rice University recognizes three types of honorary titles: endowed professorships, distinguished professorships, and university professorships.

II. Definitions

(School's) honorary title committee: Each school dean appoints an honorary title committee selected from among faculty holding honorary titles. The committee assists the dean in making recommendations to the provost and president in the award process and in the performance review procedures specified in this policy.

III. Elaboration of Policy

A. Endowed professorships (also called “endowed chairs”)

Endowed chairs are awarded by the University to outstanding faculty members in a specific discipline or inter-disciplinary area. The endowed chair is usually supported partially or fully by endowed funds provided specifically for this purpose. Faculty members in both the tenure-track and the non-tenure-track faculty ranks may be eligible for endowed chairs, depending upon the conditions in the particular endowment.

Naming: Endowed chairs are usually entitled as the “[Chair Name] [Rank] in/of [Discipline],” such as the “[J.S. Abercrombie] [Professor] in [Engineering].”

Terms of appointment: The title is usually in addition to and separable from the individual’s faculty appointment. The titleholder is subject to any provisions and conditions that may be attached to the endowed fund. For instance, titleholders may be required to provide information, such as an annual report.

Faculty members who retire while holding an endowed chair may retain the title with “emeritus” appended, but without compensation or funding from the endowed fund. Emeriti endowed chairs are usually entitled as the “[Chair Name] [Rank] Emeritus in/of [Discipline],” such as the “[George A. Peterkin] [Professor] Emeritus of [Economics].”

Award process: The awarding of an endowed professorship requires approval by the Board of Trustees of Rice University (hereinafter “the Board”). For awarding an endowed chair to an existing faculty member, the dean consults with the school’s honorary title committee for its suggestion of a faculty member to be recommended to the provost, who then presents it to the president for approval and transmission to the Board. (The process for awarding an endowed chair to a new faculty member—that is, as part of recruitment process—may vary but is still subject to approval by the Board, president and provost.) The provost informs the awardee in writing.

Review process: If a regular departmental review demonstrates a deficiency in the performance of a
titleholder, the dean may charge the school’s honorary title committee to undertake a review and prepare a report for the dean. If the committee finds a deficiency in the performance of the titleholder, the committee will also suggest a remediation plan for the titleholder to eliminate the deficiency and, if feasible, will propose a reasonable timetable by which the titleholder will satisfactorily improve performance. After reviewing the committee’s report and recommendations, the dean determines the remediation plan and informs the titleholder of the negative finding and the remediation plan. If, at the end of the remediation period, the dean finds the performance still to be deficient, the dean informs the provost in writing.

B. Distinguished professorships

Distinguished professorships are awarded to outstanding faculty members who, through their significant accomplishments, have brought special renown to Rice. Faculty members in both the tenure-track and the non-tenure-track faculty ranks may be eligible for distinguished professorships.

**Naming:** Distinguished professorships are usually entitled as the “[Name (if applicable)] Distinguished [Rank] in/of [Discipline],” such as the “[Jesse H. Jones] Distinguished [Associate Professor] of [Marketing].”

**Terms of appointment:** The title is in addition to and separable from the individual’s faculty appointment. It is usually awarded for a fixed term and may expire, be renewed, or be withdrawn. The titleholder is also subject to additional conditions that individual schools or endowed fund agreements may have.

If the school’s conditions allow it, faculty members who retire while holding a distinguished professorship may retain the title with “emeritus” appended, but without compensation or funding from any supporting fund.

**Award process:** The awarding of a distinguished professorship does not require approval by the Board. For awarding a distinguished professorship, the dean consults with the school’s honorary title committee for its suggestion of a faculty member to be recommended to the provost, who then presents it to the president for approval. The provost informs the awardee in writing.

**Review process:** If a regular departmental review demonstrates a deficiency in the performance of a titleholder, the dean may charge the school’s honorary title committee to undertake a review and prepare a report for the dean. If the committee finds a deficiency in the performance of the titleholder, the committee will also suggest a remediation plan for the titleholder to eliminate the deficiency and, if feasible, will propose a reasonable timetable by which the titleholder will satisfactorily improve performance. After reviewing the committee’s report and recommendations, the dean determines the remediation plan and informs the titleholder of the negative finding and the remediation plan. If, at the end of the remediation period, the dean finds the performance still to be deficient, the dean informs the provost in writing.

C. University professorships

University professorships are awarded to select outstanding faculty members who, because of their groundbreaking accomplishments and eminent national and international stature, qualify for an appointment that transcends any single unit. Only full professors may be eligible for university professorships. A university professorship allows the titleholder to teach in any department at Rice.

**Naming:** University professorships are usually entitled as the “[Name (if applicable)] University Professor,” such as the “[Malcolm Gillis] University Professor.”
Terms of appointment: The title usually remains with the faculty member throughout his/her career at Rice or until it is withdrawn.

Faculty members who retire while holding a university professorship may retain the title with “emeritus” appended, but without compensation.

Award process: The awarding of a university professorship requires approval by the Board. The recommendation process is usually initiated by the president or the provost. The president informs the awardee in writing.

Review process: If a regular departmental review demonstrates a deficiency in the performance of a titleholder, the dean informs the provost, who may charge a committee formed of senior faculty members to undertake a review and prepare a report for the provost. If the committee finds a deficiency in the performance of the titleholder, the committee will also suggest a remediation plan for the titleholder to eliminate the deficiency and, if feasible, will propose a reasonable timetable by which the titleholder will satisfactorily improve performance. After reviewing the committee’s report and recommendations, the provost determines the remediation plan and informs the titleholder of the negative finding and the remediation plan. If, at the end of the remediation period, the provost finds the performance still to be deficient, the provost informs the president in writing.

D. Review and withdrawal processes

Withdrawal process: If, at the end of the remediation period, a continuing deficiency remains (see “review process” sections, above), the provost, after consultation with the president, decides whether to withdraw the title and informs the titleholder in writing.

If the faculty member believes that withdrawal is not appropriate due to infringement of his or her academic freedom or due to procedural objections, then that faculty member has 30 days after the decision by the provost in which to request the convenor of Appeals and Grievances of the Faculty Senate to form a review committee. That committee will consist of three tenured members of the faculty, holding honorary titles, selected by the convenor. That committee will carry out an inquiry and submit its confidential recommendations to the president, with copies to the grievant, the convenor, the provost and the speaker of the Faculty Senate. The president, who makes the final decision, will inform the faculty member of the final disposition of the honorary title.

Once a title is withdrawn, the titleholder must cease using it on all official communications (e.g. cards, email signatures, publications), but may still denote the dates the title was held on a CV.

IV. Cross Reference to Related Policies

Policy 201, “Faculty appointments, promotions, and tenure”

V. Responsible Official and Key Offices to Contact Regarding the Policy and its Implementation

Responsible Official: Provost
Other Key Offices: Deans
Faculty Senate

David W. Leebron
President

Policy History