



# Addressing Challenges in Teaching-Track Faculty Promotion

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## Abstract

Interest in teaching-track faculty positions has been steadily increasing as enrollments in computer science degree programs continue to trend upward. While departments have welcomed these new teaching-track faculty members, senior faculty, department chairs, and university committees often struggle with how to best evaluate these faculty members during the promotion process. In our experience, some universities try to use a “watered-down” version of the tenure-track promotion standards with the intent of uniformity. Other universities have created whole new processes, which may be better at capturing the differences in teaching-track positions, but also can create a “second-class citizen” status for the teaching-track faculty members.

For this panel, we will bring together teaching-track and tenured faculty who have been active in promotion committees, have written letters of support for teaching-track faculty, and have successfully guided junior faculty through the promotion process. Our goal is to shed light on the differing practices at various universities and help attendees understand how to best support junior teaching-track faculty.

## CCS Concepts

• **Social and professional topics** → **Computing education**.

## Keywords

Teaching, Teaching-Track Faculty, Computer Science Education

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## 1 SUMMARY

Interest in teaching-track faculty positions has been steadily increasing as enrollments in computer science degree programs continue to trend upward. In our own computer science education community, there has been growing interest in discussion on how to best attract and hire new teaching-track faculty [2, 4] and how to integrate them into computing departments [1, 3]. After a burst of hiring in these positions, attention now needs to turn to how to successfully mentor junior teaching-track faculty through the promotion process. While this topic may at first seem tailored only for current junior teaching-track faculty, navigating the promotion process requires that senior faculty (both teaching- and tenure-track), administrators, committee members, and potential letter writers understand the challenges that teaching-track faculty face when going through a typical promotion process.

Often, university-level committees are not accustomed to evaluating teaching-track faculty contributions and instead try to apply a “watered-down” version of tenure-track guidelines. With this mentality, university-level committees still look to research-based metrics, such as publications and grant funding, which puts the teaching-track faculty member at a disadvantage in the process or they are seen as “less than” a research-active, tenure-track faculty member. However, a different problem can occur if a university realizes this fallacy and instead creates a separate teaching-track promotion committee. On the surface, this may seem to be a good way to ensure that teaching-track faculty are treated fairly, but it often reinforces the stereotype that teaching-track faculty are not “real faculty” in the eyes of the university. As further evidence of this two-tier system, universities euphemistically use names like “special-faculty” or even abbreviations like NTT (non-tenure-track) faculty.

For this panel, we will bring together senior teaching-track and tenured faculty who have been active in promotion committees, have written letters of support for teaching-track faculty, and have successfully guided junior faculty through the promotion process. Our goal is to shed light on the differing practices at various universities and help attendees understand how to best support junior teaching-track faculty.

## 2 PANEL STRUCTURE

All panelists will present in-person at SIGCSE TS 2025.

Prior to SIGCSE TS 2025, we will survey faculty through various means (e.g., SIGCSE mailing list, teaching-track Piazza, Hispanics in Computing<sup>1</sup>, IAAMCS<sup>2</sup>, personal contacts) to gather information on challenges in teaching-track promotion and retention at universities other than those represented on the panel. The moderator will summarize these challenges and then lead into an initial round of discussion with the panelists on how to best address these issues. For the second round of discussion, the moderator will ask follow-up questions, guiding the conversation to helping determine best practices. We anticipate a broad discussion on a number of topics, including (but not limited to):

- Understanding the challenges and conflicts that can arise when evaluations are made based on job titles universities use versus professional preparation;
- Class systems that can evolve between tenure-track and teaching-track faculty;
- Evaluation expectations in teaching, scholarship, and service;
- How to effectively write an external letter of support for a teaching-track faculty promotion case.

The remaining time of the panel (approximately 30 minutes) will be given over to questions from the audience.

### 3 POSITION STATEMENTS

#### 3.1 Christine Alvarado

Christine Alvarado is a Teaching Professor and Paul R. Kube Chair in the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) Department at UC San Diego, where she also serves as the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education. As the most senior Teaching Professor in CSE and one of the most senior Teaching Professors at UC San Diego, Alvarado has not only reviewed many promotion and tenure files, but also helped lead the development of promotion standards for Teaching Professors in CSE and beyond. She has also written external review letters for over a dozen teaching faculty from a variety of institutions at all levels of promotion.

#### 3.2 Nate Derbinsky

Nate Derbinsky is a Teaching Professor, Associate Dean of the Global Network, and the Associate Dean of Teaching Faculty in the Khoury College of Computer Sciences at Northeastern University. During his time at Northeastern, Derbinsky has contributed to more than a dozen promotion cases for teaching faculty, and has written multiple review letters for external candidates. He has also supported development of College & University processes for onboarding, evaluation, and mentoring of teaching-track faculty, and has overseen faculty affairs for more than 100 full-time teaching faculty across Northeastern's global network of 14 campuses.

#### 3.3 Sarah Heckman

Sarah Heckman is a Teaching Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs for the Department of Computer Science at NC State University. Heckman was the first teaching-track faculty hired and

promoted to full professor in the Department of Computer Science. She has reviewed promotion cases and mentored several teaching-track colleagues through the promotion process. She has written external review letters for promotions to associate and full with a range of expectations around excellence in their positions.

#### 3.4 Manuel A. Pérez-Quñones (moderator)

Manuel A. Pérez-Quñones is a Professor in the Department of Software and Information Systems at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He has worked at three different institutions each with very different expectations for faculty promotion. He has held several administration positions. Because of his CS education research, he is regularly asked to evaluate promotion dossiers for teaching faculty. He will serve as moderator for the panel.

#### 3.5 Harini Ramaprasad

Harini Ramaprasad is a Teaching Professor and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Student Success in the College of Computing and Informatics at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. After experiencing a promotion process that was mostly reflective of tenure-track promotion expectations and processes, she served on the college leadership committee that revised and updated the promotion expectations and process for teaching-track faculty in the College of Computing and Informatics. She has mentored junior teaching-track faculty on the promotion process and has written letters of support for teaching-track faculty both at UNC Charlotte and externally.

#### 3.6 Mark Sherriff

Mark Sherriff is a Professor (Academic General Faculty) and Associate Department Chair in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Virginia. During his time at UVA, Sherriff has served on multiple department, school, and provost-level promotion and tenure committees, leading the discussion on teaching-track faculty. He has also mentored several junior teaching-track faculty through the promotion process. In the CS education community, he was one of the lead organizers of the Teaching-Track Faculty Birds-of-a-Feather for several years and was one of the authors of the CRA statement on best practices for engaging teaching-track faculty in computing departments.

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<sup>1</sup><http://hispanicsincomputing.org/>

<sup>2</sup>Institute for African-Americans in Computer Science, <http://diversitycomplete.com/iaamcs/>