



APPOINTMENT, TENURE, AND PROMOTION

A position paper on criteria for evaluation of interior design faculty in postsecondary institutions

INTRODUCTION

The Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC) is committed to advancing interior design education, scholarship, and service. Central to this mission is advancing transparent, credible, and equitable standards at the institutional level for the appointment, evaluation, retention, tenure, and promotion of interior design faculty across appointment types.

In response to longstanding inconsistencies and ongoing debate regarding faculty evaluation criteria within interior design and allied disciplines, IDEC first published a position paper on appointment, tenure, and promotion in 1985, with a substantive revision in 1993. These documents served as widely referenced frameworks for institutions across North America. However, over the past three decades, higher education has undergone profound changes in both structure and expectations, particularly in the diversification of faculty roles, the expansion of the scope of scholarly contributions, and the evolving definitions of teaching excellence, institutional service, and professional engagement. In 2019, IDEC convened a Tenure and Promotion Task Force to review policies and practices from a diverse set of higher education institutions in the United States and Canada.

That review identified both common patterns and persistent gaps in the criteria used to appoint, retain, and promote interior design faculty. It highlighted the need for revised guidance that reflects current realities in the academy.

This revised position paper, prepared by the 2025-2026 IDEC Faculty Appointment and Promotion Task Force, builds upon the findings of the 2019 review and responds to ongoing changes in higher education, professional practice, and accreditation expectations. It is intended to assist institutions of higher education in developing, refining, and implementing policies governing the complete arc of faculty advancement within the interior design discipline.

This guidance recognizes the diversity of institutional missions and appointment types, including tenure-track, teaching-track, adjunct, teaching professionals, and contract-based faculty roles.

The guidance affirms that evaluative criteria should be transparent, consistently applied, and appropriately aligned with each faculty member's assigned responsibilities, whether those emphasize research and scholarship, teaching and pedagogy, institutional service, community engagement, and/or professional contributions. Examples of excellence are described in this document, however evaluation should not be limited by the examples offered here.

As the complexity of interior design practice has increased in the last 30+ years, so has interior design education leading to an increased prevalence of collaboration in teaching, scholarship, and service within the academy. Collaboration is a core professional value in academic work and is often essential to accomplishing the work itself. At the same time, fair evaluation requires clear documentation of each collaborator's role and contributions. Therefore, collaborative products may be accompanied by a brief statement that identifies (1) the purpose and context of the collaboration, (2) the specific responsibilities and intellectual/creative labor undertaken by each participant, and (3) the outcomes and impacts attributable to the shared work.

By articulating updated, discipline-informed standards, IDEC offers this position paper as a resource for academic leaders, review committees, and faculty colleagues seeking clarity, coherence, fairness, and rigor as defined by the institution in advancing interior design educators.

CRITERION FOR APPOINTMENT

The appointment of interior design faculty at all ranks should reflect both the institution's unique characteristics (including its mission) and the broader standards of interior design education.

Faculty members play a critical role in preparing students for the full spectrum of professional interior design practice. Therefore, faculty should hold academic qualifications and professional experience that are appropriate to their teaching assignments and areas of responsibility.

IDEC recognizes a degree in interior design, architecture, or a closely related design field as an appropriate credential for faculty teaching interior design coursework. While studio courses warrant particular attention due to their integrative and applied nature, IDEC affirms that interior design education across both studio and non-studio courses requires instructors with appropriate disciplinary grounding relevant to course content.

IDEC encourages all interior design programs, whether accredited or not, to establish clear faculty qualification standards that reflect the interior design focus of the curriculum while recognizing the value of interdisciplinary expertise where appropriate. IDEC further affirms that certification through the **National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ)** represents a highly desirable credential for faculty teaching interior design courses and supports its inclusion as part of a comprehensive approach to faculty qualifications.

IDEC recognizes that, within the field of interior design, a master's degree may be considered a terminal degree for faculty appointments. While some institutions may require or prefer a doctoral degree, this is not a universal expectation for faculty in interior design. Instead, institutions often assess terminal qualifications based on the intended scope of the faculty member's responsibilities and the institution's goals.

In interior design programs with faculty members teaching a considerable number of studio and content lecture courses, terminal degrees outside of interior design can be recognized. IDEC recognizes the possibility of combining a non-terminal master's degree in combination with substantive interior design practice experience as equivalent to a terminal master's degree. Professional practice experience is an important qualification that enhances the academic strength of interior design programs. Faculty with direct field experience are equipped to provide

high-quality educational experiences, to exemplify current professional standards, and to contribute meaningfully to the growth of the discipline's knowledge base.

CRITERIA FOR RETENTION, TENURE AND PROMOTION

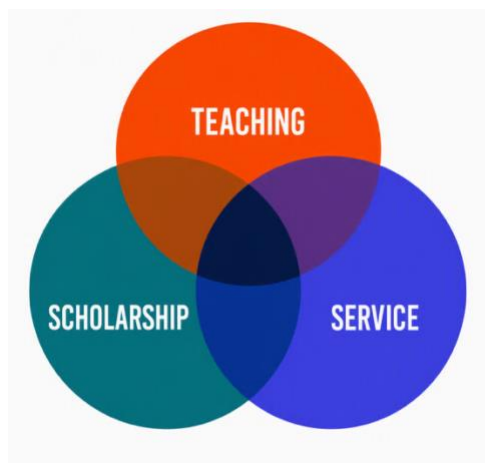


Figure 1. Overlapping Efforts

Teaching, scholarship, and service are the most widely recognized categories of faculty responsibility and form the primary evaluative framework used across higher education.

However, the relative weight of these categories varies according to faculty appointment type. For example, faculty in teaching-focused positions may have little or no assigned effort in scholarship, while tenure-line faculty are typically expected to demonstrate contributions in all three areas. In interior design, these categories often intersect (Fig. 1) –for example, through community-engaged teaching, practice-based scholarship, or service that supports professional education—making it essential to evaluate faculty contributions holistically and in alignment with their assigned responsibilities.

Institutions vary in the weight they assign to these three responsibilities, which is generally based on the institution's type and the nature of the position. Within the same institution, some faculty may have heavy teaching responsibilities and minimal service and scholarship responsibilities. In contrast, others may be expected to make greater contributions to scholarship rather than to teaching, depending on the type of appointment, qualifications, and professional experience.

Further, a faculty member's responsibilities often vary throughout their career. It is paramount that institutions clearly define a faculty member's responsibilities annually. For example, at the annual review, a faculty member can identify annual goals and determine whether completing those goals will meet department and university expectations for advancement. It is the responsibility of faculty members to explain and document how their activities meet the criteria of their appointment and institution when preparing their application for retention, tenure, and/or promotion.

This document does not prescribe a single standard but instead outlines a spectrum of professional activities that reflect the diverse responsibilities interior design faculty may hold. Faculty rank, appointment type, and assigned effort vary significantly across institutions and even within programs. As such, the examples and expectations described herein are intended to guide, not mandate, the evaluation of faculty contributions.

No individual faculty member is expected to demonstrate achievement in every area. Instead, evaluations should reflect the specific terms of appointment, institutional mission, and documented workload assignments. **The intent is to ensure that excellence, whether demonstrated through teaching, engaged inquiry, service, or the integration of these domains, is recognized in ways that are equitable, transparent, and aligned with institutional expectations.**

TEACHING

IDEC recognizes excellence in teaching as a criterion for faculty retention, evaluation, and advancement. Each interior design faculty member contributes as an individual to the total educational program through specialized knowledge and expertise.

Teaching excellence is expected in all faculty members with teaching appointments and can be measured in many ways (see the expanded list below). Given that interior design programs commonly feature **studio sequences**, IDEC encourages program leaders and campus administrators to examine the time-intensive nature of studio teaching for relevant faculty. Faculty teaching loads should align with the contact hours spent in and out of the classroom rather than credit hours alone, with attention to student-to-faculty ratios, studio enrollment size, and the

intensity of individualized feedback required in design education. Expectations for service and research should be balanced accordingly.

Mentorship and formal advising of undergraduate and graduate students are often responsibilities that bridge teaching, service, and research. Institutions will decide whether advising and mentoring are evaluated as teaching or service; however, efforts to facilitate student growth and to recognize the value of diverse populations through advising and mentoring are critical components of faculty responsibilities.

Evaluation of Teaching Excellence

A strong teaching portfolio contains diverse evidence of teaching effectiveness. While many indicators can be used to assess excellence in teaching, IDEC recognizes the importance of faculty demonstrating a consistent pattern of engagement, self-reflection, and incremental improvement in their teaching practice. Teaching in interior design is shaped by continual changes in technology, professional standards, integration of emergent research, and shifting cultural contexts. As such, effective educators adapt to these shifts and actively examine and refine their approaches over time. Faculty should be able to demonstrate their teaching effectiveness and relevance as well as their meaningful connection to both student learning and the evolving practice of interior design. Most often, significant evidence of effective teaching is provided in a teaching portfolio.

A teaching portfolio is a widely used and effective component of documenting teaching effectiveness in many interior design programs. A well-developed teaching portfolio provides critical evidence for internal and external review processes and supports accreditation, curriculum assessment, and faculty evaluation. The curation of such a portfolio represents a significant and sustained faculty commitment to pedagogical transparency, reflection, and improvement.

Faculty are expected to collect, organize, and present student work in ways that demonstrate alignment with course objectives, progression of learning outcomes, implementation of technologies, and responsiveness to professional standards. This process requires substantial time and effort, including managing student work permissions, maintaining digital or physical

archives, and selecting representative samples that reflect both the breadth and depth of instruction.

Evidence of Excellent Teaching

- ◆ **Development of impactful curricula and/or courses** that contribute to and support the broader curriculum and the program's overarching mission (e.g., developing a design technology sequence, improving studio culture, updating departmental facilities and resources).
- ◆ **Development and preparation of impactful classroom instructional tools, resources, and assessments** that contribute to and support the broader curriculum and the program's overarching mission.
- ◆ **Implementation of innovative and evolving instructional strategies** that align with current industry standards and professional practices and respond to contemporary contexts.
- ◆ **Academic advising** to support student coursework and professional development (e.g., matriculation guidance, career advising, student organization advising).
- ◆ **Engagement in mentorship of undergraduate or graduate scholarship endeavors** that demonstrate teaching effectiveness through activities such as thesis advising, design competitions and creative works, undergraduate research opportunities, awards, fellowships, exhibitions, publications, and related forms of student achievement.
- ◆ **Faculty responsiveness to and improvement of qualitative and quantitative student course evaluations over time**, with the understanding that student evaluations and surveys may not fully reflect teaching effectiveness and should be interpreted holistically alongside other evidence of teaching quality.
- ◆ **Faculty responsiveness to peer review of teaching and evidence of sustained self-assessment**, including reflective practice that examines teaching both in action and after the fact to improve student learning, course design, and pedagogical effectiveness.
- ◆ **Creation and/or delivery of teaching workshops.**
- ◆ **Teaching awards** (e.g., international, national, regional, or institutional).
- ◆ **Independent rankings or awards** recognizing program strengths related to a faculty member's area of influence.

SCHOLARSHIP

Interior design is a complex and integrative discipline. It is defined not by a singular scholarship method, but by its capacity as a practicing discipline to draw on many methods—analytical, interpretive, material, and speculative—and to adapt its approaches to the conditions of the problems and opportunities at hand. This methodological plurality of interior design engaged inquiry is a strength. It reflects the intellectual range and real-world responsiveness the discipline requires.

Scholarship advances knowledge, understanding, and practice through multiple, equally valued forms of inquiry, including design research, creative scholarship, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and community-engaged scholarship all grounded in questions that matter to the discipline, the academy, and the public. These forms of scholarship are not hierarchical; each contributes in meaningful ways to impact the discipline. Faculty members with scholarship/research assignments are responsible for developing an authentic, disciplined, and responsive practice of inquiry in their area of expertise. These individual practices, taken together, form the evolving body of knowledge in interior design. They reflect the field's diversity and its shared commitment to intellectual excellence, cultural relevance, and interior design's capacity to shape the world.

Broad classifications of scholarship include Discovery, Integration, Application, and Teaching (Boyer, 1997), and each are valued equally by IDEC across the discipline of interior design education. These four categories are used to define potential engagement: *creative scholarship, scholarship of design research, scholarship of teaching and learning, and community-engaged scholarship*. IDEC recognizes that faculty can specialize in their chosen inquiry methods, and IDEC supports a diversity of inquiry methods across the discipline. Different institutions may encourage particular methods of investigation, but this document outlines the breadth of scholarly discovery of the discipline.

The discussion of scholarship that follows is organized to mirror Boyer's classification, not to imply significance of scholarship approaches or outcomes.

Scholarship of Design Research

Research in interior design involves a systematic and methodologically rigorous investigation into the physical, aesthetic, sociocultural, behavioral, and/or psychological aspects of the built environment and that advance the field's knowledge through creative, experiential, and behavioral, and other explorations. Research may also focus on technical and environmental concerns, including but not limited to indoor environmental quality, material performance, sustainable systems, and emerging technologies.

Recognized types of research include empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, historical investigations, interpretive analyses, and critical literature reviews. These efforts may focus on understanding design processes, assessing outcomes, or creating new conceptual models. Regardless of the approach, research must show intellectual rigor, sound methodology and relevance to the field.

Creative Scholarship

Creative inquiry/creative scholarship is a scholarly mode of investigation through which knowledge is generated by making. Creative work may include, but not be limited to, the design and production of visual art objects, furnishings, accessories, textiles, art-based installations, or contemporary spaces and/ or re-creation of historic spaces. Interior design practice is concerned with improving the interior environment and thus enriching the quality of human life. It operates through material, spatial, temporal, and sensory processes, and is rooted in the premise that discovery can emerge through the act of creation itself.

Creative inquiry advances the discipline by testing ideas, constructing meaning, and exploring how the built environment (which may also include environments that are entirely digital) is perceived, shaped, and experienced. It reflects the intellectual rigor of design thinking made manifest through iterative, exploratory, and contextually grounded practice. A project's scholarly contribution lies in what it discovers, proposes, or advances, and not simply in that it was built or produced. What elevates creative work to scholarship is the rigor of inquiry it embodies and the knowledge it generates, legible to qualified peers through the work itself and its reception in the field. Scholarship through making is recognized by the rigor of its conception and execution, the

discernment of peers qualified to evaluate it, and its public encounter within a professional or educational context.

While **creative scholarship** may result in peer-reviewed publication, its legitimacy is not contingent on dissemination through the academic press. Alternatively, creative products are more commonly evaluated through critical recognition, contribution to discourse, and influence on practice. Forms of dissemination may include exhibitions, installations, built works, performances, visual essays, community collaborations, or other material expressions where knowledge is embodied and shared. Documentation and reflection may accompany the work to clarify intent and process but are not prerequisites for its scholarly status. In evaluating such work, the emphasis is on quality of inquiry, clarity of purpose, and depth of contribution, as judged through appropriate peer processes—juried, curated, commissioned, or invited.

The criteria for appraisal rest on innovative design problem identification, design processes, and/or design solutions and the contribution this makes to the body of knowledge. This can be achieved by inviting selected reviewers, and other forms of recognition such as awards or nominations.

Community-Engaged Scholarship

Community-engaged scholarship is a mode of engaged inquiry and discovery grounded in reciprocal collaboration with communities. It seeks to advance both academic knowledge and the public good through co-created practice-based processes. In interior design, such scholarship often emerges through participatory design, public-interest projects, and situated research that addresses spatial, social, and cultural challenges. Importantly, community-engaged scholarship generates new knowledge not only through outcomes, but also through methods—revealing insights about design practice, community dynamics, material systems, and ethical engagement that cannot be discovered in isolated academic settings. Community engaged scholarship involves a multiplicity of phases with different outputs associated with each stage to meet the needs of the community partner. Each stage may be translated to scholarly output; each output, as a part of the community engagement process, has merit and value that should be accounted for and recognized as a contribution. When well documented and peer-reviewed, whether by academics or community

partners and stakeholders, (e.g., a website, a report, a white paper, virtual galleries, physical space etc.), this work contributes substantively to the discipline and its body of knowledge.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Innovation is an avenue for engaged inquiry in interior design. The classroom is not a neutral space for delivering information to students but an active environment where habits of practice are formed. The methods, rhythms, and values embedded in studio teaching shape how students come to understand design, how they approach problems, critique work, make decisions, and engage with others. These pedagogical structures have a lasting impact. They become the basis for how students will practice and make inquiries as professionals.

Faculty members who engage in inquiry through classroom experiences, such as reimagining critique, structuring collaboration, integrating material research, or engaging communities, are not only enhancing instruction. They are advancing the discipline itself with the habits of practice. Scholarship of teaching and learning produce new models of design thinking and doing. These practices shape how emerging designers learn to see, question, and make. For this reason, scholarship of teaching and learning is recognized as a rigorous and impactful form of scholarship that extends pedagogical innovation beyond the classroom and packages/disseminates the innovation in a way that demonstrates the value of this type of scholarly contribution through peer review (e.g. conference presentations, publications, web-based curricular materials, etc.).

Evidence of Excellence in Scholarship

- ◆ Publication in refereed journals within the design discipline or in other disciplines where the content is relevant to a broader audience.¹
- ◆ Grant proposals written and submitted.
- ◆ Grant proposals funded.
- ◆ Copyrights and patents.

¹ *In the niche field of interior design, the impact factors of our seminal journals tend to be lower than in other fields. Similarly, citations of articles tend to be lower given the publication norms in the field of architecture and design research (See: Citation Analysis and Tenure Metrics in Architecture and Design-Related Disciplines - Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture).*

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- ◆ Publication in refereed journals on teaching methodology and other areas of educational instruction.
- ◆ Refereed papers published in conference proceedings.
- ◆ Refereed presentations at conferences.
- ◆ Books and book chapters that contribute to the discipline.
- ◆ Community-engaged scholarship with demonstrated impact through external recognition at various stages of development (e.g., website, report, white paper, virtual galleries, a built space etc.).
- ◆ Development and completion of commissioned creative works that demonstrate original design authorship, disciplinary expertise, public or professional relevance, and contribution to the broader field, and may be assessed through ad hoc peer review.
- ◆ Acceptance for a creative work in an exhibition in a juried exhibit or show; this can include roles as a curator, designer, exhibitor, and/or a solution that is documented for assessment by peer review.
- ◆ Juried design solution, such as a design competition, production, or award.
- ◆ Competitive or invited fellowships, residencies, visiting scholar appointments, or similar external recognitions that support creative scholarship and other forms of scholarship, teaching innovation, or professional development and signal the individual's expertise, promise, or renown in the discipline or broader academic community.
- ◆ Invitations that signal the individual's renown in the discipline or in the broader academic community such as invited publications or exhibitions, keynote speaking, authorship of book forewords, or similar.
- ◆ Press coverage of scholarship.

This list is not comprehensive but intended to establish disciplinary norms. Institutions and academic units may establish different criteria.

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

Excellence in Service is recognized by IDEC as a criterion for faculty retention, evaluation, and advancement. Collaborative, integrative service is critical to the maintenance and growth of institutions and commonly overlaps with teaching and/or scholarship efforts. Service contributions often occur at multiple levels with varied stakeholders beyond the students, faculty, and institution, such as community and non-profit organizations, professional organizations, and industry partners.

Academic service includes activities in a faculty member's department, college, and university. Within the academic unit, preparation for a Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) review is often one of the most labor-intensive activities undertaken by an academic program, requiring sustained faculty engagement over multiple semesters in addition to regular teaching, scholarship, and service responsibilities. Beyond the university, professional service is important for the maintenance and growth of organizations that serve the faculty member's profession, often including education and design-related organizations. Public service often involves faculty members serving the community in areas of their expertise, bringing their academic knowledge to local, regional, or national agencies or regulatory boards.

Evidence of Excellence in Service

The quality and quantity of one's service is often difficult to document. Several methods exist and can be used, including assessment of a faculty member's contributions via a letter or statement from peers, leaders, and students, as well as citations or awards for outstanding service to an organization. The curriculum vitae can provide a detailed accounting of service contributions, including length of service and descriptions of the roles undertaken. Evidence for service can additionally be demonstrated through the finished products of one's service, such as reports, databases, websites, etc. These types of evidence – along with written service statements – should outline how the individual is contributing their expertise and making impactful contributions within the institutions, organizations, and/or communities to which they belong. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to ensure that service contributions are well documented to distinguish between high and low time commitments.

Service contributions for faculty members should be understood holistically and contextualized. Service obligations, such as committee work and leadership roles, commonly increase with promotion. Further, service demands may vary substantially depending on the size and structure of a person's academic unit.

Types of Service Excellence

Service to the institution can include:

- ◆ Leadership and participation in the development of the program of study.
- ◆ Leadership or active participation in committees, task forces, working groups at all levels.
- ◆ Leadership in program maintenance and development.
- ◆ Service in accreditation processes and preparation.²
- ◆ Participation in regional, national, international, or specialized institutional accreditation reviews.
- ◆ Advising and sponsoring student groups, or organizations.

Service to the profession can include:

- ◆ Active participation, including leadership roles, in professional organizations at local, state, regional, national, or international levels.
- ◆ Developing and presenting seminars and continuing education programs.
- ◆ Editorial and peer review activities for scholarly dissemination outlets in and outside the discipline of interior design.

Service to the community can include:

- ◆ Service to governmental and nonprofit organizations related to issues concerning interiors and related content.
- ◆ Dissemination of special design expertise.

² It should be noted that programs accredited by CIDA undergo an intensive accreditation process in 6-year cycles requiring substantive service contributions by the faculty members involved. IDEC encourages program and institutional leaders to recognize the intensity and value of this service contribution.

- ◆ Service-learning activities that engage students and community groups.
- ◆ Service to the wider community beyond the immediate educational setting to enhance the visual environment and protect the health, safety, and well-being of the occupants.

CONCLUSION

IDEC affirms that fair, credible, and discipline-informed faculty evaluation depends on clear alignment between an institution's mission, a faculty member's appointment type, and their assigned workload. This position paper recognizes multiple pathways to faculty excellence through teaching, scholarship, and service. It encourages institutions to apply transparent criteria that support rigorous review and equitable advancement across tenure-line, teaching-track, and other appointment structures and encourages faculty members to document excellence across their areas of responsibilities. Work-load percentages of teaching, scholarship, and service will adjust depending on the appointment. Awards and recognition for scholarship, teaching, and service are one measure of quality work but are not required to demonstrate excellence. Collaboration is valued within the discipline and reflects both the opportunities and ways of practice. This document provides a framework for evaluating interior design faculty for appointment, evaluation, and promotion. The examples outlined here are meant as guidance, not mandates, due to the varied roles and responsibilities among faculty and within many different types of institutions. The goal is to ensure that excellence is acknowledged and is in alignment with institutional expectations.

Appointment, retention, tenure, and promotion policies administered by an institution affect faculty, students, communities served, the quality of education, and ultimately the status of the discipline.

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The 2025-2026 IDEC Faculty Appointment and Promotion Task Force collaboratively co-authored this report. This group was comprised of faculty with varying expertise areas across different institution types. This team included:

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Task Force Procedures

The 2025-2026 IDEC Faculty Appointment and Promotion Task Force was appointed by the 2025-2026 IDEC President, Bryan Orthel. This group met virtually on an ongoing basis over 2025-2026 to gather documents, seek information, and collaboratively draft the first version of the report. Per IDEC's policies and procedures, the report underwent a first-round of independent review prior to a 60-day open comment period for membership in Spring 2026. During this open period, the task force members hosted a public, in-person workshop at the 2026 Annual Conference to welcome input from attendees. Feedback from these channels was integrated into the final document and approved by the IDEC Board in Summer 2026.

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