

Lafayette College Department of Physics

Scholarship Standards

Adopted May, 2012

The department of physics expects faculty to develop an active program of scholarship that can involve Lafayette students in a meaningful way. Within the disciplines of physics and astronomy, the department recognizes that there are diverse approaches to scholarly activity. The department embraces that diversity as beneficial to the faculty member, to students, and to the College as a whole. Accordingly, these guidelines should be understood as describing current common practice, and should not be construed as limiting or discouraging other forms of scholarly activity. When evaluating candidates, the totality of the record will be considered, along with the potential for continued scholarly activity.

Scholarly activity in Physics and Astronomy takes many forms. For all forms, peer-review is regarded as one of the most important indicators of scholarly quality.

Publications and Presentations

Publication or presentation in peer-reviewed fora is normally one of the most important measures of scholarly activity. Faculty are encouraged to publish in the journals most likely to be read by others working in their subdiscipline, but are discouraged from parceling out research into the smallest "Least Publishable Unit" in order to boost publication numbers.

Grant proposals are another important peer-reviewed activity. Since funding opportunities vary considerably, both across fields and over time, and since funding needs vary significantly, there are no fixed expectations, but actively seeking external support is recognized as important scholarly activity, and the resulting peer review is important evidence of quality scholarship. The category of grant proposals should be interpreted broadly, including not just proposals for funding, but also proposals for equipment, and for access to scarce or shared resources, such as telescopes, satellites, and lab facilities.

Writing books, chapters or articles in books, and editing books are all valuable scholarly activities. Instances where the work is peer-reviewed are particularly valued. In many cases, the opportunity to write or edit a book is by itself a valuable external indicator of the overall quality of the scholarly record, and the College should recognize that external validation.

Faculty are also expected to interact with other scholars in the appropriate venues, such as conferences, workshops, and colloquia. Invited talks are particularly strong evidence of scholarly achievement, but contributed presentations are also valued. Both oral and poster presentations are equally valued, as the preferred mode of presentation varies with different conferences and workshops.

When appropriate, publication in conference proceedings is encouraged. Conference abstracts sometimes also represent significant scholarly activity, and will be valued accordingly. Peer reviewed publications are particularly valued, but the department recognizes that conference proceedings vary considerably in the extent to which they undergo rigorous peer review. Faculty should explicitly discuss the nature of specific conference contributions.

Writings and presentations for the broader community are also encouraged, consistent with the American Physical Society's objective of promoting the "advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of physics." Examples of such presentations include articles in magazines, web-based publications, and public presentations. However, such activities should not be a faculty member's sole scholarly activities.

Collaborations

Some faculty in Physics work as individual investigators, while others work in collaborative groups that can vary greatly in size. Both styles are valuable. Within collaborations, the department recognizes that conventions differ as to how work is divided and the order in which individual authors are listed. Neither single author nor lead author papers are required, but the faculty member's role in some of the collaborative papers should be significant. Faculty who work in collaborations should explicitly address their role in the various items that make up the scholarship portfolio.

Evidence of Scholarship through Professional Service

Many professional service activities are also indirect evidence of scholarship. Organizing workshops or conference sessions, serving on review panels, and serving on the staff for professional publications are all examples of important activities by which professional organizations recognize outstanding scholarship. Such activities contribute broadly to the advancement of physics, and may be appropriate evidence of scholarly activities for faculty with an established research record.

Student Involvement

Scholarly work that involves Lafayette students in a meaningful way is particularly valued. The department recognizes that such involvement represents a significant investment of time and effort, and may result in reduced productivity. However, such involvement is of tremendous educational value to the students, and is central to the mission of the department and to the College as a whole. At the same time, qualified students are not always available, and not all fields are equally amenable to undergraduate student involvement, so there is no fixed expectation of student involvement.

Similarly, not all work with students should result in peer-reviewed publication. Scholarly work whose main goal is to give students interesting and valuable research experience is worthwhile, but should not be a faculty member's only scholarship.

Overall, faculty should explicitly discuss any student involvement in their work.

Summary

Faculty at Lafayette are expected to be active and productive scholars in their fields, and to establish a record that demonstrates their potential for continued scholarly development. In developing their scholarship portfolio, faculty should explicitly discuss how their specific scholarly activities align with the College and departmental scholarship standards.