TO: ALL UCSD FACULTY

FROM: Senate Committee on Academic Personnel
Steven P. Briggs, 2014-15 Chair

DATE: October 23, 2015

SUBJECT: Where CAP Stood, 2014-15

Where CAP Stood (WCS) is an informal document produced by the Committee on Academic Personnel and affords an opportunity to go into more length about issues and topics that have occupied CAP’s time and attention during the year (2014-15 in this case). References to WCS occur occasionally in candidates’ files. This is gratifying, since understanding CAP’s thinking is always a good start in framing the logic behind the actions proposed in a file. At the same time, it should be noted that University policies can change from year to year and individual files are different, so it can be hard to predict the fate of a proposed action just from reading and quoting a past WCS. Each year’s WCS will focus on issues that were most pressing during that year. To quote a 1950’s science fiction author, “To follow tradition means to do the same things in the same grand style as your predecessors; it does not mean to do the same thing.” This describes quite well the approach of CAP in 2014-15. Previous WCS going back to 2010 are on the CAP website and should be consulted.

Campus standards for advancement. CAP maintained the campus standard for one-step acceleration of the Ladder-Rank and In Residence faculty: candidates’ research/creativity must have been at least what their department would expect for two review periods and there could be no weakness in teaching or service; or that extraordinary achievements in teaching or service could justify acceleration when research productivity was greater than that required for normal advancement, but fell short of twice the expected rate. Research/creativity was documented by publication (or production) of original, peer-reviewed work during the review period. Research was typically published as journal articles, conference proceedings, or books. Examples of creativity included musical composition, performance, recording, or instrument development; acting, dancing, choreography, costume, stage set design, lighting design, or direction of a play, film, or dance; art or film exhibition; composition of fiction, poetry, or drama. Reviews of the literature were not a substitute for original research, nor were commentaries, perspectives, interviews, or textbooks. Patents per se were not judged to be important measures of scholarly achievement, but intellectual property that had documented impact on the University or society were taken into consideration when judging the significance of a candidate’s research/creative work.

A bonus off-scale was awarded with a merit advance for three different scenarios: research/creative productivity that exceeded department standards but not enough to justify acceleration; extraordinary service or teaching, while also meeting normal research/creativity expectations; exceptional research/creative productivity but with a relatively weak teaching or service record. During the past year, Health Sciences faculty members were included in bonus off-scale recommendations. There were a few faculty members who provided service to the University during the review period of such high value that their department and Dean recommended acceleration based on service. The EVC authorized acceleration as an override of CAP’s judgment that the research achievements in these cases were not sufficient for acceleration.
The criteria for promotion to the Associate rank included demonstration of scholarly independence and leadership, plus teaching and service that met department standards. Typical documentation of independence/leadership included serving as corresponding author on publications, publishing without mentors, giving invited presentations at prominent venues, earning major grant support as principal investigator, and letters from independent referees that attest to the candidate’s independence and leadership. Generally, proposals for promotion to Associate rank that failed were because the candidate lacked scholarly independence and leadership, but poor teaching also delayed promotion for some.

The criteria for promotion to the Full rank included consistently strong teaching and service, and research/creativity that met department and University standards. Advancement to Professor Step VI included demonstration of a strong national or international reputation and leadership as a scholar, plus excellent teaching and strong service to both the campus and the field. Advancement to Professor Above Scale required research/creativity that was internationally recognized and acclaimed (e.g., through awards and keynote speaking engagements), excellence in teaching and campus-wide service, and evidence that the candidate had achieved the highest level of distinction (based on a career review). Normal merit advancement of faculty who were Above Scale was either at 50% (just meeting the department research standards for a normal merit advance) or 100% (continued strong leadership as a scholar and excellence in teaching and service). Accelerations of Professors who were Above Scale were 150% or 200% for twice or more the expected rate of productivity. CAP considered if a major award was received during the review period that recognizes only the most distinguished scholars in a broad field of endeavor (e.g., a Tony Award, Pulitzer Prize, National Medal of Arts/Science/Technology and Innovation, or election to the National Academy of Sciences/Engineering/Medicine). However, a major award was neither a requirement nor a guarantee of 200% acceleration for those who otherwise deserved 150%. Acceleration to Above Scale prior to spending at least 4 years at Step IX required rare and compelling achievements; only one such file met this standard.

CAP expected faculty members to increase their service to the campus with increasing seniority. For advancement to Step VI and Above Scale, CAP expected campus-wide service, outside the Department/School/Division. CAP judged service according to the effort required and its impact. Service is a requirement of all faculty members. It is generally expected to be done without additional compensation. The most onerous service, such as Chair of a Section/Department, can be rewarded by some teaching relief, summer salary, or a modest stipend. Fully compensated duties were not considered to be service. Professors had to continuously provide service to both their field (e.g., their community of scholars) and the University.

Research Scientists were judged according to the same standards as Professors except that teaching was not required and service could be to the University or to the field (Professors must serve both). If teaching was done (by Research Scientists who also held an instructional title), it was credited as service to the University.
Professors of Clinical ‘X’ had to document clinical and teaching excellence and meet department standards for research productivity. Clinical research is generally about best practices rather than advances in understanding and is published in specialty venues that may not be highly cited. While many Professors of Clinical ‘X’ have grant support similar in numbers or scale to Ladder Rank Faculty and Professors-in-Residence, by the nature of their research they are often site principal investigators for multicenter studies rather than overall principal investigators of the study and their grants are often funded by industry. They are more likely to be involved in publications where clear description of their contribution is important because of shared authorship with investigators from multiple institutions. CAP recognizes that many Professors of Clinical ‘X’ lack grant support so their research productivity may be low which should be commensurate with the fraction of their effort dedicated to research. Departments with both Ladder Rank and Clinical ‘X’ faculty should have distinct standards that define success for each series.

CAP has encouraged departments to develop written standards for advancement, and to include in the department’s letters an evaluation of each candidate’s performance against these standards. Compliance has made the review process and its outcome more predictable, especially for accelerations and bonus off-scale awards. The process is not algorithmic, however, as the quality and the impact of research and other creative activity factor into CAP’s recommendations. Standards can never be zero for research, teaching, or service for all professorial series; contributions must be made in each of the three categories in every review period. For Adjunct Professors, CAP encouraged departments to delineate specific expectations for research, teaching, and service at the time of appointment.

**Teaching.** The role of teaching and its evaluation in the career advancement of the faculty continues to be problematic. Teaching can be to one student or one thousand; it can occur in an auditorium or at a hospital bedside. Teaching obligations vary widely between departments and the evaluation of teaching is often inadequate. This makes it difficult to assure fairness in the academic review process. Time available for research/creativity is related to productivity, and to career advancement including promotions and accelerations. If one leg of the stool – teaching – is effectively eliminated for some faculty members then they will have significantly more time available for research/creativity. Low scores on teaching evaluations are the most common obstacles to career advancement for good scholars but the risks of getting poor teaching evaluations don’t exist for professors who don’t teach, or who teach very small numbers of students.

Mentoring is an important duty of Ladder Rank and In-Residence Faculty. CAP expects professors to regularly serve on dissertation committees and as primary advisor for graduate candidates and this requirement grows with seniority. Thus, mentoring is a necessary duty, and it should be evaluated. Evaluation of mentoring was generally comprised of testimonials from current or past mentees who often remained dependent on their mentor in various ways, creating conflicts of interest that undermined the usefulness of the evaluations; CAP virtually never saw a negative evaluation from a mentee. No department described standards for mentoring that could be used to judge performance. Mentoring is not sufficient to satisfy the teaching obligation.

Per policy, CAP expected multiple forms of teaching evaluations. CAPE evaluations that only sampled a small fraction of the enrolled students were typically negative and CAP saw cases in which such evaluations were contradicted by department-administered evaluations that engaged a higher proportion of the same students. There is an important lesson here for all faculty members. CAP paid particular attention to widely-expressed student comments.
Appointments. The proposed rank and step for new appointees must be justified based on the candidate’s career accomplishments, independent of their proposed level of compensation. Key considerations are their cumulative research/creative achievements, the time spent in their current rank at their home institution, and an assessment of the rank/step they would hold if they had spent their career in the UC system, including accelerations for career achievements. Their record of teaching and service should be considered.

Adjunct appointment requires an active research program and meaningful engagement with the teaching and service missions of the University. CAP interpreted meaningful engagement liberally but it required obvious contributions to all three legs of the stool. Appointment in the Adjunct series of faculty members whose primary mission is teaching is permitted but it can be problematic because this series requires an active research program; care must be taken to define responsibilities and to provide resources that are necessary for the faculty member’s research success.

Joint appointments, often at 0% for the secondary appointment, have become more common. It is important for faculty members to realize that joint appointments create teaching and service obligations in both departments, in proportion to their fractional appointment. All appointments require evidence of teaching and service in the appointing department to justify reappointment and to enable career advancement. An appointment that is split between departments requires success in both; one cannot advance in only one of the departments. Excellent performance in the home department with 50% appointment and no or poor teaching/service in the other department with 50% appointment will preclude advancement. For this reason, CAP recommends that all joint appointments be supported by an MOU between appointing departments that describes the teaching and service obligations required of the candidate for merit advancement in each department. Candidates who met their obligations to their home department but failed to meet their obligations to a 0% appointment could advance in their home department but reappointment to the secondary department was not recommended by CAP. Departments should bear in mind that they are responsible for evaluating all teaching and service by their faculty members, including those with 0% appointments.

Fairness of compensation. For the academic year beginning July 1, 2015 the entry level title and on-scale salary for candidates that had just completed their PhD was Assistant Professor Step I, $58,500 (using the 07/01/15 adjusted scale). The highest on-scale salary was $156,000 for Professor Step IX. In some departments, the entry level salary for Acting Assistant Professors, who have not yet earned a PhD, was in excess of $200,000 due to off-scale salary components. The justification for these disparities was that the economic values of the domain knowledge and skill sets typical of each department are different as evidenced by job market analyses. CAP found this argument to be legitimate. Some members felt that huge off-scale salary inequities may cannibalize academic programs and cause morale problems to the overall detriment of the University but the committee decided that this topic lies largely beyond CAP’s purview.
4th year appraisals. Departments, Chairs, or Deans sometimes cheer for a candidate rather than provide a critical appraisal that sets realistic expectations and guides the candidate toward success. A candidate who has published high-impact, independent research articles and won major grants but who taught only one course and received low scores and negative comments on their teaching evaluations might receive a Favorable appraisal from their department and Dean but would likely receive a Problematic appraisal from CAP. The most common appraisal from CAP was Favorable with Reservations which often indicated that the quality and quantity of research/creativity was on track toward promotion but more was needed to establish independence, and that teaching and service were both adequate.

Change of series. It is common in some departments for faculty members to change between the Research Scientist, Adjunct, In-Residence, Clinical ‘X’, and Ladder Rank series or to have split appointments between two or more of these series. Often the appointment to a series is based on the candidate’s record of grant support. Transfer between series can be a problem if the standards are significantly different. For example, the Ladder Rank and In-Residence series may require a track record of sustained grant support, high research productivity, and high-impact research whereas the Clinical ‘X’ series may not. A lateral transfer from Clinical ‘X’ to the Ladder Rank or In Residence series may place a candidate into a step populated by faculty members with far greater records of research achievement. In such a case, transfer to a lower step may be appropriate. In the Health Sciences, this issue was exacerbated by occasional use of appointments to the Ladder Rank series as a reward. Lateral change in series is only possible if the candidate has already met all of the requirements for the proposed rank and step. This can be problematic for a change from Project Scientist to Associate or Full Research Scientist where scholarly independence must have already been established.

Former crossover steps. The former crossover steps were used for normal merit advancement under Dean’s authority. In some cases, candidates for promotion who were judged by CAP to have not met the requirements, instead received a merit advancement to a former crossover step based on their published research/creative work during the review period. All merit advancements now require some scholarly productivity (at least one original, peer-reviewed research/creative publication in the review period) with the following exception. Progress toward major projects such as books can justify a merit advancement without a publication in the review period - once in each rank - provided that a department ad hoc committee evaluated the unfinished work and recommended advancement.

Promotions from within. Promotion of faculty members to the Associate level was delayed or denied at a significantly higher rate if they had been appointed from within rather than from an external search (i.e., from a postdoc, Project Scientist, or Research Scientist, position at UCSD). The failure was almost always caused by a lack of independence, manifest by their UCSD mentor’s continuing role as senior author on the candidate’s publications. Typically, the ORU Head/Dean/AVC was unwilling to address this problem in their evaluations of these junior candidates who depend on their mentors for resources including lab space. Appointments from within appears to be a problematic practice and when done it should be accompanied with a mentoring plan to enhance career success.
Consecutive no-change. CAP encountered files of faculty members who had been proposed for another of multiple consecutive no-change decisions made on Dean’s authority; the files came to CAP for incidental reasons (e.g., to reset market off-scale). CAP judged that the candidates should have been considered for advancement. To prevent faculty members from becoming lost in the review process at the mercy of a Dean, CAP urged the EVC to require review of consecutive no-change decisions; this has now been incorporated into policy.

Academic freedom vs. department standards. In its review of proposed changes to APM 210-1-d, CAP considered the broader implications of policy mandating support for faculty members who change their research focus. CAP was concerned about a potential conflict between academic freedom and the authority of a department to set its own standards. In its response CAP wrote: “Each department has established for its faculty performance standards appropriate for their scholarly community and encompassing specific domains of knowledge. These domains naturally change as knowledge advances but the performance standards remain relatively stable. Occasionally, a faculty member’s research interest changes so much that it is no longer within the specific domains of knowledge encompassed by the department. Consequently, the standards of the department may no longer be appropriate for evaluating the faculty member’s performance. Faculty who choose to re-focus their research outside the domains of knowledge of their department may no longer be relevant as mentors for department graduate students or undergraduate students, may detract from department rankings or competitiveness for training grants, may not be competent to teach required graduate courses or even undergraduate courses, may prefer to do teaching and service outside the home department, may not bring in grant support, may not publish in a manner that meets department standards, and may not help pay for bond-funded occupied space.

Faculty members whose research focus has greatly changed may be a better fit in a different department. This may create a conundrum if the faculty member holds a senior level appointment but their research record, in their new field of scholarship, is similar to that of a junior faculty member.” CAP reasoned that every professor has the academic freedom to study any subject they choose and that each department can change its standards to accommodate new interests of professors but departments are not obligated to do so. Faculty members cannot demand standards that are tailored personally for them. Academic advancement is an earned privilege, not a right. Advancement requires that a faculty member meet the standards of their department for all review criteria.

External referees. CAP distributed documents this year (they are posted on CAP’s webpage) describing criteria for judging the independence of referees and restating the number of independent letters required for each appointment and promotion. CAP also stressed that letters from referees who are NOT independent are sometimes important to include because they can provide insights into collaborative research that independent referees cannot.

CAP saw several instances this year in which text between independent letters was identical or the tense of the letter writer changed between third and first person when describing the candidate. In these instances the files were returned to the department with a request for a complete explanation, and the referee letters in question were excluded from further consideration. Some departments noticed these irregularities and brought them to CAP’s attention at the time of file submission, which is the correct action to take. Departments should immediately request new letters to supplement those that must be excluded when irregularities are found. They should also seek a full explanation and include it in the department letter. Candidates and search committee members should be warned not to communicate with referees in a manner that could influence the referee letters.