

TO: ALL UCSD FACULTY

FROM: Senate Committee on Academic Personnel
Victor Ferreira, 2011 – 2012 Chair

DATE: January 25, 2013

SUBJECT: Where CAP Stood, 2011 – 2012

The primary mandate of the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) is to provide recommendations to the Executive Vice Chancellor regarding academic personnel actions. CAP's recommendations are guided foremost by UCSD's Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM), as well as by the University of California's Academic Personnel Manual (APM). The objective of this communication is to document issues pertaining to the PPM, APM, and CAP's interpretations of these policies that figured prominently in CAP's deliberations over the past year. Many issues have been raised in previous *Where CAP Stood* documents, and are reiterated here because of their continued or shifting relevance.

Issues relating to file preparation

Conflicts of interest. During preparation of files, a tension can arise between gaining input from faculty (both internal to the campus and external) who appear fully impartial, and gaining input from faculty who have the greatest expertise with candidates' contributions. The PPM provides guidance on this issue in some cases, advising against (though not forbidding) the participation of chairs and external referees who have close collaborative relationships with candidates. Campus reviewers take a position beyond this minimal stance, however, viewing contributions from non-independent faculty as by default creating an academic conflict of interest (generally involving close collaborations that may create specific interest in the candidate's academic advancement, or sufficient investment in the work that providing impartial evaluation may be difficult). As such, best practices are for departments to avoid any appearance of academic conflict, by choosing *ad hoc* committee members and external referees who bear no formal relationship with candidates. Campus reviewers do recognize that the best balance between gaining impartial and expert input sometimes weighs in favor of participation of faculty with formal relationships with candidates. If so, departments are strongly advised to disclose the formal relationship with the candidate and describe the conditions that warrant involvement of faculty as well as the nature of the professional relationship that is involved. Relatedly, chairs of departments who have a formal relationship with candidates should not prepare the departmental recommendation letter. If despite a formal relationship, a chair is in conflict, she or he may contribute to preparing the department letter, though the formal relationship should be disclosed, and the department should take steps to ensure that the department's point of view is presented without concern of conflict whenever possible, with all such steps disclosed in the department letter (for example, by giving final editorial and signing authority to the department vice chair or other suitable faculty member).

Letters from external referees. CAP continues to see academic files with suboptimal numbers of letters. Most problematic is when files include too few *independent* letters (five for any action that confers a tenured appointment or equivalent, three for all other actions, except appointments at Step I or II of the Assistant rank, which require three letters that need not be independent at all). CAP almost without exception requests that departments provide additional letters if these minima are not met. CAP also had concerns with files that had exactly the minimum number of letters, particularly when some aspect of a letter was problematic (for example, equivocal recommendations, or referees from less prominent institutions or at insufficient levels of seniority). For this reason, many CAP members prefer to see one or two letters more than the minimum required for an action. At the other extreme, CAP sees little value added when departments include very large numbers of letters from external referees in academic files. In addition to increasing the workload for campus reviewers, requesting inordinate numbers of letters threatens to exacerbate the (not unreasonable) reputation that the University of California unduly burdens the scholarly community with requests for external referee letters. Relatedly, some departments request letters from external referees for actions that do not involve career review (for example, accelerations). For the same reasons, CAP members hope that departments reconsider these policies or practices.

The University of California personnel system is unique in having two career-review steps within the Full Professor rank: Step VI and Above Scale. This uniqueness means that external referees from outside of the University of California often have no idea what these advancements are about. (It is not unusual for external referees' letters for faculty who are proposed to advance to Step VI to recommend promotion to full; CAP members are uncertain whether such recommendations should be construed favorably or unfavorably.) The most straightforward way to circumvent this problem is to request some letters from referees at other University of California campuses. Additionally, campus templates for soliciting letters for external referees have recently been updated to provide additional guidance on these actions. CAP hopes that the updated templates help to reduce the persistent confusion that has arisen in past years.

Teaching. CAP members continue to be duly impressed with the outstanding teaching performance of the majority of our faculty. As ever, CAP notes that best practices are to include multiple forms of teaching evaluation in a candidate's file. Furthermore, CAP considers exhaustive inclusion of student comments to be informative, in some cases because it can provide a mitigating context for candidates who have some blemishes in their teaching record. Direct related input from the candidate or their department that provides further clarifications and pertinent background is also strongly encouraged if based on metrics that apply uniformly rather than on case-by-case scenarios. Remediation plans, along with follow-up, that are deemed to define a solid and sustained path towards teaching excellence are given weight.

CAPE evaluations are always a source of controversy. CAP acknowledges that professor evaluations based on surveys of students are not a flawless measure of teaching performance. Furthermore, because CAPE evaluations provide numerical scores that invite the sense of comparability across departments, it is tempting to view the scores as a *de facto* standard for teaching performance (like GRE scores for graduate study or ISI Impact Factors for journal quality). CAP is aware of these concerns and strives to contextualize CAPE scores to the extent possible, and emphasizes once again that including all student comments along with CAPE

scores helps to provide a better understanding of faculty teaching performance. Meanwhile, CAP members would welcome the development of any additional tools that allow for comprehensive evaluation of faculty members' teaching that is fair, impartial, and thorough, and that can be implemented within the resource limitations imposed by our current budgetary constraints.

That said, CAP members are sometimes skeptical of some arguments that are used to dismiss CAPE evaluations. By some views, CAPE evaluations are merely an index of popularity. Many members of CAP are reserved about this assessment, however, confident in the belief that our students are capable of distinguishing when an instructor merely entertains them rather than truly teaches and inspires them. Also, CAP gives very little weight to arguments that a candidate's CAPE evaluations were undermined by CAPE's online evaluation system; note that *all* CAPE scores are collected online, and CAP sees many truly excellent evaluations. CAP pays attention to the percentage of a candidate's students that expect an "A" grade. At the same time, CAP is not persuaded that candidates earn weaker CAPE evaluations simply because they do not use overly lenient grading strategies, as CAP sees many teaching records with high CAPE evaluations and low percentages of students expecting an "A" at the time of evaluation, often accompanied by comments describing an instructor who is challenging but fair and dedicated. Commentary regarding such matters, if provided by the candidate or the department, is welcome and is closely scrutinized by CAP in our effort to make comprehensive and equitable judgments.

CAP members note that the quality of evaluations of graduate teaching and mentorship is uneven across the campus. In its attempt to comprehensively evaluate teaching performance, CAP appreciates thorough documentation of all forms of teaching, including at the graduate level.

Service. In departmental recommendation letters, CAP members appreciate fuller descriptions when service commitments carry responsibilities that are not commonly known across the campus, both when responsibilities are heavy and when they are light.

Diversity. CAP continues to follow the practice of rewarding genuine contributions to campus diversity, without penalizing the lack of such contributions. What constitutes a 'genuine' contribution is not always straightforward, but as with many matters, can only appropriately be left to the judgment of reviewers throughout the academic review process.

Documenting scholarly or creative contributions. Candidates' scholarly contributions should be recognized for their quality as well as their quantity. To assist with the evaluation of such quality, CAP finds it very useful if the academic file documents how the candidate contributed to his or her published work. Such documentation should take a form suited to the nature and the quantity of the contributions. For a large single contribution (say, a book), it is useful for reviewers outside the candidate's discipline if some of the relevant research methods are described. For a dozen or fewer works (say, journal articles or collaborative performances), the candidate's role for each work can be described. If the numbers of works within a review period is larger, a categorized list organized by the nature of the candidate's contribution can be provided. Indications of the quality of publication venues, impact, and so forth are always of value. Without any such documentation, CAP members have difficulty doing anything other than evaluating by counting.

A special case arises with massive collaborations, often taking the form of major research consortiums. When works of scholarship have literally hundreds of co-authors, CAP urges departments to develop metrics so that individual candidates' contributions can be evaluated.

Collaborative research. CAP firmly rejects the notion that faculty must choose between participating in collaborative research versus developing as independent scholars. Many disciplines everywhere on campus thrive through synergistic collaboration. On the issue of evaluating contributions to collaborative research, CAP casts a careful eye on one form of collaboration: When relatively junior faculty members maintain largely exclusive collaborations with one or two more senior scholars, often ones who are former or current mentors. Two dangers consistently arise with collaborative relationships that involve asymmetric seniority and ongoing or vestigial mentorship. First, junior candidates' standing in their field can be short-changed, with undue credit for effort or contribution being given to the senior collaborators. Second, and in complement, senior candidates may appear to claim undue credit for academic contributions. CAP members are particularly dismayed when attempts to circumvent the first danger leads senior collaborators to discount their own contributions in the academic files of their junior collaborators, while not discounting the same contributions in their own academic files. The fairest and most convincing way to circumvent these concerns is for senior collaborators to foster the development of the independent research careers of their junior collaborators, and in a manner that is portrayed clearly by the actual academic record of those junior collaborators.

Appraisals. If there is an action where CAP is likely to be more cautious than departments, it is with appraisals of Assistant rank appointees. For faculty at the Assistant rank who are on a positive trajectory toward tenure (or equivalent), CAP sees *Favorable with reservations* as the most common appraisal. CAP hopes that departments and divisions can mentor junior faculty so that the *with reservations* part of the appraisal title does not unduly overshadow the *favorable* part of the appraisal title. CAP does not commonly recommend *Favorable* appraisals, because even when candidates are on a good trajectory toward tenure, there usually remain aspects of the file that need to continue to improve to warrant tenure. In contrast, *Problematic* and/or *Unfavorable* appraisal ratings signal that the candidate has much work to do in order to achieve tenure, and receiving such a rating is a strong signal for the candidate to undertake all measures and avail his or herself of all resources to help prepare the most successful case possible.

Off-scales. CAP is able to recommend an establishment of or an increase to a market off-scale salary component in two situations only: At the time of appointment of a new faculty member, or in the case of a retention of a current faculty member. It should be kept foremost in mind that a *market* off-scale salary component can only be justified by market-based considerations.

At the time of appointment of a new faculty member, a market off-scale salary component can be justified either through a competing offer for a comparable appointment from a comparable institution, or through a market analysis of recent comparable appointments in comparable departments. If a department foresees making enough appointments to warrant it, it may seek a pre-approved entry level salary agreement based on a discipline-based market analysis.

For faculty already appointed at UCSD, retention-based justifications for an establishment of or an increase to a market off-scale salary component can come in two forms: Formal retention and pre-emptive retention. Formal retention actions are accompanied by credible evidence of a recruitment attempt from another institution. In this case, CAP's primary role is to assess the comparability of the raiding institution, so as to recommend whether the proposed change to the market off-scale salary component is justified. The majority of CAP strongly feels that CAP's recommendation should be restricted only to adjustment on the basis of the candidate's competing nine-month academic salary (for faculty on nine-month appointments). Additional salary, benefits, bonuses, or incentives vary substantially from case to case, and diminish CAP's ability to maintain consistent practice from case to case. Concerning pre-emptive retentions, CAP very strongly takes the position that the case for adjustment of the market off-scale salary component be accompanied by *credible* evidence of outside interest in the candidate. On the basis of such interest, which in almost every case is much more vague (at least numerically), CAP recognizes that a comparatively modest upward adjustment to a candidate's market off-scale salary component can reward some of our strongest faculty and nip potentially more costly formal retention actions in the bud. CAP recommends continued careful scrutiny of all such actions as well as ongoing dialogue between the senate and administration so as to further develop suitable parameters for the use of pre-emptive retentions.

It must be emphasized that whether for new or continuing appointees, a market off-scale salary component is not an *equity* off-scale salary component; justification for a market off-scale cannot be justified neither by equity considerations nor by considerations of parity among particular groups of faculty. At the same time, CAP recognizes and encourages efforts on the part of the senate and the administration to develop mechanisms through which some of the marked salary equity disparities among our faculty can be remedied.

Reconsiderations. When acting on a reconsideration action, CAP restricts itself to evaluation of genuinely new information that is added to the file. Thus, the addition must be information -- it should not just be re-argumentation or attempts at persuasion -- and it must be new -- it must not simply reiterate information documented in the original action.

Issues relating to academic steps

Steps for new appointments. CAP very much appreciates justification for the proposed step of all new appointments. In the case of appointments at Step I or II of the Assistant rank, this justification can be brief, citing a candidate's relevant academic experience that precedes appointment at UCSD (e.g., time as a post doctoral researcher). For all other steps at all other ranks, proper justification may need to be more comprehensive. Appointment at Step III of the Assistant rank should only be proposed if the department makes a convincing case that the candidate will be ready for promotion to the Associate rank within four years. Appointments at higher steps should be justified by time spent and academic performance at other institutions. Deliberations regarding academic step should never be based on salary considerations. Steps recognize academic standing; suitable salaries are established with the market off-scale salary mechanism.

Crossover steps. The crossover steps are often taken as emblematic of the complexities of the University of California's personnel system. Even so, most members of CAP feel that as currently designed, they serve a useful function, and that it is not a straightforward matter to simplify their use without causing other complications. As currently designed, CAP can only recommend advancement to a crossover step when the file includes actual evidence of scholarly accomplishment that, upon completion, is likely to justify promotion upon next review. In nearly every case, such evidence takes the form of completed chapters of a book project. In article disciplines, advancement to a crossover step may be justified if the candidate is able to include a number of not-yet-accepted manuscripts that would be sufficient to warrant promotion, but only if there are actual manuscripts (ideally in some state beyond initial submission). CAP does not take a funded (or likely-to-be-funded) grant as evidence of scholarly accomplishment sufficient to warrant advancement to a crossover step. CAP recognizes that receiving a grant constitutes recognition from academic peers (and in the current funding environment, that recognition is considerable); still, promotions, like grants, are justified by actual research productivity and not the availability of funding to underwrite that productivity.

Accelerations. CAP recognizes that the PPM does not provide unambiguous guidance regarding standards for acceleration. CAP views accelerations as warranted when there is unusually strong productivity -- sometimes described as "double" what would normally be expected, to the extent that such quantification is possible -- in at least one area of professional responsibility, combined with no discernible weakness in any other area of professional responsibility. In almost every case, the area of unusually strong productivity is research and/or creative activity. In addition to poor performance at assigned responsibilities, most CAP members view a near (or total) absence of contribution in any area of responsibility, including teaching and service, as a weakness, unless legitimately justified. Especially in the professorial series, service includes not just professional and discipline service; CAP views the contributions of our strongest faculty to departmental and University service as essential for the continued academic health of our community.

At the rank of Full Professor, accelerations to the career-review steps (Step VI and Above Scale) are judged by a higher standard than other accelerations. Justification for this is PPM 230-28, which specifically notes that advancements to these career-review steps will not normally occur before a regular term of service at the immediately preceding step. More practically, assembling career-review files is onerous for departments and for external referees who are asked to provide letters. Failed acceleration to these career review steps are thus more consequential than regular failed accelerations. It is thus a matter of proceeding with reasonable caution to restrict proposals of accelerations to Full-rank career-review steps only when it is clearly warranted. Note that accelerations *through* Step VI (from Step V) do not have this standard, but instead require the regular standard for acceleration for faculty at the proposed step.

Sometimes, and especially for career-review actions, departments decide to change a proposed action (for example, when external letters are so strong that an acceleration seems warranted on top of a promotion or career-review advancement). Such mid-stream changes in proposed actions should be reserved for unusual cases, as they complicate the file review process. When departments do pursue mid-stream changes, it is helpful if they explicitly note and justify the

changed strategy, to allay any confusion regarding description of departmental discussion and departmental votes, or the content of external referee letters.

Above Scale. Advancements of faculty to or at the Above Scale level are not judged by the same standards as advancement within the academic steps. The PPM specifically documents that to be conferred with the “Distinguished” title, and to advance with that title, candidates must be scholars and teachers of the highest distinction whose work has been internationally recognized and acclaimed, *and* whose teaching performance and service are excellent. Previous *Where CAP Stood* documents have noted that candidates can remain at Step IX without shame; an analogous standpoint can be seen as appropriate at the time of Above Scale academic review as well.

By the same token, accelerations within the Above Scale category are not judged by the same standards as accelerations within the academic steps. Above Scale accelerations -- advancements of more than 100% of the difference between the top two steps in the Professor series -- must be reserved for our faculty whose contributions are well beyond those that earned advancement to the Above Scale category in the first place. Advancements of 200% at Above Scale are and should continue to be extremely unusual. These should be proposed only when the candidate’s research contribution is much more than exemplary, or when candidates earn international or national recognition through honors or awards (in combination with contributions warranting regular Above Scale advancement or acceleration).

Off-cycle reviews. *Where CAP Stood* commonly notes that off-cycle reviews are to be strongly discouraged. Off-cycle reviews raise concerns regarding equity, encourage advancement strategies that do not further the academic interests of the University, and threaten to make the University of California academic personnel system -- already likely the most burdensome such system in the world -- even more burdensome. Proposals for off-cycle reviews must specifically justify the off-cycle timing, bearing in mind that outstanding professional accomplishment by itself is not suitable justification. Factors specifically related to the timing of the review -- for example, retention concerns -- should be explicitly cited. Note that promotions from the Assistant to the Associate rank are never considered off-cycle.

Issues relating to academic series

Lecturers with (Potential) Security of Employment (L(P)SOEs). UCSD is fortunate to include among its faculty truly remarkable L(P)SOEs who have invaluable enriched our environment through extraordinary teaching and contributions to the instructional mission of the University. For this reason, L(P)SOE appointments must be reserved for faculty who will maintain the integrity of this series. CAP recognizes that the standards by which L(P)SOEs are evaluated are cumbersome and sometimes difficult to interpret. The PPM requires:

- Teaching of truly exceptional quality and so specialized in character that it cannot be done with equal effectiveness by ladder-rank faculty members or by strictly temporary appointees
- Professional achievement and activity
- University and public service

- Educational leadership recognized beyond the campus and contributions to instruction-related activities (e.g., conducting teaching assistant training, supervision of student affairs, development of instructional materials)

Beyond truly exceptional teaching and university and public service, CAP seeks evidence that an L(P)SOE has made additional professional contributions and has displayed educational leadership. Additionally, CAP seeks evidence that the candidate has made contributions that are recognized beyond the campus, such as (but not limited to) published books or manuals, peer-reviewed publications, or contributions to broadly visible conferences and workshops. Though CAP recognizes that the PPM language does not provide especially clear guidance, in CAP's experience, faculty within the L(P)SOE series are less likely to encounter difficulty if they are provided early and effective mentorship, ideally immediately at the time of appointment.

Adjunct Professors. The Adjunct Professor series serves many different functions across the campus. CAP views the appointment and advancement of salaried adjuncts, who largely come from the Health Sciences campus, as relatively straightforward. More complex are non-salaried Adjunct Professors across the campus. PPM language concerning the Adjunct Professor series will be updated during this academic year. This language will emphasize "meaningful engagement," instead of the much-maligned (by some) "one course or equivalent" standard. Though CAP members see value in the increased flexibility that the new language will provide to the campus, even under the previous more restrictive standard, many files came to CAP that, in the judgment of its members, did not meet any reasonable standard of "meaningful engagement." Appointees as non-salaried adjuncts are expected to make substantive contributions to the academic lives of the appointing departments. CAP urges the campus community to maintain this standard.

Concluding remarks

To compare the University of California academic personnel system to a Rube Goldberg device is to make a Rube Goldberg device seem simple. Yet, this system is frequently recognized by our campus faculty and staff as among the fairest systems for recognizing professional accomplishment anywhere in academia. The burden of maintaining this reputation is felt by faculty and staff at all stages of academic review, including in departments and divisions, at the Academic Senate, in the Academic Personnel office, and in Academic Affairs. Service on CAP, perhaps to a greater extent than any other academic duty, provides an opportunity to observe the sheer breadth and brilliance of the world-changing creative activity, education, and institution-building that is the daily activity of the members of the UCSD community. These professional accomplishments are the best testament to the success of our academic personnel system.