

Section I

Name of Committee: University Senate Personnel Committee (USPC)

Submitted by: Jodi Swanson, Chair, on behalf of USPC

Date Submitted: April 17, 2023

Membership Roster:

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Overview Narrative:

The following summarizes committee work accomplished throughout this past year:

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The University Senate Personnel Committee met regularly six times between October 2022 and April 2023. In addition to these monthly meetings, Committee members met with the Provost prior to the start of the academic year in Summer 2022 and with the Vice Provost and Provost Fellow in two Listening Sessions in Spring 2023. The Committee Chair met with College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Associate Deans in conjunction with the Chair of the Student Faculty Policy Committee in Spring 2023. The Committee began ascertaining demographic information across units toward a centralized dashboard to demonstrate the diversity and breadth of University personnel. The aims for the Personnel Committee were to summarize and consolidate existing areas of concern and distress for university personnel members that remain problematic without meaningful change, and to devise plans forward in concert with University administrators to enact meaningful change. Overarchingly, these centered around areas of equity, consistency of policies and procedures across academic units, and transparency of communication and process between university administrators and faculty/staff members.

Section II

Request for Consultations and/or topics reviewed by the committee and outcomes (topics reviewed by the committee decided not to act/review should be listed here with, no action taken):

a. System for improvement for underperforming faculty members

- Do all colleges offer support for teaching and learning like W. P. Carey has with their Teaching and Learning Dean? To provide equitable resources to all faculty, could teaching and learning support be provided at a university level?
- Could an innovative university-wide system or process be developed to assist units in identifying and supporting career-track faculty struggling with instructional practices?
- Could a standard and transparent performance improvement process be developed for faculty who are struggling?
- **Outcome:** This issue was discussed with the Vice Provost and Provost Fellow in Listening Sessions. A system is forthcoming for professional development for Career Faculty with details to follow from the Vice Provost. The Committee developed some recommendations for identifying faculty members who are underperforming:
- **Recommendation for actions focused on equity, inclusiveness, and innovation:** An identification process must include more than students' end-of-course survey results.

b. Bias, inconsistency, and high-stakes consequences in students' course evaluations

- Are specific standards (and transparency concerning those standards) possible regarding the weight units apply to students' course evaluations? For example, do units disregard extremely positive or negative evaluations or consider how students' grades may affect their responses? Do unit, like merit raises, develop their own measurement of faculty evaluations?
- **Outcome:** This issue was discussed at length with the Vice Provost and Provost Fellow in Listening Sessions and with The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Associate Deans, in conjunction with the Chair of the University Senate Student Faculty Policy Committee. Because evaluation instruments vary widely across academic units, and because units have intellectual freedom of design and choice regarding which items are included and the language of such items, it is unlikely a standardized series of course

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evaluations will be utilized; however, the University Promotion and Tenure Committee intentionally and consciously takes into account all aspects of a candidate's promotion portfolio when making promotion decisions, and it is recommended that units' internal promotion committees intentionally and consciously take into account other aspects of portfolios and extenuating circumstances that may have resulted in particularly low evaluation ratings.

- **Recommendations for actions focused on equity, inclusiveness, and innovation:** Base considerations of students' course evaluations on the ratio of submitted evaluations to classroom enrollment, perhaps arriving at a minimum percentage for evaluations to be highly considered in terms of instructor retention. Come up with a consistent outreach plan, beyond e-mails, to encourage more students to submit evaluations. Require units to revisit and revise evaluation instruments regularly (e.g., every five years) for relevance and equity. Develop a means of coding and analyzing students' open-ended responses, particularly for promotion candidates.

c. Full-time employment definition

- Determining what is "full-time" employment has implications for whether personnel members are benefits-eligible, whether personnel members are eligible to serve on standing committees, and whether personnel members are eligible for promotion.
- For clarity, do clear-cut definitions exist regarding what is considered full-time employment?
- **Outcome:** This issue was discussed with the Vice Provost and Provost Fellow in Listening Sessions. The University administration is proposing an amendment to the ACD stating that "full time" (i.e., the Academic Assembly) is defined as "benefits-eligible", or .5 FTE. Administrators allow the University Senate to adopt this definition or another, with regard to which members of the Academic Assembly are eligible to participate in faculty governance.

Section III

Request for Consultations and/or topics that were not started or remain unfinished and need to be carried over to the next academic year.

a. Sabbatical leave for Career Track Faculty

- The [ACD 705](#) specifies that tenured faculty, academic professionals, and administrators with faculty ranks, all with six years of employment, qualify for sabbatical leave; presently, career-track faculty do not qualify.
- Although sabbaticals were historically unique to academia and reserved for tenured faculty, many private-sector administrators and others now qualify for sabbaticals. Considering competitiveness and attracting top talent, the lower-income relative to other faculty, weighty instructional and service loads, and the invaluable roles in their units of career-track faculty, an option for quality for sabbatical leave seems an equitable, inclusive, and innovative action.
- Career-track teaching and clinical faculty could use sabbaticals to advance teaching engagements, enhance knowledge in their fields, and network in private and public

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sectors to bring back to the classroom and to provide students a realistic connection to their career after graduation.

- **Outcome:** This issue was discussed at length with the Vice Provost and Provost Fellow in Listening Sessions. In lieu of formalized sabbaticals, Career Faculty are likely to receive forthcoming opportunities for professional development. Members of the Committee felt questions remain and will continue discussions in Listening Sessions with administrators to learn more regarding professional development opportunities, including a timeline for their implementation and details for those seeking such opportunities.

b. Job security for faculty members not eligible for tenure (e.g., contract discrepancies, dismissal even when performing meritoriously)

- Transparency on year-to-year versus multi-year contracts seems important. Language seems necessary regarding how to attain multi-year status, along with conditions/timing for nonrenewal of contracts for faculty and academic personnel who are performing meritoriously.
- Steps forward regarding position value (e.g., collective terminology shift, title language changes) reflect an acknowledgment that career-track faculty are often committed to positions for the long-term, despite a lack of tenure eligibility; are there ways to ensure their security?
- Rolling one-year contracts, in lieu of multiyear contracts, for Career Faculty less than the “Full” Professor ranking, may increase job security and streamline and diminish the stress associated with evaluation processes.
- Consistency of a deadline across Colleges/units for Career Faculty (e.g., March 31) regarding contract renewal for the upcoming academic year would enable unrenewed faculty to secure new employment well-before a fall semester.
- Questions have been raised regarding consistency of raises for a given promotion year, specifically for teaching professors. Can raises be expected with promotions beginning the year of promotion?
- **Outcome:** This issue was discussed with the Provost, and Vice Provost and Provost Fellow in Listening Sessions. The new collective language for “Career Faculty” (from “Non-tenure Eligible Faculty”), the university-wide paths to promotion on a Career “Track”, and the option for multi-year contracts at the “Full” Professor level were important shifts forward; however, Career Faculty remain fearful for the security of their positions and are not consistently alerted to non-renewal with adequate time to seek other employment (and/or are not renewed despite meritorious performance). Thus, the Committee felt questions remain and will continue discussions in Listening Sessions with administrators.

d. Transparency regarding wage increase exercises

- The process for and size of wage increases (e.g., merit increases) appears to warrant clarity and transparency; processes are not consistent across Colleges or even among smaller units within Colleges (e.g., Schools, Departments), with limited process transparency.
- Limited transparency exacerbates inequities across and within Colleges, and this is especially problematic for Colleges with a substantial proportion of career-track faculty members. To our knowledge, the overall pool of money allotted to each College for

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merit-based wage increases is dependent upon faculty salaries within that College, yet average faculty salaries already vary dramatically by College and Colleges with lower-average salaries receive lower merit increases than Colleges with higher-average salaries, compounding existing inequities.

- Is it possible to grant cost-of-living increases, particularly given the recent skyrocketed cost-of-living in the Phoenix metro area?
- **Outcome:** This issue was discussed with the Provost, and Vice Provost and Provost Fellow in Listening Sessions. Discrepancies in recent wage increases for some faculty members appear to be tied to discrepancies in market rates. The Committee developed some recommendations for transparent communication of processes and decision-making:
- **Recommendations for actions focused on equity, inclusiveness, and innovation:** Involve faculty members in exploring a more equitable and transparent approach to allocating funds for merit increases. In keeping with ACD511-01 (“Performance Funds”), provide university-level communication and oversight to ensure that an equitable and transparent process, discussed openly and clearly with faculty, is utilized within each College. Provide yearly information about average merit increase percentages by rank across the university. If cost-of-living increases are not viable, explore innovative approaches for partially offsetting the rising cost-of-living to increase the likelihood of attracting and retaining top-level faculty talent.

e. Compensation for overload courses, compensation for faculty associates

- Wages for overload courses vary across units, sometimes as much as half the compensation in one School/College as another. Moreover, some units allow for negotiation of pay or have reflected cost-of-living, inflation, or the prep and person-power necessary for a course, whereas others have remained a flat rate for some time.
- One concern expressed that some units employ faculty associates as a method of maintaining lower per-overload-course compensation, but that may result in inequitable opportunities for instructional Career Faculty.

Section IV

Recommendations to the Senate or Final Comments

The USPC is working to develop a centralized University dashboard to better and more immediately ascertain the diversity and breadth of University personnel. The Committee requires a means of understanding the employed *lay of the land* to most effectively serve those it represents. The Committee is also working to develop a more effective feedback-sharing tool (e.g., a standardized form via a sharable electronic link) to collect and consolidate personnel matters from across the institution. The Committee plans to continue regular (e.g., monthly) Listening Sessions with University administration members toward continuing a culture of consistent, open, transparent communication, and the Committee recommends the formation of regular (e.g., semesterly) Town Hall meetings with administrators, perhaps hosted and moderated by the USPC, to give faculty and staff members a direct communicate outlet.

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Please type a summary in 100 words or less in this space. This paragraph will be cut and pasted directly into the Senate Annual Report.

The aims for the Personnel Committee were to summarize and consolidate existing areas of concern and distress for university personnel members that remain problematic without meaningful change, and to devise plans forward in concert with University administrators to enact meaningful change. Overarchingly, these centered around areas of equity, consistency of policies and procedures across academic units, and transparency of communication and process between university administrators and faculty/staff members. The majority of issues regarding faculty members pertained to Career/Career-Track Faculty Members' wellness, security, working conditions, and value, and the Committee was pleased to hear on several occasions in Listening Sessions with administrators that the concerns of Career Faculty are a leading priority across campuses.

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