

March 5, 2015

MAUREEN STANTON, Vice Provost
Office of Academic Affairs

RE: Merit actions to Professor Step 6

Dear Vice Provost Stanton,

As you know, the Davis Division Representative Assembly voted on June 3, 2014 to no longer require submittal of extramural letters when advancing to Professor Step 6. This vote was prompted by a petition received from 36 department chairs on campus. The petition stated the following:

"As chairs we have spent an inordinate amount of time trying to find scholars who are willing to undertake the arduous task of reviewing a candidate's material for a "promotion" that for most non-UCDavis faculty makes no sense. As you are aware, the UC schools are the only institutions that require external letters at this career stage. Soliciting such letters is therefore awkward and writing the letters is as well since many external reviewers are uncertain what criteria to apply beyond the vague language used in soliciting them. Not surprisingly the content of these letters varies little (i.e., they are almost uniformly positive). Thus, we do not believe that external letters at this career stage are sufficiently useful in evaluation for merit advancement to warrant soliciting them. The process for review at Step 6 is in large part a vestige of an academic personnel process that has changed over time in such a way, including the gradual addition of additional steps before "above scale," as to make the traditional process at Step 6 no longer particularly useful or relevant. **Information on national and international reputation, impact and other accomplishments is readily available from other sources (e.g., citations, awards, invitations) and our time is better spent gathering these data.**"

CAP is experiencing difficulties with the dossiers forwarded by departments in support of cases for advancement to Professor Step 6. As you know, the requirement for outside letters for this action has been discontinued. However, Step 6 remains a barrier step subject to the criteria set forth in APM 220-18.b.4 and UCD-APM 220.IV.C.4a. In the absence of outside letters, department letters should be very clear in specifically addressing the Step 6 criteria, and should provide the sorts of information that were previously gathered from the outside letters, while making specific reference to the standards applying to teaching, service and research as described in the APM.

CAP wishes to note that very commonly this year such reference is absent from the department chair and Deans' letters, suggesting that Step 6 is being regarded as merely a longer-duration version of a standard merit advancement. CAP thus respectfully requests that explicit attention be paid to the Step 6 guidelines in the preparation of future dossiers.

Sincerely,



David Simpson, Chair
Committee on Academic Personnel-Oversight

Cc: Andr e Knoesen, Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate
Gina Anderson, Executive Director, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

Enclosures



ONE SHIELDS AVENUE
DAVIS, CALIFORNIA 95616-8701

March 7, 2014

Chair Bruno Nachtergaele
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
402 Mrak Hall, UC Davis
Davis, CA 95616
Dear Bruno:

We write to request that you ask the Senate to reconsider its reluctance to support the recommendation from the UC Davis Academic Personnel Streamlining Implementation Workgroup (APSIW) of January 9, 2014, that UC Davis eliminate external referee letters for the high level merit to Professor Step 6.

As chairs we have spent an inordinate amount of time trying to find scholars who are willing to undertake the arduous task of reviewing a candidate's material for a "promotion" that for most non-UC Davis faculty makes no sense. As you are aware, the UC schools are the only institutions that require external letters at this career stage. Soliciting such letters is therefore awkward and writing the letters is as well since many external reviewers are uncertain what criteria to apply beyond the vague language used in soliciting them. Not surprisingly the content of these letters varies little (i.e., they are almost uniformly positive). Thus, we do not believe that external letters at this career stage are sufficiently useful in evaluation for merit advancement to warrant soliciting them. The process for review at Step 6 is in large part a vestige of an academic personnel process that has changed over time in such a way, including the gradual addition of additional steps before "above scale," as to make the traditional process at Step 6 no longer particularly useful or relevant. Information on national and international reputation, impact and other accomplishments is readily available from other sources (e.g., citations, awards, invitations) and our time is better spent gathering these data.

Requesting letters, preparing materials for referees, and processing letters also places an extra-burden on our already over-worked staff and introduces an unnecessary and unpredictable expense to departments (e.g., some referees want hard copies of a candidate's books and other publications mailed to them in places outside the continental U.S.). Finally, as Julie Schumacher noted in a recent commentary in the Chronicle of Higher Education (<http://chronicle.com/blogs/conversation/2014/01/30/the-gristmill-of-praise/>), academics are inundated with requests for letters—she estimates that she wrote 50 to 100 recommendation letters last year. We should not use this resource on Professor Step 6 merits, but save it for reviews for tenure, promotion to full, and promotion to Distinguished Professor ("above scale") actions.

Sincerely

George A. Barnett, Chair, Communication
Katharine Burnett, Director, East Asian Studies
María Cecilia Colombi, Chair, Spanish and Portuguese
David Copp, Chair, Philosophy
Joseph Dumit, Director of Science and Technology Studies
Susan Handy, Chair, Environmental Science and Policy
Paul D. Hastings, Chair, Psychology



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Wolf-Dietrich Heyer, Chair, Microbiology & Molecular Genetics
Naomi Janowitz, Chair, Religious Studies
Richard Kim, Chair, Asian American Studies
Louise Kellogg, Acting Chair, Earth and Planetary Sciences.
Elisabeth Krimmer, Chair, German and Russian
Sashi K. Kunnath, Chair, Civil and Environmental Engineering
Bill McCarthy, Chair, Sociology
Tim McNeil, Chair, Design
Elizabeth Miller, Chair, English
Anita M. Oberbauer, Chair, Animal Science
Kathy Olmsted, Chair, History
Beth A. Ober, Chair, Human Development (Human Ecology)
Patsy Eubanks Owens, Chair, Landscape Architecture
Ahmet Palazoglu, Chair, Chemical Engineering and Materials Science
Hearne Pardee, Chair, Art and Art History
Raul H. Piedrahita, Chair, Biological and Agricultural Engineering
Vai Ramanathan, Chair, Linguistics
Jon D. Rossini, Chair, Theatre and Dance
Richard Sexton, Chair, Agriculture and Resource Economics
Juliana Schiesari, Chair, Comparative Literature
John T. Scott, Chair, Political Science
Julia Simon, Chair, French and Italian
Henry Spiller, Chair, Music
Rex Stem, Director, Classics Program
Ann Stevens, Chair, Economics
Julie Sze, Director of American Studies
Chris Van Kessel, Chair, Plant Sciences
Case P. van Dam, Chair, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Li Zhang, Chair, Anthropology

June 4, 2014

ACADEMIC SENATE MEMBERSHIP

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday, June 3, 2014, the Representative Assembly approved the following motion 57 in favor; 11 opposed:

"We support Step-Plus System implementation effective July 1, 2014, for all Academic Senate titles. Our understanding of the system is based on the descriptions provided in the "Step Plus System for Personnel Actions, and Guidelines for Advancements Under the Step-Plus System – Academic Senate Titles" documents. To ease the transition, members should have the option to request an 'acceleration in time' under current rules for their first action during the three-year period ending June 30, 2017.

The Representative Assembly directs the Executive Council to appoint a task force charged with reviewing the Step-Plus System including an assessment of whether the efficiency and efficacy envisioned was achieved. The review will commence in early 2016-2017. The task force will seek endorsement of its report during the April 2017 (spring) Representative Assembly meeting."

The documents referred to in the motion are posted on the senate website: <http://academicssenate.ucdavis.edu/divisional-resources/Step%20Plus.html>. Note that the motion includes the provision that faculty may request an acceleration-in-time under the current rules for their first action during a three year transition period.

The affirmative Representative Assembly vote officially advises the Chancellor that the Davis Division of the Academic Senate supports moving forward with Step-Plus System implementation. The Academic Senate leadership will assist with the implementation as needed. Chair-elect Knoesen has indicated he will ask Vice Chair-elect Goodhue to lead the Academic Senate's Step-Plus System implementation in 2014-2015. Her task includes developing a plan and process by which the required Step-Plus System review will occur in 2016-2017. In addition, a workgroup will be formed to monitor and advise the implementation of Step Plus.

Step Plus is the result of a the hard work of a great number of senate members, assisted by dedicated staff and the administration, in response to a resolution of the Representative Assembly (passed June 3, 2011), which called for simplifications in the academic personnel process. I would like to thank the members of the Academic Senate Taskforce on Simplifying the Personnel Process (STAPP), the Academic Personnel Streamlining Implementation Workgroup (APSIW), and the Joint Senate-Administration Workgroup on Step Plus Policies and Procedures (SAWSPPP), for their creative and meticulous work.

At yesterday's meeting, following another recommendation by STAPP and APSIW, the Representative Assembly also voted to recommend that extramural letters no longer be required for advancement the Professor Step 6 which, however, remains a 'barrier' step as described in APM 220.

Sincerely,



Bruno Nachtergaele, Chair
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
Professor: Mathematics