

October 22, 2015

[Advisory to Deans #AA2015-09](#)

**DEANS, EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATE DEANS, ASSOCIATE DEANS, ASSISTANT DEANS, CHAIRS, AND
ACADEMIC PERSONNEL ANALYSTS**

RE: Step Plus System for Academic Federation

Dear Colleagues,

On June 15th, 2015, the Academic Federation (AF) voted to implement the new Step Plus System for the following title series:

- Adjunct Professor
- Agronomist in the Agricultural Experiment Station (AES)
- Specialist in Cooperative Extension (CE)
- Health Sciences Clinical Professor
- Professional Researcher
- Project Scientist
- Specialist

Step Plus is expected to reduce administrative workload by eliminating accelerations-in-time for merit actions while providing all candidates the opportunity for advancements of 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, or (in very rare circumstances) greater than 2.0 steps. The Step Plus System for all merit and promotion actions is in effect as of July 1, 2015. For these Federation positions, accelerations in time are only permitted for promotions to the Associate and Full ranks under the Step Plus System. The interim Step Plus advancement criteria for these Federation titles are available in the **Step Plus System** link on the UC Davis Academic Affairs webpage (<http://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/policies/step-plus/guidelines-for-advancement-federation.html>). All Step Plus guidelines (including Senate and Federation) are interim guidelines and will be applied to all actions until revised. New Step Plus salary tables are available on the UC Davis Step Plus Salary Tables webpage at: <http://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/policies/step-plus/salary-tables.html>.

General principles about the advancement of Academic Federation members-- As we move to implement Step Plus for these titles, I want to emphasize that all Academic Federation (AF) members who successfully meet the requirements for their title series are expected to advance at normative periods as their experience, skills and responsibilities develop over time. Details regarding normative periods for advancement can be found for each series policy in the Academic Personnel Manual (APM). The UC Davis Academic Personnel History Information Database (APHID) generates an eligibility list for all academic employees that must be reviewed by each dean's office, department, and principal investigator (PI). ***Importantly, all AF members must be informed of their eligibility annually, and Principal Investigators (PIs) must review eligibility and budget for their potential advancements.***

- Historically, AF researchers supported on "soft money" have tended to defer merit actions and promotions when there is an apparent lack of funding to support their advancement. While it is true that a number of international AF researchers cannot work less than 100% time because of visa restrictions, candidates without this constraint should have the option to pursue merit advancement or promotion, even if the awarding of that advancement will entail a reduction in their percent time or their period of employment on any given project. Under Step Plus, any given advancement may be awarded for more than one step based on merit, and so it is imperative that department chairs urge PIs to plan carefully for merit-based advancement of AF researchers as they develop research proposals and manage grant and contract funding. Our office provides a form in **Appendix A** (to be included as an addendum to the department letter) that will document and summarize communications about the candidate's potential advancement and available funding, first between the department chair (or designee) and the PI, and then between the AF candidate and the department chair. These communications will allow AF candidates to make informed decisions about pursuing merit advancement or promotion. Candidates choosing to pursue advancement when funding may not be available for full-time employment should consult with their department to understand how a reduction in percent time could affect visa status, retirement or health benefits.

AF Step Plus process overview-- When eligible for a merit or promotion, the candidate requests a specific action-- full consideration of all Step Plus advancement options (1.0, 1.5 steps, or 2.0 steps), consideration for 1.0-step advancement only, or deferral. We provide general guidelines for those choices below.

- For *all* AF advancement requests (as for Senate actions), the Action Form in MIV (formerly known as the Recommended Action Form) should indicate, as a default setting at the time of the department-level vote, a 1.0 step advancement.
- A candidate requesting full Step Plus consideration is allowed to make a case for greater-than-one-step advancement in their candidate's statement, but regardless of that request, subsequent reviewers and decision-makers should evaluate the record carefully and consider all Step Plus advancement options (no advancement, 1.0 step, 1.5 steps, or 2.0 steps).
- For a candidate requesting consideration for 1.0-step advancement only, subsequent reviewers and decision-makers should review the record within the Step Plus context and may indicate their view that the record deserves more than a 1.0-step advancement, but only 1.0-step advancement will be approved.
- The department's recommendation should be based on the opinions of the Peer Group and Voting Group (<http://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/resources/federation/guidelines.html>) after reviewing the candidate's record. If the voting majority recommends advancement of more than one step, the proposed action in MIV should be updated to reflect that recommendation.

The only exceptions to full Step Plus consideration are those cases where the AF candidate has elected to be considered only for a 1.0-step advancement. Most often, this choice will be determined by the funding source(s) for the candidate's position. Because many of the appointees in these titles receive compensation from non-State sources, special consideration must be given to both the potential salary and retirement accrual ramifications of advancements. This consideration needs to occur before a promotion or merit action is pursued, because once an advancement is approved, it cannot be deferred. Please see the following list of considerations and recommendations that are specific to each Academic Federation title for which Step Plus is now in effect.

1. **Specialists in CE** - No additional considerations are needed for this State-funded series. Candidates advancing by more than one step will receive the Step Plus increment and supplement, according to the Step Plus System guidelines.
2. **Agronomists in the AES** - No additional considerations are needed for this State-funded series. Candidates advancing by more than one step will receive the Step Plus increment and supplement, according to the Step Plus System guidelines.
3. **Health Sciences Clinical Professors** - If an advancement of more than one step is approved, the base salary (both the X and X' components) should be adjusted according to the Step Plus salary tables. The increment and supplement both need to be tracked and implemented in payroll as off-scale components, although neither is treated as off-scale salary for purposes of the Health Sciences Compensation Plan. The half-step Step Plus increment is technically part of the base salary (X and X') even though it is entered in PPS as off-scale. The supplement is treated as a temporary off-scale, with an end date corresponding to the next normative action.
4. **Adjunct Professors/Professional Researchers/others who are paid from non-state funds as PI** - In this situation, the candidate/PI typically determines the allocation of funding from external grants or contracts. Accordingly, when eligible for advancement, the candidate should evaluate both the level of accomplishment for the review period and the availability of funding for the future 2-3 years (the normative period for review, as specified by Step Plus). Following these self-assessments, the candidate/PI may consult with the department chair and/or budget officer regarding financial implications of advancement. If sufficient funds are available to support any anticipated merit and/or promotion action, full Step Plus consideration should proceed. However, if funds will not be available for a 100%-time appointment following the approval of all advancement options, the candidate/PI must decide on one of three options:
 - a) Pursue all Step Plus advancement options (this may require a reduction of the percent time until additional sources of funding are available);
 - b) Request approval of a 1.0-step advancement only (this may require a reduction of the percent time until additional sources of funding are available); or

- c) Defer (which would allow the candidate to apply for advancement as early as the following year).
5. **AF members on extramural funds for which they are not a PI** – When informed of eligibility for advancement, the candidate should evaluate his or her level of accomplishment for the review period, ideally in consultation with the PI. At the same time, the department should send **Appendix A** to the PI(s) in charge of grant funds, filled out with the following information: eligible candidate's name; current title (including rank and step); year of last advancement (or appointment, whichever is more recent); current % time; current salary and benefits; and salary and budget projections for Step Plus advancement (assuming the current % time does not change). The PI then provides to the department chair a brief description of anticipated funding availability, which is subsequently shared with the candidate. Based on this funding information and self-assessment, the candidate makes an informed decision about advancement options. If funds are unlikely to be available for full-time appointment following the approval of an advancement action, the candidate must decide on one of three options, as follows.
- a) Pursue all Step Plus advancement options. If advancement is approved, it may require an involuntary reduction of the percent time (with the option of pursuing other part-time employment), or it may be necessary for the AF member to work for a shorter time period until additional funding is available.
 - b) Request approval of a 1.0-step advancement only. If advancement is approved, it may require an involuntary reduction of the percent time (with the option of pursuing other part-time employment), or it may be necessary for the AF member to work for a shorter time period until additional funding is available.
 - c) Defer consideration for advancement (which would allow the candidate to apply for advancement as early as the following year).

The candidate's choice must be reflected in an addendum to the department letter using the form found in **Appendix A** (Parts 1 and 2) of this advisory. If the candidate elects not to pursue an action, this completed form should be uploaded as the department letter into a redelegated deferral action in MIV. Dean's Offices will be provided a spreadsheet of data to assist with completing the first page of the form by October 28 and eligibility is available in the Academic Personnel History & Information Database (<https://aphid.ucdavis.edu>).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your school or college consultant within Academic Affairs.

Sincerely,



Maureen L. Stanton
Vice Provost-- Academic Affairs
Distinguished Professor-- Evolution and Ecology

Notification of advancement eligibility for an Academic Federation member

TO: [redacted], PI

FROM: [redacted], Department Chair

Academic Federation (AF) members who successfully meet the requirements for their title series are expected to advance at normative periods as their experience, skills and responsibilities develop over time. As directed by the Vice Provost- Academic Affairs, we have recently informed the following Academic Federation member of eligibility for [redacted], effective 7/1/20[redacted].

Candidate's name: Dr. [redacted]
 Candidate's current title (including rank and step): [redacted]
 Year candidate last advanced or was appointed (whichever is most recent): [redacted]
 Current % time employed: [redacted]%

Under the UC Davis Step Plus system, the candidate is eligible for consideration of advancement of 1.0, 1.5, or 2.0 steps, based on the record of professional contributions. The table below indicates the candidate's current annual salary and benefits, as well as the estimated salary, Step Plus supplement and benefits for each of the Step Plus advancement options (http://afs.ucdavis.edu/our_services/costing-policy-e-analysis/composite-benefit-rates/).

	Current	1.0-step advancement	1.5-step advancement	2.0-step advancement
Annual salary	\$ [redacted]	\$ [redacted]	\$ [redacted]	\$ [redacted]
Annual Step Plus Supplement*	\$ [redacted] (if applicable)	\$ [redacted]	\$ [redacted]	\$ [redacted]
Period covered by supplement*	7/1/20[redacted] - 6/30/20[redacted] (if applicable)	n/a	7/1/20[redacted] - 6/30/20[redacted]	7/1/20[redacted] - 6/30/20[redacted]
Benefits	\$ [redacted]	\$ [redacted]	\$ [redacted]	\$ [redacted]

*The **Step Plus Supplement** is awarded only if advancement is approved at 1.5 steps or greater AND is awarded only for the period of normative time at the new step.

As you are the Principal Investigator on grants from which all or a substantial portion of the candidate's salary and benefits are paid, I am writing to both inform you of the candidate's eligibility for advancement and to enquire about the expected availability of funding. This information will be used by the candidate to decide on whether to pursue advancement during this merit cycle. **Please note that if there is not sufficient funding to support advancement at 100% time, the candidate may still pursue advancement. If advancement is approved and additional funding is not identified, it may become necessary for the appointee either 1) to work 100% for a shorter time period, or 2) to work at a reduced percentage (at which time s/he will be eligible to seek additional, part-time employment).**

To assist the candidate in making an informed decision, please complete the following page.

Cc: Dr. [redacted], candidate

Part 1: PI's good-faith assessment of probable funding availability:

Please complete this form and provide a brief rationale where indicated.

- 1. _____ I understand that Academic Federation (AF) members who successfully meet the expectations for their title series (i.e., are doing good work in all areas of responsibility) are expected to advance at normative periods as their experience, skills and responsibilities develop over time.
- 2. If the candidate is awarded a merit or promotion advancement, please indicate your best estimate of funding availability (check only *one* of the following). These are statements made in good faith, and do not constitute a binding agreement.
 - a. _____ I anticipate having funds to support full-time employment for at least 1-2 years for advancement of 2.0 steps or less.
 - b. _____ I do not currently have funds to support full-time employment for all Step Plus advancement options (1.0, 1.5 or 2.0 steps), but will seek such funding.
 - c. _____ I do not anticipate having funding available for advancement at this time.

If you selected 2b. or 2c., please briefly describe your funding situation and plans:

Name of PI: _____

Signature of PI: _____ Date: _____

Part 2: Candidate's selection

- 1. Based on the good-faith information provided above, I choose (check *one* option):
 - _____ to pursue Step Plus advancement.
 - _____ to pursue 1.0-step advancement only.
 - _____ to defer review for advancement. I understand that I will be eligible for advancement again next year.
- 2. _____ I understand that if I am awarded advancement and there is insufficient funding for full-time employment for the next year, my appointment may be reduced in time from 100% to a lesser percent, or it may be subject to early layoff, or both. I understand that such reductions in my percent appointment or in my duration of appointment may have impacts on my visa status, retirement credit and health benefits.

Signature of Candidate: _____ Date: _____

Part 3: Chair's signature

Signature of Chair: _____ Date: _____