

August 20, 2012

**DEANS, EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATE DEANS, ASSOCIATE DEANS, VICE PROVOSTS,  
VICE CHANCELLORS**

RE: Confidentiality in peer review

Dear Colleagues:

Peer review is critical to our academic personnel processes, and confidentiality is essential for meaningful and credible peer review. As we begin the academic review year, I write to remind you of your obligations to maintain confidentiality throughout the peer review process.

Confidentiality is imperative at every level, including review of candidate files, discussions during faculty meetings involving appointments, advancement or other personnel review actions, submission of internal letters of evaluation, and serving on *ad hoc*, college or campus personnel committees. The identities of those writing external letters, serving on *ad hoc* committees, and speaking during faculty discussions, as well as the contents of their evaluations, must be kept confidential if candid assessments are to occur. No matter how innocuous you think a disclosure is, and no matter how significant you consider the rationale for disclosure to be, experience has taught us that great harm is often done by breaking confidentiality within the academic review process. Moreover, it is a violation of the system-wide Faculty Code of Conduct ([APM 015.II.D.4.](#)) to “[b]reach ... established rules governing confidentiality in personnel procedures.”

I am writing to affirm the fundamental principle that the advancement of knowledge and public support for higher education depend on a review process in which faculty members feel free to make evaluations based on substance rather than on fear of personal or professional repercussions. You will strengthen the culture of peer review and accountability at the University of California by adhering strictly to our confidentiality standards, as well by affirming their importance.

Thank you for your continuing commitment to ensuring the quality of our hiring and advancement processes at UC Davis. Please share this information with your chairs and unit heads.

Maureen Stanton  
Vice Provost – Academic Affairs  
Professor – Evolution and Ecology