



Davis Division Academic Senate

Request for Consultation Responses

STAPP (Streamlining the Academic Personnel Process) Special Committee Report

November 15, 2012

The STAPP Report was received by the Representative Assembly during its meeting of June 8, 2012. The report is presented along with comments provided by the Committee on Academic Personnel-Oversight for review by Davis Division standing committees.

Affirmative Action & Diversity

November 9, 2012 9:46 AM

The Affirmative Action & Diversity Committee has reviewed and discussed the STAPP (Streamlining the Academic Personnel Process) Special Committee Report. The committee is in favor of these efforts to significantly streamline the process for merits and promotions. The workload involving personnel actions is currently extreme, and must be reduced to allow faculty to focus on their primary duties (teaching and research.) The "Plan 1/Step Plus" proposal clearly accomplishes the greatest amount of streamlining of effort. It is also promising in that it will hypothetically help those faculty (via the "merit bonus" and "acceleration credits") who are less inclined to put forward their dossiers for accelerated review either for fear of being deemed "aggressive" or because they are too busy to put the time in. This may indeed therefore especially be good for women and underrepresented minorities (URMs), both of whom have been documented to fall into these categories at a greater rate. However, the concern is that departments, FPCs and deans will not necessarily have enough incentive to, on their own accord, take a proactive approach to reviewing each packet as potentially deserving of acceleration. This may be especially prominent in cases where unconscious bias may be present (particularly relevant to women and URMs.) The committee therefore favors "Plan 1/Step Plus" with an added proviso that there be a requirement that each Dean's office report, in detailed manner that includes both department and demographics of the faculty, what promotions and accelerations are going forward each year. This report should be provided not only to the upper administration, but to the faculty members of that division/department. In this way, all concerned parties will be able to see whether the accelerations granted under the new streamlined process are benefiting all faculty members equitably.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES)

November 5, 2012 9:55 AM

Dear Academic Senate Executive Council,

The Executive Committee of the College of Biological Sciences has reviewed the report of the STAPP Committee, and consulted on it more widely with the faculty of the College. We find ourselves in near complete agreement with the report. This includes our agreement with the prioritized suggestions as laid out in the report. “Plan 1” decreases the frequency of file preparation and review and thus reduces the workload at all levels in the merit process. If properly implemented it would not decrease monetary compensation for acceleration, and would enable accelerations based on efforts in the last year of the review period – a problem with the current system. It even has the potential to produce an increase in the rate of acceleration for those for whom it is appropriate. For these reasons we strongly agree with the report that implementation of Plan 1 is indicated.

We understand that the large change in the system associated with Plan 1 could meet significant resistance and so, also in agreement with the report, we find that “Plan 2” would produce a more modest, but still useful decrease in the workload for at least some levels of the merit process. We see implementation of Plan 2 as desirable if there is a failure to implement Plan 1.

We are in agreement with all of the recommendations in “Part B” with the exception of the possible abolition of the “return-to-scale” policy. The off-scale system is to help recruit and/or retain faculty based on exceptional achievement. When this is no longer the case, as must be the situation when normal advancement is not achieved, continuation of the off-scale salary does not seem appropriate. Some modification of the return-to-scale policy could be acceptable, but the system should not be abolished.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (EDUCATION)

November 15, 2012 1:30 PM

The Faculty Executive Committee of the School of Education has reviewed the report of the STAPP Committee and consulted with the SOE Faculty at its October Meeting of the Faculty. We are persuaded by the argument made in the report on the need for change and streamlining of the personnel review process as documented by numerous studies presented. Plan 1 maximizes the opportunity for accelerations and simplifies the process in substantive ways. Plan 2 also offers desirable changes for streamlining by re-delegating reviews to the Dean. Some members of the Faculty expressed concern that while this approach reduces work-load, there is a danger of less faculty engagement and oversight of the review process. We endorse the Part B streamlining proposal most especially as this will result in reducing the use of extramural letters and avoiding redundancies in documentation in internal letters. Part C recommendations have been implemented already in the SOE to a large degree. While there was initially a reduction in response rates for faculty evaluations, over time student response rates have increased as a result of faculty and staff encouragement. Nonetheless, we recognize that ongoing monitoring of response rates and exploration of ways of enhancing these should continue.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (ENGINEERING)

November 19, 2012 9:04 AM

College of Engineering (COE) Executive Committee Members sent the STAPP report to the faculty members in their respective departments and asked for comments. After receiving feedback, the COE Exec Committee met for discussion. The committee voiced unanimous support of the Step Plus Plan as well as many of the individual recommendations for streamlining the UC Davis academic personnel process.

There was strong agreement that the current system desperately needs streamlining. There was broad support for the more radical plan 1 (Step plus), as it would greatly reduce workloads and put everyone on more even footing during a review (because the same number of years would be considered). This support came with the caveat that FPCs would have to be trained/monitored to ensure they were appropriately proactive. A sizeable number of faculty indicated that the plan did not even go far enough – for instance, there was a recommendation that no internal letters (department, Dean's, FPCs) should be written except for appraisal and promotion steps – and instead regular reviews would be based on an expanded CV.

Although the Committee preferred Step Plus, they also unanimously agreed that Plan 2 (using the Dean only (no FPC) for most reviews) would be better than the current system as long as FPC or CAPOC would be involved in any actions that were not favorable to the particular faculty member being evaluated. A common view was that if all other UC campuses can function without FPCs, it seems that Davis should be able to as well.

The COE Executive Committee also notes that the current process for Federation Actions is even more problematic and time consuming with less value.

One faculty member in one department (not an Executive Committee member) did indicate lack of support for on-line course evaluations (due to the fact that evaluations from students who did not attend class would be given equal consideration to those of students who did attend class). In addition, two faculty comments were received indicating that Step 6 letters were valuable and that the lack of understanding of them could be addressed by adding an explanatory paragraph to the Chair's request for external letters.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (LS: HACCS)

November 6, 2012 10:10 AM

Consultation from Faculty Executive Committee, College of Letters and Science

Streamlining the Academic Personnel Process

November 5, 2012

The Faculty Executive Committee of the College of Letters and Science endorses Part A, Plan 1 of the proposal to Streamline the Academic Personnel Process. In light of the history of ineffectual attempts to simplify the process, we endorse this significant form of change through the “step plus” plan. We also endorse Part B, the proposal to remove unnecessary effort, most especially concerning extra-mural letters and redundancy in internal letters.

Finally, we urge caution in Part C. We are concerned about the rate of return of online student evaluations at other institutions. Colleagues at other institutions report return rates below 10%.

We discussed the possibility of making the online evaluation data public only to students who completed evaluations as a possible incentive to have them complete evaluations. Colleagues reported that when this strategy was implemented at other institutions it resulted in a drop in evaluation scores due to students who never attend class filling in evaluations in order to gain access to evaluations of instructors.

In conclusion, we enthusiastically support Part A, Plan 1 and Part B and urge caution about the online student evaluations in Part C.

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (MANAGEMENT)

December 20, 2012 2:05 PM

STAPP Report Comments from the Graduate School of Management

General Consensus:

The Graduate School of Management (GSM) senate faculty were polled on this issue. Of those providing comments, the following consensus arose:

1. GSM faculty strongly support Plan 1 (Step Plus) reform proposal. There is one comment regarding implementation issues detailed below.

2. GSM faculty strongly support parts B and C of the proposal, with the exception of one concern on Part B detailed below.

Specific Comments:

The Plan 1 proposal needs to give more thought to the dynamics of the process, especially, the change in behavior of the faculty and hence the chair in responding to the new system. Disclosure issues are important also. Finally, I note that the February 2012 Task Force "recognized that our proposed plan may have limited effect in some of the professional schools ..." (p. 11), although this relates more to the goal of establishing competitive salaries rather than simplifying the personnel process, although the two are linked.

The Part B stuff (bypass the FPC) probably should be stronger, in some sense. I can see the arguments in favor of it as written, but signaling that occurs as a result of a case being referred to the FPC seems too strong to me. If we want to offload the FPC, we should go all the way and use the FPC only as a mechanism of first appeal for "normal" merits (i.e., "normal merits" should never go the FPC except on appeal by the candidate).

Council of School & College Faculty Chairs (VETERINARY MEDICINE)

November 8, 2012 9:59 AM

No response at this time.

Elections, Rules & Jurisdiction

October 17, 2012 11:59 AM

No response at this time.

Faculty Welfare

November 15, 2012 11:05 AM

Response of the Faculty Welfare Committee to the STAPP Report

The Faculty Welfare Committee recognizes that the personnel process at UC, Davis has become unnecessarily complicated and wasteful of resources and faculty time. We applaud and support the recommendations to streamline the process described in the STAPP report. To be more specific we endorse the recommendation for the Step Plus program as laid out in Plan 1 under Group A as well as the proposals in Group B & C. If Plan 1 is ultimately rejected we endorse Plan 2 in Group A as an alternative. Our preference, however, is to enact Step Plus/Plan 1 recommendation.

Graduate Council

September 24, 2012 4:30 PM

No response at this time.

Planning & Budget

November 14, 2012 4:30 PM

The Committee on Planning and Budget applauds the effort to simplify and streamline the Academic Personnel Process at UC Davis. In our discussions there was strong support among the committee members for Plan 1, the Step Plus Process, were the suggested reforms to be implemented. In addition, CPB members support the following statement in the STAPP report: "We propose that each recommendation in Parts B and C be considered regardless of whether Plan 1 or Plan 2 in Part A is implemented."

Additionally, CPB would recommend deleting Item 6 in Part B, which is "Abolish or severely modify the "return-to-scale" policy." This applies to a situation in which a faculty member is receiving an off-scale salary, yet the majority faculty vote finds the candidate's performance lacking. CPB doesn't understand this logic and why such a negative vote should not be taken into account in re-assessing whether the off-scale salary is justified. The majority of CPB agrees that negative faculty evaluations and votes should impact off-scale salary decisions.

Finally, although the STAPP report did not apply to Academic Federation titles, CPB agrees that it may be worthwhile to review those processes in the future to avoid the need for departments to administer two different personnel processes for Academic Senate and Academic Federation.

Research

October 17, 2012 11:59 AM

No response at this time.

Undergraduate Council

November 29, 2012 3:44 PM

The following response is submitted on behalf of the Undergraduate Council and its Chair, Matthew Traxler.

The undergraduate council strongly supports the goals of the STAPP Special Committee. We agree that the current review process is overly complex, cumbersome, and costly.

We have reservations about the report in that, in our view, it does not emphasize teaching as an important component of the evaluation process. We encourage you to revise the report so that it highlights the value of high-quality instruction as a key component of the evaluation process. Ideally, as you revise processes for tenure and promotion, you will find ways to incentivize instruction, especially at the undergraduate level. In our view, high quality teaching should be rewarded. The university must do more than just articulate the goal of providing high quality instruction, it must take positive steps to identify teachers who actually do so and reward them in a tangible way.

We also strongly endorse the report's recommendations to leverage on-line resources to make the evaluation process more efficient. In particular, we recognize the potential benefits of using web-based and/or mobile-based applications for the course evaluation process. However, we have some concerns about how the move to on-line evaluations will be pursued. It is important that campus-wide procedures for conducting evaluations be developed. But this does not mean that a single, campus-wide measurement instrument should be adopted. Different disciplines emphasize different kinds of skills and employ different methods of instruction. There should be sufficient flexibility in any on-line evaluation system, so that different departments and programs can tailor their measurement instruments to meet their own specific needs. We hope that the final report will incorporate these principles.