

# NEWS from ACADEMIC PERSONNEL

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## Articles, Resources, and Tips ... For Your Career

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### Letters of Evaluation

All parts of a candidate's dossier are important and are used to document the candidate's accomplishments in the areas of scholarship/creative activity, teaching, and service. Contributions to teaching are verified by student and peer evaluations. Service is indicated by membership on committees, administrative positions within the University, active participation in professional organizations, and community service. Judgment about a candidate's scholarship/creative activity also requires documentation from multiple sources. At a research university, the quality of the scholarship/creative activity is paramount. Although there are several metrics, such as number of papers, books, or other creative activity, quantity is not a substitute for quality.

In this regard, the external letters of evaluation are crucial. For review purposes, external refers to any evaluator outside UCLA. Thus, reviewers at any other University, including other campuses of the University of California, are considered external. Internal letters, which may be solicited from faculty at UCLA, provide important information about the candidate's teaching, mentorship, and citizenship, as well as further input on the scholarship/creative activity. For the clinical compensated series, for whom primary emphasis is clinical teaching and professional competence, the internal letters are most important. The following comments about the external letters refer to the regular and In-Residence series.

It is through external letters that members of each discipline have the opportunity to provide expert judgment on the candidate's creative contributions, originality, and standing in the field. External letters then are important at every level of the academic personnel process. The procedure for soliciting letters is specified in the CALL (Summary of Procedures # 2: Guide to Preparation of a Dossier, Section III. Letters of Evaluation). External letters are solicited by the proposing department from experts in the candidate's area of research/creative activity. Both the department and the candidate suggest individuals from whom letters will be solicited. The most useful letters are analytical and provide a detailed evaluation of the candidate's contribu-

tions. The academic review process provides the candidate with a mechanism to alert the reviewing bodies of potential issues that may bias the letters of evaluation. As stated in The CALL (Appendix 1, section VI), "The candidate may provide in writing names of persons who, in the view of the candidate, for reasons set forth might not objectively evaluate the candidate's qualifications or performance. Persons so named are not, however, necessarily disqualified from being asked to provide an evaluation." The candidate has the opportunity to review redacted copies of the letters and comment on them.

"Under normal circumstances, five to eight such letters are sufficient" (The CALL, Appendix 1, section VI). If, after examination of letters in a dossier, the Council on Academic Personnel (CAP) decides that the number of letters is insufficient, or that the letters are not sufficiently analytical, additional external letters will be requested. Because external letters are solicited by departments, CAP's request requires the proposing Department to solicit additional external letters. After the appropriate number of letters has been received, all letters are carefully considered by the Council. In practice, letters from the Chair's list tend to be more independent evaluations, and CAP traditionally gives more weight to these letters. ■

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Did You Miss Our Fall 2007 Newsletter?

Go Check It Out ... [http://www.apo.ucla.edu/docs/Newsletter\\_Fall07.pdf](http://www.apo.ucla.edu/docs/Newsletter_Fall07.pdf)

## Use of Review Committees

At one time, many academic personnel cases, such as promotions to Associate Professor, other promotions, and new hires, routinely were sent by CAP to Review Committees (RCs) for analysis. In academic year 1996-97 160 such committees were created. The creation and use of these committees, however, delays decision-making, and such delays can be particularly costly to the university when they involve competitive hiring or retention situations. As a result, the usage of RCs began to decline in 2001-02. Although the number of RCs appointed each year varies, last year a total of 49 were appointed, which is a reasonable indication of the likely usage of such committees in the future. Of these, 6 were for new faculty appointments, 26 for promotion to Associate Professor, 6 for promotion to Professor, 9 for advancement to Professor Step VI, and 2 for advancement to Professor Above Scale.

CAP now mainly appoints RCs in cases of promotion to Associate Professor where the record suggests some likelihood that Associate Professor might be denied and in cases where CAP feels it lacks sufficient expertise to make a judgment. The reduction in use of RCs has had several effects. First, it obviously places a greater burden on CAP to make recommendations on cases. Second, there is a reduced burden on Senate faculty who otherwise would serve on RCs. Third, because fewer RCs are appointed, those Senate members who are asked to serve may be less familiar with what is expected than in the past when such service was common.

Because of the decline in general familiarity, this article explains the purpose of RCs, how they are formed, how they function, and what they are expected to do.

**Purpose.** RC members are chosen because their academic backgrounds and interests are anticipated to give insight into the merits of the case. The RC report provides additional information to CAP and to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel when the case is reviewed. RCs receive the current dossier for review. It should be noted that the 4<sup>th</sup> year appraisal document and any past academic action(s) are not included in the dossier seen by the RC. Rather, they remain in the “backfile” that is accessible to CAP and the Vice Chancellor.

As an end product, the RC produces a report that becomes part of the permanent record. The report indicates the committee’s views of the case and whether it endorses or opposes the proposed action. Where there are splits within the RC, majority and minority opinions should be explained in the report. (A separate minority statement can be included but often it is possible to explain the ma-

jority and minority positions in a single document.) The RC report is then considered by CAP and the Vice Chancellor in making a judgment on the case. Note that since CAP already has reports from the department, it is looking for an independent judgment by the RC as opposed to a summary of previous documents. Since the RC process inherently delays the progress of the case, it is important that the RC report be produced on a timely basis. Reports need not be lengthy but they should be thorough enough so that CAP can understand the nature of the deliberations and the RC’s view of controversial elements of the case.

**Membership on RCs.** When CAP determines an RC is needed, it recommends specific individuals whom it believes could provide insight on the case. Typically, deans and department chairs are required to submit nominations of possible RC candidates. CAP is not obligated to select from the recommended names but does consider them. It also uses a computerized database of faculty expertise in nominating possible members. CAP members may also have personal knowledge of individuals who have relevant expertise.

In general, individuals who have administrative responsibilities such as department chairs and deans are not chosen for RC membership. Usually, there will not be more than one person from any academic department appointed (including individuals with zero-time appointments in a department). One member is chosen to act as a departmental representative from the candidate’s department. The departmental representative is expected to provide insight into the views of the department to the other RC members.

One member of the RC – not the departmental representative – is selected to be the chair of the RC. The chair is responsible for producing a draft of the RC report for member consideration and then the final report. Staff of the Academic Personnel Office will assist the chair in scheduling meetings and other matters including gathering signatures on the final report.

Although it is not required, CAP will sometimes suggest the name of a non-voting assistant professor to serve as an observer on an RC. The purpose of such a nomination is to give junior faculty a chance to learn about an important aspect of the academic personnel process.

Candidates for personnel actions have the right to suggest names that should be excluded from the review process - including potential members of RCs. It is expected, however, that some reason be given for such exclusions. CAP will consider such requests but is not bound by them.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Effective Mentoring

Most junior faculty arrive at UCLA with only a vague idea of what is required to have a successful academic career. It is incumbent on departments and the University administration to provide new and junior faculty with counseling and career advice regarding the organization they have joined, its institutional processes, and their own career trajectory. One way of doing this is through formal and informal mentoring. Mentoring is most effective when it is *both* formal and informal, and when the process is regularly monitored. Formal mentoring involves the official appointment, by the department chair, of senior faculty as mentors who meet with junior faculty at specified intervals to review progress and future plans. Informal mentoring is more dependent on the naturally occurring discussions that take place among faculty.

There are a number of things that should be kept in mind to make the mentoring process as useful as possible. First, the selection of mentors should be made in consultation with the individual to be mentored and, importantly, with an eye to avoiding potential conflicts of interest or personality. All junior faculty should have at least one assigned mentor and required meetings should occur on a regular basis, with a recommended minimum of one meeting per quarter.

Second, the process of mentoring should cover multiple concerns that affect junior faculty. These include some of the following important areas (this is not meant to be an all-inclusive list): (1) How to balance the multiple criteria for advancement (research, teaching, professional engagement, and service); (2) Knowledge of the resources available to assist in improving teaching and/or research; (3) Knowledge of the criteria for evaluation of research, especially the importance of establishing a record of independent creativity; and (4) The criteria for achieving promotion, and how they are concretely applied in the department.

Third, successful mentoring is a process that involves a give and take relationship between the mentor and the individual involved. The mentor should establish a positive and non-judgmental atmosphere to build trust and openness in the relationship, providing feedback in a constructive manner. Mentors should make the right introductions to colleagues on the campus or in the discipline to help establish research collaborations.

There are pitfalls mentors should try to avoid. While one important goal of mentoring is to help determine the kind of career to be pursued, the mentors should be circumspect about imposing their own value judgments regarding a “correct” path to follow. Thus, mentors should not promote their agenda, but provide sound advice. The mentoring process can be problematic when those involved have dual relationships – for example if the mentor is a supervisor of the individual to be mentored or if the mentor is a co-author on a very large proportion of publications. Such circumstances should be avoided, but if that is not possible, the rule is to be on guard about the conflicts of interest. It often is difficult and even intimidating for junior faculty to articulate their questions and their needs under such circumstances; mentors need to be sensitive to this issue.

Finally, the process of mentoring works best when it is monitored. Mentors should provide brief summaries of mentoring discussions to the department chair, and the individual mentored should have access to the substance of these mentoring reports.

For additional information contact the office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development, Professor Rosina Becerra on Ext. 67411. ■

## DID YOU KNOW?

According to The UCLA CALL, advancement to the rank of Professor Above Scale will not occur in less than four years of service at Professor Step IX “except in rare and compelling cases.”

Members of the Council on Academic Personnel (CAP) are selected by the Academic Senate’s Committee on Committees (ConC). CAP has 14 members that represent diverse parts of the UCLA campus. Members typically serve for 3 years. Factors used by ConC in selecting members of CAP include: (1) a distinguished academic career; (2) expertise in key areas of knowledge, and (3) ability to function in a team environment. Each year ConC contacts Senate faculty to gauge their interest in serving on particular Senate committees. ■

## Appendix Changes to the UCLA CALL

The two changes below were recently implemented to the Appendices of The UCLA CALL.

**Five Year Reviews.** Every faculty member at the University of California must be reviewed at least every five years. The new changes in Appendix 12 of The CALL clarify that the outcome of a Five-Year Review can be an acknowledgement of good performance and a possible recommendation for an off-scale salary increase when warranted by recent achievements, as well as the possibility of more support from the University for their research program.

**Off-Scale Salary.** The old policy on “Return to Scale Rate” was removed from Appendix 17 of The CALL to make it conform to current procedures. The policy is obsolete as UCLA faculty are no longer expected to return to scale. ■

## Use of Review Committees

(Continued from page 2)

**Confidentiality.** Members of RCs operate in strict confidence. The names of the members are known to CAP and to the Vice Chancellor. But unlike the names of CAP members or names of elected personnel committees within departments and schools, the names of those serving on RCs are not available to the candidate. In particular, CAP members will not disclose membership on RCs to anyone. Of course, the members of RCs are expected to observe strict confidentiality with regard to all aspects of their deliberations and the dossier documentation received. RC members – including the departmental representative – should not discuss the fact that they have been appointed with anyone, including their dean and/or department chair.

**Conclusion. Maintaining Peer Review.** A critical part of academic governance is the role of the faculty in peer reviews of academic performance. Such peer review activity is expressed in service on internal personnel committees in departments, in voting on departmental recommendations in personnel cases, in service on CAP, and in membership in RCs. Thus, service on RCs is a normal and expected activity of Senate faculty. CAP encourages all faculty to respond positively to requests for service on RCs. ■

## Key Links

Academic Personnel Forms: <http://www.apo.ucla.edu/forms.asp>  
Academic Personnel Manual: <http://www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/apm/welcome.html>  
Academic Personnel Office (APO): <http://www.apo.ucla.edu>  
AP Newsletter Volume 2, Issue 1: [http://www.apo.ucla.edu/docs/Newsletter\\_Fall07.pdf](http://www.apo.ucla.edu/docs/Newsletter_Fall07.pdf)  
Council on Academic Personnel (CAP): <http://www.senate.ucla.edu/committee/cap/cap.htm>  
Deadlines: <http://www.apo.ucla.edu/deadlines.asp>  
Emeriti Information: <http://www.errc.ucla.edu>  
Faculty Diversity: <http://faculty.diversity.ucla.edu>  
Faculty Handbook: <http://www.apo.ucla.edu/facultyhandbook>  
Faculty Searches: <http://faculty.diversity.ucla.edu/search/searchtoolkit/index.htm>  
The UCLA CALL: <http://www.apo.ucla.edu/cal>  
UCLA Salary Scales: <http://www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/tab0708/tabcont.html>