WHITE PAPER ON EXEMPLARY WRITTEN CRITERIA AND PRACTICES RELATING TO RESEARCH, TEACHING, PRACTICE AND CLINICAL FACULTY

SUBMITTED TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE EXECUTIVE BOARD
By the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH, TEACHING, PRACTICE, AND CLINICAL FACULTY AFFAIRS

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An Overview and Introduction

This White Paper is an update to a document that was produced and submitted to the Academic Senate Executive Board in 2012, and which is available for perusal on the Committee on Research, Teaching, Practice, and Clinical Faculty Affairs' (CRTPCFA; formerly CNTTFA) website:

http://www.usc.edu/academe/acsen/AboutUs/FacultyCommittees/NonTenureTrackFaculty.htm

As that 2012 document noted, the CRTPCFA is to serve a "monitoring role" and to perform "surveys of campus guidelines and practices." To that end, we followed the methodology of the 2012 White Paper and once again took inventory of:

1. RTPC (NTT) faculty-related criteria and guidelines from most schools within the university. This was done via collection of documentation and/or Faculty Guidelines from the schools, or, in cases where such documentation was unavailable, we relied on anecdotal accounts from committee members who are faculty in the school(s). We collected data from every school except Architecture, Gerontology, Dentistry, and Pharmacy.

2. NTT policies (typically drawn from faculty handbooks) of the following peer institutions: Harvard, Princeton, Northwestern, UCLA, Stanford, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Washington, NYU, Yale, and Duke. More specifically, we examined these institutions' policies in the following areas:

   a. Profile
   b. Workload
   c. Merit Review
   d. Promotion
   e. Governance
   f. Contracts
   g. Sabbaticals

In reviewing these policies, guidelines, and practices, and via a comparison with both the 2009 and 2012 White Papers, we have formulated a series of core issues and recommendations, along with a number of best practices that we found either in individual USC schools, or in the peer institutions.

In general, we believe that good progress has been made in terms of formulating and instituting policies that support RTPC faculty development and success at USC. There will always be ways that we, as a university community, can improve our practices, however; the following recommendations are therefore offered in that spirit.

Issue No. 1: RTPC Faculty Guidelines & Transparency

For the most part, committee members reported that RTPC guidelines (on issues such as promotion and merit review) are clear and are easily accessible, but this was not universally true. In one case, neither the faculty committee member nor administrators were able to locate a copy of the written guidelines, though both agreed that the guidelines did, in fact, exist; in another case, a committee member reported that guidelines were presently "in the drafting stage."

Recommendations:

1) All schools should maintain written guidelines on any RTPC policies that are more specific than the general rules in the Faculty Handbook, and these school-specific guidelines should be freely and publicly available—they should be as easy to find and access as the USC Faculty Handbook.

2) Authorship of the documents should be clear and transparent: if the policies were written by the Dean's office or the Faculty Council, the documents should say so, and they should indicate dates that the documents were last revised or updated.

3) There should be a clear pathway for addressing and revising elements of the documents if/when the need arises. This could be done via a faculty vote, or via the use of resolutions, following the current practice of the Academic Senate. In any case, all faculty should have a sense of the ways that they can impact what the documents say.

4) These documents should be regularly reviewed by a faculty committee, such as the Faculty Council, which can then consult with and make recommendations to the Deans.

5) Information on RTPC policy should be covered annually via some sort of orientation session, both for new, incoming faculty, and for current faculty who would like a refresher course.

Best Practices: The School of Dramatic Arts, Dornsife College, the Sol Price School of Public Policy, Rossier, the Marshall School of Business, and the Thornton School of Music all have written documentation dealing with most aspects of RTPC faculty's roles.

Rossier, Dramatic Arts, and Marshall deserve special recognition for having documents that are especially thorough and well-organized.

The School of Social Work's Faculty Guidebook is publicly accessible via its Web site.

Issue No. 2: Salary and Faculty Input

RTPC salary is a topic that merits a more open and transparent discussion, and in the interest of maintaining a robust system of faculty governance at USC, it would be salutary to open up a conversation on the ways that faculty might participate in some kind of advisement on salary-related issues. Fittingly, as of this writing, the Senate is considering a resolution that would support benchmarking in the various schools.

Recommendation: Faculty should have some advisory role or input into the way that salaries are handled. This could be in the form of a faculty committee that performs regular benchmarking, for instance. Schools also might consider posting benchmarking numbers, or setting "basement" salaries, or posting a range of averages. Additionally, faculty should have a clear means of appealing the issue if they feel that they are being underpaid, and faculty committees—such as the Faculty Councils—should work in an advisory capacity with the Deans to ensure benchmarking fairness.

Best Practices:
--The Rossier School of Education has a Salary and Promotions Committee that includes both tenured and promoted-rank RTPC faculty.
--The Gould School of Law and the School of Social Work both have faculty committees that work with the Dean's office on issues pertaining to the budget.
--The Sol Price School has an especially clear and transparent means of explaining the merit raise pool percentages to faculty via their annual salary letters.
--A faculty member in the School of Dramatic Arts is involved in oversight over equity adjustments for part-time faculty.

Issue No. 3: Contracts, Appointments, and Job Security

One of the Academic Senate's great accomplishments from the 2014-2015 school year was the codification, in Chapter 4, of job security provisions for RTPC faculty—specifically, Ch. 4 Section G (2) which codified the practice of ensuring that any non-reappointment of RTPC faculty "shall only be done after review and recommendation by an appropriate faculty body." That said, there are far too many faculty members who are unaware of the changes, and yet others who know about the revisions but continue to believe that they somehow "aren't real."

On a more positive note: in a number of schools, promoted RTPC faculty are on multi-year appointments, and in the best cases, this corresponds with rank and promotional achievement. This is a good trend and we hope it catches on more widely.

Recommendation: Schools should use multi-year appointments as a means of rewarding excellent research, teaching, practice, and clinical faculty. Ideally, this would be connected to promotional rank, such as 3-year appointments at the Assistant and Associate Professor (or equivalent) rank, and 5-year appointments at the Full Professor rank.

We also hope that discussions on RTPC job security will continue in both the Senate Executive Board and the Senate as a whole: perhaps the sort of tenure that is granted for exceptional teaching at liberal arts colleges (such as Oberlin) could serve as an example. We hope, in any case, that the topic receives a more in-depth treatment in the near future.

Best Practices:

--The Rossier School of Education, Thornton School of Music, the Viterbi School of Engineering, Dornsife College, the Annenberg School of Communication, and others offer multi-year appointments for faculty at the Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor ranks or their equivalents (3 and 5 years, respectively).
--The Keck School of Medicine reports excellent retention and job stability, with non-reappointments "on the order of 0.2% annually."
--Sol Price offers 3-year appointments starting with the Assistant Professor rank (which is their entry-level hiring rank).

Issue No. 4: Professional Development and Mentoring Support

Funding and support for RTPC faculty development varied widely from school to school. In most cases, *some* funding is available for things like travel to academic conferences. In other instances, faculty can apply for a reduced teaching load to support (for example) creative projects.

Recommendation: Each school should establish a minimum level of support for basic professional development activities (such as conference attendance) and/or for covering equipment costs (adapters to be used for laptops and in-classroom projectors, say) and research or creative materials. Schools should also have clear criteria for applying for funds, and should supply reasonable explanations for cases where requests are denied.

Best Practices:
--The Annenberg School for Communication offers an annual $1,000 "research and teaching" fund to all full-time faculty, and faculty presenting at conferences can apply for additional funding.
--The Rossier School of Education features a simple, streamlined, and generous application supporting faculty travel to conferences: $1,000 simply to attend, and up to $2,500 for faculty who are presenting papers.
--The Sol Price School of Public Policy features a "sizable faculty allowance account" which is the same amount for both RTPC and TT and which can be used for everything from conference/research travel to purchasing work-related computers for use at home.
--The School of Dramatic Arts offers a $1,000 research and teaching grant to all FT faculty. The funds can be used for book purchase, theatre tickets, travel to see performances, and so on.
--Yale University offers faculty a $2,000 annual research and teaching fund.
--The School of Social Work has outstanding RTPC professional development support: $3,500 for on-campus faculty ($1000 for travel; $2500 for scholarship) and $4,500 for Virtual Academic Program faculty ($1000 for travel; $3500 for scholarship). (On-campus faculty are also eligible for a $1,000 work study stipend.)
--A committee member from the Keck School of Medicine noted that a recently hired Associate Vice Chair for Faculty Development has been "transformational" in terms of support for faculty. Simply hiring one, very skilled, people-oriented person in administration can have a radical impact on morale. Special care should therefore be taken in hiring people who interact with and oversee this dimension of the faculty's work.

Issue No. 5: Merit Review & Promotion

Our review of the schools' documentation and our conversations with committee members revealed conflicting opinions. In general, schools did indeed feature written procedures and guidelines, but questions remain about the interpretation and clarity of the guidelines. Furthermore, we continue to hear concerns about the way(s) that teaching is evaluated—particularly the heavy importance that tends to be placed on student evaluations.

Recommendations:
1) Each school should maintain clear documentation on both merit review and promotions, with criteria are clearly laid out and explained. RTPC faculty should have input into what the criteria are, and in the drafting and/or revision of the documents. All faculty should have a clear understanding of the difference in the merit rankings—the difference between "meets versus exceeds."
2) Merit and promotion reviews should be conducted by faculty, and these reviewers should be established via a faculty vote. Membership of the committees should always include RTPC faculty with the relevant experience (e.g., teaching faculty be included in the review of other teaching faculty; research faculty should be included in reviews of research faculty).
3) Guidelines on merit review and promotion should be reviewed regularly by a faculty body—such as the Faculty Council—and updated and revised as necessary, and faculty more generally should have input into the way the reviews are conducted.
4) There should be a clear process for appealing decisions on merit review and promotion.
5) A clear schedule / timeline for merit reviews and promotion should be established and laid out in the documents.
6) Evaluation of teaching should rely on criteria beyond student ratings (see the attached 2013 report from the Senate's Faculty Evaluation Taskforce).
7) Appropriate adjustments should be made for merit reviews of faculty who also have administrative responsibilities.

Best Practices:
--Dornsife College, the Marshall School of Business, the Rossier School of Education, the Keck School of Medicine, the Viterbi School of Engineering, and indeed most of the schools we surveyed maintain documentation on promotion and merit review processes.
--The Keck School of Medicine deserves special praise for a "big informational campaign" on RTPC promotion over the past two years, along with revision of guidelines. One of our committee members reports that guidelines have been "enthusiastically embraced."
--The Sol Price School of Public Policy features an apparently unique system of merit review whereby all faculty within each department—RTPC and TT alike—review one another—a "universal" voting structure that might appeal to other schools or departments.
--The Viterbi School of Engineering reports a merit review and promotion process that "mimics" that of the TT faculty.

Issue No. 6: Workload / Profile

In past years, workload and Spitzer profile were seen as major points of interest in the White Papers that were produced by this committee. The relative lack of concern about workload and profile this time around suggests that improvements have been made and that the university, on the whole, is doing well in this area. Still, we have fielded complaints from faculty over the past few years that profile and workload were changed without warning, or where new duties (such as a research-profile faculty member being asked to teach) were added arbitrarily.

Recommendations:
1) Schools should clearly indicate workload and profile for the various tracks—both in the individual's contract, and in the public documentation.
2) Both the Spitzer profile (e.g., 80/20 teaching/service, or 95/5 research service) should be spelled out, and the amount of work should be indicated (e.g., the expectation to teach 3 classes per semester or 24 units per academic year).
3) Considerations for workload should be broad and should make an effort to account for dimensions of the job that can sometimes go unnoticed: class preparations, responding to emails, filling out documents and forms, and so on.
4) Schools should make an effort to be flexible and accommodating to faculty's needs and talents, and to situations that can sometimes change unexpectedly—in other words, we recognize a need here for both clarity and consistency, and for flexibility.

Best Practices:
--Dornsife College, Social Work, Viterbi, Annenberg, Rossier, Marshall, and most of the schools we surveyed offered clear descriptions of both workload and profile.
--The Sol Price School and Rossier both offer the opportunity for teaching faculty to renegotiate their profile so that they can add a 10% research component.
--The School of Cinematic Arts and the Thornton School of Music allow for adjustments of 10-15% to allow for creative or research components.

Issue No. 7: Sabbaticals

Both the 2009 and the 2012 White Papers made recommendations on sabbaticals, with the 2012 report citing the Provost's 2011 Advancing Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences award as a positive step, and noted that the Libraries, the School of Pharmacy, and the School of Social Work all offer paid professional leaves for their RTPC faculty. Sabbaticals are widely seen as a chance for faculty to "recharge"—to reinvigorate their teaching and/or research and to therefore bolster their work for the university. In the interest of maintaining a collegial and intellectually rigorous academic atmosphere, it makes sense to offer sabbaticals to the broadest range of our faculty.

Recommendations:
1) All faculty with at least 6 years of full-time service should be eligible for sabbaticals (in accordance with Chapter 3-E (2) of the Faculty Handbook).
2) Decisions on whether or not to grant a sabbatical should be made on the basis of merit—sabbaticals should not be granted as a matter of course, or simply on the basis of time served.
3) Research should not be the only criterion considered: reviewing/updating/developing curriculum and artistic/creative work should be eligible as well.

Best Practices:
--Princeton and Northwestern both offer paid professional leaves to NTT faculty—Princeton to its Senior Lecturers (i.e., promoted NTT). The criteria are as follows:

Candidates for the leave must have held the rank of senior lecturer for at least six years and must be appointed to a five-year term. Senior lecturers are eligible to apply for one leave per five-year term.

--The 2012 White Paper (accessible via the Web address on pg. 2 of this document) reported that "Seven of the ten peer institution handbooks provided for sabbaticals or paid professional leave for NTT faculty."
--The Viterbi School of Engineering's Faculty Council is presently investigating ways of provided sabbaticals to its RTPC faculty.
--The School of Social Work, once again, provided the "gold standard" policy in this regard: it offers paid "scholarly leave" for "one time only" for RTPC faculty at the Associate rank, and an unlimited number of times at the Full Professor rank. Resources to cover costs are furnished by the School rather than the university, and applications for the leaves are reviewed by both the Faculty Council and the Dean's office.
--Harvard offers sabbaticals to its Senior Lecturers.

In Conclusion

As we noted at the outset, laudable progress has been made in the realm of RTPC policies and practices. It's worth noting that this document was written during a time when important questions about shared faculty governance in higher education are being asked all across the U.S. Criticisms have been leveled over a perception that universities are growing increasingly "corporate," with crucial decisions being made by administrators rather than faculty. We believe, however, that USC has a great opportunity to chart a different path, and as this document shows, USC has made strong progress in terms of the way that policies and practices for RTPC faculty are implemented. There are places where improvements can still be made, however. Shared faculty governance, we believe, is contingent upon our own work as colleagues and stakeholders in the future of the university, and on our own willingness to proactively seek out mutually beneficial solutions. This White Paper has been written and is hereby submitted to the Executive Board and to the Academic Senate with that in mind, and with a cautious optimism concerning what the future might hold.