

## RTPC Faculty Affairs Committee Final Report, 2017-18

### I. Charge for This Year

The charge for the RTPC Faculty Affairs Committee this year was focused on extending the benefits that were defined for Teaching Faculty in the Provost's September 15, 2017 memo (which was entitled "Recognizing Teaching Faculty") to RTPC faculty who do research, clinical work, or work in a professional practice.

Unlike RTPCFA committees in the past, members devoted the vast majority of time to investigating current models of contractual and job security at other universities, examining a survey of Research faculty in Dornsife, and understanding how gap funding is currently implemented in several research institutes at USC.

The following sections provide an overview of the Committee's proposal relating to extending benefits. This proposal has already been submitted to the Senate Executive Board.

### II. Extending Benefits

#### A. *Extending Benefits to Faculty Whose Salaries are Not Contingent on External Funding.*

The Committee's proposal asks the Provost to extend the same benefits, including: (1) the new length-of-contract terms (i.e. standard ranks; three-year contracts for Associate Professors; and five-year contracts for Full Professors); (2) new separation terms; and (3) the new opportunity to apply for Continuing Appointment, to all full-time faculty who have reached the appropriate rank (either of Associate or Full Professor depending on the benefit involved, regardless of their specific title or school) and **whose salaries are not contingent on external funding**.

The Committee was aware that this proposal takes a novel approach by defining who is eligible for these benefits based on whether their work is funded by the University, as opposed to categorizing faculty based on their titles or tracks. However, this approach recognizes the value of our full-time, salaried RTPC faculty, who are devoting their long-term careers to advancing USC's educational mission, whether through teaching our students, providing clinical services to those in need, or doing research that will benefit the university and the world. In addition, this policy should provide a concrete and relatively easily administrable way to determine who qualifies for these benefits.

Further, if a full-time RTPC faculty member is hired as a salaried employee, but happens to win an outside grant or other funding that pays a portion of that person's salary for a limited time period, that faculty member should not lose their benefits when the outside funding ends. Having this rule would ensure that faculty are not discouraged from obtaining external funding during the course of their careers.

#### 1. *Clinical faculty*

Because their base salaries are paid by USC, all full-time Clinical Faculty should be covered by the policy described above, even if they are required to maintain an active, revenue-producing

clinical practice as part of their employment (e.g. many of the clinical faculty at the Keck School of Medicine). Although these Clinician Faculty members are generally responsible for generating external funding through patient care (e.g., direct billing of patients, insurance companies, etc.), their salaries are not directly linked to these generated funds (unlike faculty whose salaries are funded by research grants, as described below). While fluctuations are expected in the number of individual patients seen and income generated, it is unlikely that fluctuations in, or even the loss of, any individual Clinician's patient-care contribution would result in a large loss of generated revenue to Keck or the University.

Because a large variability in salary ranges exists across Clinician salaries (often related to national expectations of salary ranges for each subspecialty, as opposed to expected academic contributions), the Committee further proposes a "core salary" model whereby a guaranteed core salary will be paid to every Clinician Faculty member during the person's three- or five-year contract. This standardized "core salary" is expected to be uniform across each School and will generally vary only by whether it applies to an Associate Professor or Full Professor. These standardized core salaries are expected to be near the minimal range of the clinician salary at each school.

## *2. Practitioner / Professional Faculty*

Professional and Practitioner faculty represent a smaller proportion of the RTPC, but they offer specific, practitioner or professionally based expertise to schools and programs. Salaries for Practitioner faculty are also paid by USC, and should be covered by the same benefits extended to Teaching faculty.

### **Salary Gap Funding For Research Faculty Whose Salaries are Contingent on Grants**

Providing reasonable job security benefits to high-performing, full-time Research Faculty whose salaries are contractually contingent upon obtaining external funding (i.e. grants) is more complicated. However, these faculty may lose their funding and are vulnerable to a number of outside variables (e.g., grant programs that are reduced, ended, or experience a change in focus). When a Research faculty member has not succeeded in receiving new outside funding, they may need support from the University until they are able to apply for and receive grant funding.

Providing this kind of salary gap funding will benefit the University as a whole because it will allow us to retain these high-performing faculty members, who can be given an adjusted work profile during the interim and continue providing the University with valuable services. For example, Research faculty may take on additional research, teaching or administrative duties. Assuming that these faculty members would be given adjusted, interim work profiles, the Committee therefore respectfully requests that the University provide them with gap funding at the following levels:

**Associate professors** whose salaries are reliant on external funding should be given: (1) 12 months of gap funding that brings that faculty member up to 100% of his or her previous salary level; and (2) An additional 12 months of support that brings that faculty member to at least 50% of full-time pay while retaining his or her standard employee benefits (e.g., health benefits).

**Full professors** whose salaries are reliant on any external funding should be given: (1) 18 months of gap funding that brings that faculty member up to 100% of her or his previous salary level; and (2) An additional 18 months of support that brings that faculty member to at least 50% of full-time pay while retaining his or her standard employee benefits (e.g. health benefits)

Various research units throughout the University have processes in place for routinely evaluating and funding gaps in grant work and salary through institute funds (e.g, Institute for Creative Technologies and Information Sciences Institute, and Center for Economic and Social Research). The methods used by these units can be considered as potential models for this initiative.

As noted above, all of the above-described gap funding would be contingent on the Research faculty member: (1) assuming a reasonable, adjusted work profile, including possibly assuming other job duties, such as taking on research responsibilities funded by other grants, teaching classes in their area of expertise, developing new projects or funding opportunities or taking on administrative duties; and (2) making a diligent effort to seek new external funding to replace the lost funding. For both goals to be achieved, the faculty member's adjusted work profile during the gap-funding period should have sufficient time set aside for them to work on seeking additional external funding (i.e. apply for new grants).

Periodic assessments should be conducted to ensure both that the faculty member is diligently pursuing new funding and that the adjusted work profile is workable for both the faculty member and the involved school. These assessments can be conducted each semester with criteria established in advance for evaluating appropriate progress.

A faculty member could be in a position of needing this type of gap funding more than one time. If that occurs, the Committee believes that the Dean of the involved school should have the discretion to determine whether gap funding should be provided more than one time. In addition, prior to any final termination decisions, efforts should be made to identify other opportunities to retain the faculty member in new roles, as determined by the Dean.

### **III. Other Issues Discussed in RTPC Committee**

The RTPC Faculty Affairs Committee also discussed several other issues this academic year, including the following:

#### *A. Salary benchmarking*

In 2015-16, the Academic Senate passed [a resolution](#) that, among other things, called for a comprehensive salary benchmarking process to be undertaken at each school. This issue remains a priority for the RTPCFA committee.

The Provost's Office has begun to gather data, but at this point it is unclear what oversight role it is able to execute specifically with regards to benchmarking. At the November 15th meeting of the Academic Senate, Assistant Vice Provost of Academic & Faculty Affairs and Director of Center for Excellence in Teaching Ginger Clark briefly reported on the Provost's Office's benchmarking process, and (as per the meeting minutes) noted that it has been a challenge for

her office to find good salary data from peer institutions, though she has met with each school at USC's Dean about the need to provide reviews for all RTPC faculty.

Some Faculty Councils (perhaps most notably the Dornsife Faculty Council) began the process of researching salary comparisons and providing this information to their Deans. In Dornsife, for instance, this resulted in an initial report arguing that the most appropriate comparison for Teaching faculty in the College are tenure-track faculty at selective liberal arts colleges (SLACs). This was delivered to the Dean, who in turn asked additional question which led to further research during the 2017-18 school. A second report from the Dornsife Faculty Council's Faculty Affairs Caucus is forthcoming.

### *B. Sabbaticals*

Sabbaticals continued to be a topic of discussion and important to some RTPC faculty. The Committee discussed the potential of having all sabbaticals being merit-based, and proposed that it might be worthwhile to set up a Task Force next year to think through merit-based sabbaticals for all faculty, including tenured, tenure-track, and RTPC faculty.

### *C. Differing application of policies or processes in different schools*

The committee also discussed the fact that the application and implementation of a number of policies and processes that affect RTPC faculty vary greatly among the different schools. Examples include sabbatical availability, contract renewals and evaluation conversations. In addition, different teaching/work profiles (including class unit requirements) are seen at different schools.

A great amount of variability is also seen around the support provided for research faculty, depending on the school / unit / department. For example, in some units, some research faculty have worked for long periods with no salary or far less than 100% of salary due, to lack of grant funding.

## **IV. Priorities for Future Consideration**

Finally, the committee identified additional issues the next committee may wish to pursue:

### *A. Addressing the problem of under-funded, long-term research faculty*

As noted above, there are research faculty working in some schools for extended periods of time, often without full funding. This represents a potential problem for both the research faculty and the schools, and should be explored more fully.

### *B. Salary benchmarking*

A different methodology may be required in response to the persistent concern from schools that they cannot benchmark RTPC salaries due to different faculty titles. An evaluation of industry or

association surveys based on the kind of work may offer better insight on this issue. In general, better methodology can be developed to attempt to benchmark salaries. If there were benchmarks, then deans can use them to address those problems. The RTPC FA may be able to identify methodology, recommending a way to approach this work for the Provost's office, as opposed to attempting to engaged in collecting salary data.

### *C. RTPC titles*

Providing more uniformity around RTPC titles was suggested as a need across the university. Identifying guidelines for redoing titles may be appropriate, as well as a discussion around the most appropriate use of parentheticals such as "Professor of Policy (Teaching)."

### *D. Monitor new Teaching Effectiveness standards*

New resources from the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) were introduced throughout 2017-18, include a new Learning Experience Evaluation to replace student course evaluations. The RTPCFA may wish to monitor faculty responses to the new evaluation system, and also evaluate faculty participation in teaching support programs around Teaching Effectiveness from CET.

### *E. Salary compression*

Faculty have raised concerns related to salary compression, tracks and work profiles.

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