

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Raymond Hall, Chair, Academic Senate

FROM: David Low, <sup>DL</sup>Chair, University Personnel Committee

DATE: November 3, 2022

RE: APM 327 – POLICY ON PROMOTION

At its meeting on October 13, 2022, the University Personnel Committee voted 7-0 (with one abstention) to undertake revisions to APM 327 – Policy on Promotion. Specifically, the Committee had been discussing the lack of clarity in the policy regarding promotion to the rank of Full Professor. In the weeks and months prior to October 13, members of the Committee reviewed policies on promotion to Full from ten peer institutions. We also solicited feedback from the Associate Professor Organization’s leadership (for which David Low is a co-chair) and sought input from AVP Schmidtke of Faculty Affairs. Upon deliberation, the Committee determined that Fresno State’s policy could be drastically improved in terms of outlining a clearer process for promotion to Full.

On November 3, 2022, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve our working revision and submit it to the Academic Senate for deliberation. Proposed changes to the policy are described in detail below.

**Background**

There is considerable confusion among faculty about the process outlining promotion to the rank of Full. Because there is nothing like a Probationary Plan to follow, Associate-level faculty are left to navigate a subjective process and hope for the best. How are phrases (from the current APM 327) such as “broadly-recognized, well-established distinction,” “sustained activity,” and ‘maturity of teaching’ meant to be interpreted? Without precise guidelines, it depends on who sits on department and school personnel committees, and in administrative positions, in any particular year.

Based on conversations that have occurred this AY in the Associate Professor Organization (formed in 2022 at the request of Provost Fu), there is much that needs to be demystified. Two oft-repeated (and contradictory) pieces of wisdom are that “you essentially need to repeat what you did for tenure” and that “you need to perform at a higher level than you did to earn tenure.” In either of these competing narratives, the advice is deceptively simple. Who is the you in these scenarios? Must a candidate match or exceed what they *personally* did during the probationary period (i.e., self-referenced assessment? – but what if they published 17 articles when only 3 were required?) or must a candidate match or exceed a similar course of achievement to what their Probationary Plan required of them (i.e., criterion-referenced assessment – match the 3 required publications or surpass them), or must one prove themselves similarly or exceedingly

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worthy of distinction as their peers (i.e., norm-referenced assessment – match or surpass what others are doing across campus)? From a policy perspective, we cannot say with confidence that any of these scenarios is the correct one, because nowhere has it been formally written down in policy. What we are left with is inconsistent hearsay, mythos, and a recipe for confusion, stress, and burnout.

A second major issue with promotion to Full is the nature of department-by-department variance (which is not in itself a bad thing). What is considered *de rigueur* in one discipline (i.e., the need to secure outside funding) might be considered superfluous in another. Some faculty publish a book while others publish articles, hold solo exhibitions, and/or engage in public scholarship. Ultimately, the University Personnel Committee maintains that departments are in the best position to assess the merits of their own colleagues when determining if they have achieved *senior status* in their field. It would be asinine to judge an engineer by the standards of a sculptor or vice-versa.

The third major issue the Committee addresses in our revision of APM 327 is the issue of balance. Whereas probationary faculty follow a balanced three-section probationary plan with set targets for teaching, RSCA, and service, many associate-level faculty are asked to take on a larger service role in the years following tenure. Should faculty be penalized for this if increased service makes conducting research (at the same level as before) exceedingly difficult? If so, committing to a greater service load would be disincentivized. And what if an Associate Professor were to have a service-heavy phase followed by a research-heavy phase, or vice versa? Could they be turned down for promotion to Full because they did not show *sustained activity* in all areas?

The Personnel Committee's proposed amendment to APM 327 aims to ameliorate these and other longstanding issues by making several key additions and changes to the policy. The revised APM 327 would establish a new process whereby every department creates discipline-specific standards for promotion to Full (III.B). Candidates would then be rated according to those standards (III.F).

**The policy has been amended in the following areas:**

1. Much of the revision to APM 327 occurs in sections III.B and III.F, where the proposed revised policy outlines a process for departments to establish and apply criteria for promotion to Full. As described in III.B, each department at the University (and appropriate units for Librarians and SSP-ARs) will be tasked with collaboratively writing, discussing, and voting on standards for promotion to Full. These standards will outline what constitutes Adequate, Good, Very Good, and Exceptional teaching, research/creative/scholarly activity, and service vis-à-vis the rank of Full Professor in the field/discipline. Quantitative targets will be provided wherever possible. Before going into effect, department standards must be approved by the College Personnel Committee and Provost to ensure equity among departments and alignment with policy.
  - The process of departments drafting standards for promotion to Full would require some time (1-2 years) to implement. Faculty Affairs will provide guidelines, exemplars, and templates and will work with departments to fine-tune their language. The goal is to create durable processes for departments that honor the discipline-specific merits of faculty (*similar to APM 322a where departments*

*are tasked with drafting their own policies on teaching effectiveness.*) Department standards could be tied to accreditation, can consider things like journal quality & impact, and can list acceptable (as well as unnecessary) forms of evidence. Whenever possible, benchmarks and targets should be provided to assist in defining Adequate, Good, Very Good, and Exceptional.

- i. The revised policy does stipulate that a department's definition of Good cannot be lower than the department's baseline requirements in the most current probationary plan. This is to ensure that senior faculty are not held to lighter expectations than new faculty standards.
  - Note: The footnote that accompanied this section (regarding external letters) has been moved, not eliminated. It is now Footnote 17.
  - Note: 327.III.B.d. stipulates that departments must revisit their standards every five years.
  - Note: Footnote 18 has been added to 327.III.B.d where the process for departments revising their standards is described. The footnote concerns grandfathering, and cites CBA 15.3 to explain how faculty will follow department standards have been approved for adoption.
2. In the revised APM, section III.F discusses how department standards will be used to rate candidates for promotion to Full. (This process is reiterated in section V.D.1.) Here the policy addresses the muddled nature of criterion vs. norm vs. self-referenced assessment, and establishes that promotion to Full is a criterion-referenced assessment (with the criterion being department standards). To be favorably recommended for promotion to the rank of Full Professor, candidates are expected to meet this ratings scenario across the areas of teaching, RSCA, and service: **Exceptional in at least one area, at least Very Good in another area, and at least Good in the remaining area.**
- Note: In section V.G.4, the policy explains that "Satisfying the requirements for positive recommendation on promotion does not in itself constitute a guarantee of promotion, as the final decision is made by the President" (where President refers to the Provost—as the President's designee).
3. In 327.III (section preamble), the Committee removed the phrase "broadly recognized" in front of "well-established distinction" to both to redundancy and because *broad recognition* is a vague concept. The Committee also removed the final sentence of this section: "The standards for promotion will be sustained activity and quality contributions." The nature of *quality contributions* is best left to departments to define. The nature of *sustained activity* is problematic, in that faculty could be penalized for prioritizing RSCA and service at different times during their post-tenure periods. For promotion to the rank of Full, guidelines established by departments will honor cumulative accomplishments. There are many valid reasons a faculty member's accomplishments might come in a sporadic fashion, including a pandemic, caring for family members, or serving as department chair (perhaps during a pandemic while caring for family members).
4. In 327.III.A, the Committee clarified that a candidate's contributions to the university and the profession "from the time of their previous successful promotion application"

will be considered. This addition is meant to include contributions the faculty member made during the year in which they successfully applied for their previous promotion but did not include in that application.

- Note: Footnote 15 has been added to offer clarification.

5. In 327.III.C, the Committee removed the sentence: “The successful candidate for promotion will also provide evidence that his/her teaching has matured over the course of her/his academic career.” The nature of *maturity in teaching* is difficult to define in a policy, and should be left to departments to establish standards for teaching effectiveness befitting the rank of Full Professor. Further, there are a number of tenured faculty whose teaching loads are reduced by grant-funded research and/or leadership and/or service activities, for whom providing evidence of *matured* teaching may prove unreasonable. To that end, the term “sustained pattern of excellent teaching” has been replaced with “consistent pattern of quality teaching” to give departments agency to define *quality teaching* in their standards.
6. In 327.III.D, the Committee removed this sentence about RSCA: “This expectation could be met, in part, by demonstrated leadership in their professional communities—but leadership alone cannot serve as the sole substitute for the significant research, scholarship, or artistic productivity that defines distinction in the discipline.” Because departments will be tasked with generating standards, they will determine how to include (or not include) leadership in their consideration of RSCA accomplishments.
7. In 327.IV, the Committee drafted specific criteria for early promotion to Full Professor (i.e., in the fourth year following promotion to the rank of Associate or earlier). These criteria are meant to align with the preceding policy revisions regarding on-time promotion to Full. Again, candidates are evaluated in reference to established criteria (department standards). The department will apply standards to evaluate a candidate’s achievement. To be favorably recommended for early promotion to Full, candidates must be rated as **Exceptional in the three areas of teaching, RSCA, and service.**
8. Footnote 34 (previously Footnote 30) has been amended to reflect that the President’s decision will be mailed electronically, not to a home address.
9. In section II.2, under the Scholarship of Discovery, “public scholarship” is included where previously the policy listed “public presentations.
10. Binary gender pronouns (he/she, s/he, and his/her) have been replaced with gender neutral pronouns (the singular they and their) throughout the policy. This practice is reflective of consultations the Committee has had with outside gender experts, including the Coordinator of the Cross-Cultural and Gender Center.
11. Spacing, font, and capitalization have been made consistent wherever these typographical issues were found.
12. In several instances, unactionable verbs such as “should” were replaced with “must.”

13. In the References, previous versions of APM 327 include “Final Report of the Faculty Scholar Blue Ribbon Committee (APM).” We can find no reference to this report in APM 327 but were reluctant to remove the reference without knowing why it is there.

Enclosed are tracked changes to APM 327 for the Executive Committee’s and full Senate’s review.

Respectfully submitted,

D. Low

CC: Xuanning Fu, Provost

Jim Schmidtke, Interim Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs

Reva Sias, Co-Chair, Associate Professor Organization

Larissa Mercado-López, Special Assistant to the Provost for Faculty Equity and Belonging