

March 18, 2013

Professor Calvin Moore
Chair, Committee on Faculty Welfare
Berkeley Division, Academic Senate

Dear Cal:

I want to thank you and your colleagues for meeting with me to discuss questions about the timely review of cases for academic advancement. I appreciate the Committee's interest in the streamlining steps that the campus has already taken, and I describe seven of them below. I am also grateful for the Committee's valuable advice about some further measures the campus will soon be taking, and below I have included some discussion of those measures as well.

Campus ad hoc review committees. When we appoint a campus ad hoc review committee (CAHRC), delays can ensue, first as the committee is formed and then as it carries out its deliberations and prepares its report. While the campus continues to require CAHRC review for all cases for promotion to tenure, CAHRC review may now be waived for some tenure-level appointments and for some cases for promotion to Professor. So far, we have found that these new practices have not diminished the quality of our reviews, and clearly we have been able to reduce the average amount of time it takes to complete reviews in these two categories of cases. We are also better able to ensure that we burden faculty members with CAHRC service only when their help is truly necessary. In an additional effort to smooth the CAHRC process, we now endeavor, whenever possible, to provide faculty members with advance notice of the possibility that they will be asked to serve. Of course, we would not want to take steps that would diminish the thoughtfulness of CAHRC review, but we will continue to look for ways in which CAHRC review can be made as timely as possible.

Endowed chairs. Most cases for appointment and reappointment to endowed chairs may now be submitted by using a simple check-sheet, which reduces the workload for candidates, department chairs, deans, and staff at every level. This streamlining measure is appropriate because most endowed-chair cases are routine, and the check-sheet indicates when additional information should be provided. The Senate's Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations (Budget Committee) has streamlined its review of most endowed-chair actions.

Merit increases for adjunct professors. The balance of teaching and research contributions for faculty in the Adjunct title may be different in different academic units, and so starting this year, the role of central review will be limited for many cases in this title. While no changes have been made to the review processes for appointment, promotion, advancement to Adjunct Professor, Step VI, or advancement to Adjunct Professor, Above Scale, decisions about all other Adjunct actions may now be made by deans, provided that they submit a check-sheet to the Academic Personnel Office (APO) before the effective date of the action. These check-sheets will allow APO and the Vice Provost to audit the deans' decisions. This is a three-year pilot program, and I expect it to improve the timeliness of decisions for our Adjuncts, to reduce workload for staff, and to free up time in the Budget Committee and my office for other kinds of cases. At the end of the pilot period, we will

assess carefully the extent to which this delegation of authority has preserved fair reviews for our Adjuncts.

Merit increases for Continuing Lecturers. While central review of recommendations for conferral of Continuing Lecturer status is still required, merit increases for non-Senate faculty members who have achieved Continuing Lecturer status can now be approved by deans without central review. So far, I am satisfied that this delegation of authority has preserved fair reviews for our Continuing Lecturers.

First merit increases after appointment for ladder faculty. The first review period after appointment at Berkeley is usually abbreviated, and most new faculty will have spent their time getting research projects established and new courses launched. Thus one-step merit increases for new faculty are now being handled through the use of a simple check-sheet. This reduces the workload for candidates, chairs, deans, and staff at every level of review. For its part, the Budget Committee nearly always uses its consent calendar to make its recommendations on these cases.

Additional Senate streamlining. The Budget Committee now streamlines its reviews for most well-prepared cases for one-step merit increases, provided that the case does not involve a “threshold review” (a promotion or an advancement to Professor, Step VI, or to Above Scale).

Decanal streamlining. The APBears system offers deans the option of reviewing the departmental recommendation and supporting it without comment. Many deans now avail themselves of this option when they receive well-prepared cases for one-step merit increases, provided that the case does not involve a threshold review. Using this option enables deans to focus their time and attention on other cases for advancement.

Context and next steps. For some years, our campus goal for the timely review of merit cases has been to provide the deans’ offices with a tentative or final decision before the effective date of the action whenever the merit case has met submission deadlines. In recent years, we have in nearly every instance met this goal. This may sound like good news, but it leaves out a crucial detail: around 80% of cases have been submitted after their APO deadlines, often weeks or months later.

Of course, we strive to provide timely decisions about late cases as well as those that are on time, but the submission of large numbers of late cases quickly produces a challenging back-log. Delays only grow as an accumulation of late cases encounters the summer vacations scheduled by the staff, faculty, and administrators who are involved in various levels of academic review. Finally, the late cases from one year will spill over into the next, delaying consideration of new cases.

An obvious question is whether the APBears system has slowed the review of cases. Multi-year data show, however, that the system has if anything slightly improved matters. In 2009-10, before the introduction of APBears, 80% of cases were submitted more than two weeks after the relevant campus deadline. Again during 2010-11, the year APBears was introduced, 80% of cases were submitted more than two weeks after the relevant campus deadline. In 2011-12 we saw a modest decrease in the percentage of cases that were late, from 80% to 77%. This decrease occurred during the first year that the use of APBears was expanded to types of cases beyond regular merit reviews.

A few colleagues have argued that our multi-tiered system of review for Senate faculty causes delays and should be re-examined. Both the Senate and the Administration value shared governance in this realm, however, believing that it keeps our review processes as fair and transparent as possible.

To increase the number of timely decisions, it is becoming clear that we must be able to smooth the flow of cases during the academic year. In turn, that requires us to articulate what our shared expectations for timely case submission should be. Thus several new policies and practices, developed with the help of your committee, are aimed at increasing the number of timely decisions by revising and clarifying deadlines for submissions and using them in some new ways.

Our campus goal will continue to be providing the deans' offices with a tentative or final decision about each merit increase before the effective date of the action, provided that the case has met relevant deadlines in its preparation. With a smoother case flow during the academic year, the percentage of timely decisions should be able to keep pace as the percentage of timely submissions increases.

These new policies and practices will be implemented starting with cases submitted during 2013-14. I will soon be sending a message to all faculty and other academic appointees encouraging them to acquaint themselves with these upcoming changes.

During 2013-14, we will also add some new reporting tools to APBears that will help us to pinpoint and address any remaining problems. Information will be collected by departmental and decanal units and by case type, showing how many candidates submitted their materials on time and how many cases were submitted on time to APO. For late cases, the data will indicate the number of days by which relevant deadlines were missed. I would welcome an opportunity to review these data with your committee and consult about any further steps that might be appropriate.

A final word about tenure cases: They are the reviews of greatest importance to the campus and to the individual faculty member, and they are also the ones that are most subject to unexpected delay. External reviewers may be late in sending their letters to departments; scheduling difficulties may delay departmental ad hoc review and departmental deliberation; review by the campus ad hoc committee may be slowed by its members' other academic commitments; and final review must be provided by both the Provost and the Chancellor. As I mentioned, the campus has taken some steps to improve the campus ad hoc review process, but it must continue to be a process that leaves time for thoughtful deliberation. While I cannot promise that all tenure cases will be decided before their proposed effective date, I do offer my assurance that everyone involved in the process gives tenure reviews a high priority and works hard to provide the timeliest tenure decisions possible.

Regards,

Janet

Janet Broughton
Vice Provost for the Faculty