UC Merced
Minutes of Joint Meeting of August 21, 2008
Kolligian Library, Room 217

The meeting was attended by representatives from Academic Personnel, the Senate's Committee on Academic Personnel, and Faculty.

Morning session (*Assistant Professors, CAP Members, Academic Personnel)*

Faculty comment: We did not anticipate the need to give talks. UC Merced has limited funds for presenters.
CAP response: Focus on your research as that is more important. We look qualitatively at each case, rather than quantitatively. There are few fixed criteria; however, the demonstration of high quality research and where you publish is important. You can also present at meetings to display your research and they do not need to be invited presentations. Also, look into the possibility of collaborating with other departments or UC campuses to pool your funding and attract speakers, who would then speak at several campuses. Being part of a new campus gives you cachet and people would be interested in helping you.

Faculty comment: The first review occurs in the second year of service and the Mid-Career Appraisal (MCA) occurs in the fourth year. [CAP Edit: The Draft Merced Academic Personnel Policy (MAPP) states under Section 410-2d that the MCA "is ordinarily conducted during the fourth year of service but may be done earlier."] We were told we could take an extra year.
Dr. Ojcius: That is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Faculty question: Do junior faculty get tenure review after five years?
CAP response: That occurs in the sixth year. If work that is crucial to a case is completed prior to its submission to Academic Personnel in the sixth year, it can be considered in promotion to tenure cases.

Faculty question: For the MCA, how far back does CAP go in our careers?
CAP response: We mostly assess your UC Merced career. For a baseline, we look at your whole career, but we mostly focus on the work you've done on this campus. The MCA reviews all of the faculty member's work and the trajectory to tenure. The MCA is different from merit review in that it is a progress statement and provides information on how we can help the faculty member achieve tenure. CAP provides advice during routine merit reviews but the MCA is a more formal process.
Faculty question: For self-statements, do we only concentrate on our UC Merced careers?
CAP response: We want to know about your whole career. A crucial point for us is whether you are independent from your mentor. For your publications, we want to see independence in research; we do not want to see your mentor always being listed as a co-author.

Faculty question: How are outside evaluators chosen?
CAP response: The Schools make those selections. CAP is trying, with the assistance of the Administration, to set up a mentor program for Assistant Professors.

Faculty question: What is the expectation for letters of reference for the MCA?
CAP response: We are not requesting letters at this time. It is the Schools' decision.

Faculty comment: I would like clarity on the step system.
CAP response: As an Assistant Professor, you have an eight year span of time to achieve tenure regardless of the step at which you were hired. Even if you were hired at Step 4, you still have eight years. Think of it in terms of years rather than steps. But be careful with the eight year span concept as the sixth year is actually the review year. The crucial criterion for tenure is whether you feel you are ready. You could be ready after the fifth year. Your FTE belongs to you and you are not in competition with anyone else.

Faculty question: Will my case look weak because I have to be concerned about public service in addition to teaching and research duties?
CAP response: You need to push back on things that others can do. Your research is unique and something only you can do. We know that there is pressure at UC Merced to do public service and we have discussed this with the Administration. What you are doing is different from other campuses because you are building curriculum. On other campuses, faculty is just managing curriculum. If you are building a program which also feeds into your research, that needs to be stated in your dossier. It can count as service. We can only act based on what is in your dossier, so make sure to include these important items.

Faculty comment: I would like clarity on the materials submitted to CAP.
CAP response: Outside reviewers should not comment on your service. Focus more on the quality of your papers rather than the quantity.

Faculty question: How does CAP view community involvement?
CAP response: We look to see if your community service is assisting in the development of your scholarship.

Faculty question: How is CAP structured?
CAP response: The three year terms are staggered so that there's not a brand new committee each year. This year there are five UC Merced members. Internal numbers are growing. CAP informs the Administration when more information is needed to review a case. The Administration will also relay information to the Deans and AP Chairs that is important to the faculty member and the tenure process. If we have something we want you to know, we will tell you. We are always in contact.

Faculty question: What is the CAP review process?
CAP response: All CAP members read and vote on each file. Three CAP members are assigned to review a particular file based on the compatibility of their disciplines. One member is the lead reviewer and presents the case. The second and third reviewers fill in any gaps in the presentation. After the presentation of the case all members then weigh in on the merits of the case. Sometimes CAP will request additional information from the unit if needed.

Faculty question: What if there is a CAP member who has the same research focus as the faculty member under review and what if that CAP member disagrees with the faculty member's research?

CAP response: It is a violation of our ethics to be biased and it goes against why we're here. If a committee member had any prejudices, the other members of the committee would temper that person. CAP members will recuse themselves if they don't feel it is appropriate for them to review a particular case. CAP and the Administration can also request an external ad hoc committee to review cases.

Faculty question: How does graduate student training fit into a case?
CAP response: There is no specific credit for the number of graduate students under your supervision. However, we are interested in your graduate students and what they're doing now. We take note if your graduate student's name comes first in a publication but it is not held against you. It is a concern if you didn't have any graduate students. The best place to discuss your graduate students is in your self-statement, as it helps present a fuller picture of yourself.

Faculty question: In regards to interdisciplinary work, how does CAP view joint appointment cases?
CAP response: We are sensitive to the pressure that comes with a joint appointment. We had a case last year in which the faculty member's research was quite varied. However, in his/her self-statement, he/she very efficiently explained to us how the research all fit together. Also, publishing in peer-reviewed journals is helpful.
Your self-statement should not be self-promoting or self-congratulatory. You should provide a clear picture of yourself and make it informative and descriptive. Show us that you're a good candidate, don't merely tell us.

<u>Afternoon session</u> (*AP Chairs, Deans, Faculty Members, CAP, Academic Personnel)*)

Faculty question: How many internal and external letters do you need for Assistant and Associate Professors?

CAP response: In general, we used to get around twelve outside letters and that was too many. So we requested about six outside letters for Professor or Associate Professor actions. Some would be suggested by the candidate and the others would be suggested by the School. It is important that the School get independent people to write letters. We would like one or two letters from the UC system because they have some kind of affiliation and they know the standards. For beginning Assistant Professors, we expect to have letters from people on their thesis committee. For a MCA at UC Merced, we only ask for outside letters if there is a lack of knowledge on the part of the in-house group of the candidate's research area. [CAP Edit: The Draft MAPP states under Section 305-2b that "Extramural letters of evaluation should be from qualified and distinguished authorities. For appointments at the level of Assistant Professor, Steps, I-III, 3-5 letters from candidate suggested reviewers are required. For appointments at the levels of Assistant Professor, Step IV and above (including all Associate and full Professor levels), 3-4 letters from candidate suggested reviewers **and** 3-5 letters from School suggested reviewers are required. Of the School suggested letters, 2-3 should be from a UC campus."]

Remember that if the letters are not analytical, they don't help us regardless of how many you have. We are looking for a measured assessment rather than just endorsements. If your case is a tenure decision, it is useful to have letters from people who are tenured themselves.

There was an extended discussion between a faculty member and CAP about the need to establish an appeals process for rejected cases. It was asserted that a factual error was made in a certain case that led to an appointment not being extended to a candidate. The faculty member was reminded that the final decision does not rest with CAP but rather the Provost or Chancellor.
Dr. Ojcius: An appeals process exists and has already been used at UC Merced. If a school disagrees with the recommendation of CAP, then the school Dean can appeal through the Provost or Chancellor.

Faculty question: Is there any value in having external letters for MCAs?
Dr. Ojcius: There have been very few of those requests. They are not required, but they are used if there is not sufficient expertise in the School for the candidate's area.
CAP response: One letter, two at the most from within the UC system would be fine. We have seen it done in different ways. Sometimes, the APC chair writes the report then solicits the outside letter. In other cases, the APC chair finds someone within the UC system to act as the chair of the internal review committee. It may be supplemented by an additional letter. It is more valuable if the letter is evaluative. The role of the MCA is to encourage people in their mid career and to provide assessment.

Faculty question: Can a MCA be combined with a merit review?
CAP response: We keep them separate because they ask different questions. The merit increase asks what has taken place in the period under discussion. The MCA asks what the career looks like from the time the person began until now, what the prospects are for tenure, and how we can make helpful suggestions to the candidate. A distinction must be made between the two decisions. Some of the information is redundant, but they're separate issues.

Faculty question: Are reference letters required for merits?
CAP response: No letters required. They are only required for promotion.

Dr. Ojcius: School-suggested letters are needed for appointments for Assistant Professor Step IV and above.
CAP response: The logic for this is as follows. An appointment at Step I or II and sometimes III means that the candidate does not have much of a publication record. There is no value in asking for letters beyond the three the candidate provides. An appointment at Step IV means that the candidate has a publication record and we would expect letters from reviewers other than mentors. [Also see the CAP Edit just above.]

Faculty comment: At other campuses, there a stigma associated with being at Step VI. We have a different environment here and some Assistant Professors might not be ready to go up by Step V.
CAP response: There is no stigma. We mentioned this morning that the crucial criterion for tenure is whether you feel you are ready. The eight year clock starts when you get here.

Everyone has the same amount of time regardless of step. (Unless you have maternity or paternity leave in which case the clock stops).

Dr. Ojcius: We would like to propose some deadlines to take care of merit increases and promotions. A deadline of prior to January would leave more time for new appointment cases in the spring. We are proposing three different deadlines. (Handed out deadline dates for submission of materials.)

Faculty response: Since the promotion to Associate Professor requires a full set of outside letters, it is not realistic to get that done by November. We don't even know who is up for promotion. Faculty are not required to even say whether they want to be considered for promotion until July or later.
CAP response: Either they tell you earlier, or the November date has to change.
Faculty response: They tell us after they receive a notification from AP. We don't do anything until we hear from AP that somebody wants to be considered. The schedule might be unrealistic for this year.
CAP response: Anything that requires letters ought to take place at a later date. Merit review for Associate Professors could be put in the earlier slot. You are encouraged to hold all the merit reviews at once because faculty are thinking about all the cases at once. There might be more consistency across levels when you do them all at one time.

There was discussion on how best to inform faculty when they are due for a two year merit review and an MCA. There was discussion on changing the deadline to April for next year in terms of asking faculty if they want to be considered. [CAP Edit: A revised set of deadlines has been issued for the 2009-10 Academic Personnel Actions.]

Faculty comment: It is not clear when an Assistant Professor can go forward with a promotion to an Associate Professor. The letter from the APO does help. It would be nice to have clear procedures.
Dr. Ojcius: Next year, we will get the notifications out earlier. This year, standard merit increases will be in November.

Faculty question: For most of the faculty, teaching evaluations are based solely on student evaluations. What is being done on other campuses?
CAP response: It is a perennial problem. One way to deal with it is to sit in on your faculty member's classes. Another way is to read their syllabi. But in the end, we do rely heavily on the student evaluations. We try to make reasonable comparisons: if it's a required course in the discipline, we know what other people have done. If it's a class that's being taught for the first time, we don't expect to see the same evaluations it would have gotten on the fifth teaching. If the comments are that the course is too hard, it doesn't worry us. If the comments are consistent in saying that the Professor is disrespectful to the students, we take that into account.

CAP comment: There is a movement towards online evaluations. In classes with small enrollment, students are wary of writing negative evaluations. They fear that their handwriting will be recognized. Online evaluations protect their identity.

Faculty comment: I have heard of campuses asking for letters from students.
CAP response: We recommend it. Some campuses keep tabs on students and contact them three years later about the class they took. Their opinion three years later might be more important than their opinion on the last day of class. It might help flesh out faculty's cases.

CAP comment: There is an issue about the quality of journals. Junior faculty should try to publish in more recognized journals. Also, we would like to know the quality of the journals. When you tell us that these are the leading journals in the field, we'd like to know how many journals there are in the field. You should also state in your letter what the three leading journals are in the field.
Faculty response: That is very subjective.
CAP response: We realize there are differences in journals. We also realize that there is a difference between a journal that is widely read in the field and a journal that is narrowly read but has significant influence.
Faculty response: There is also a distinction between traditional, disciplinary journals and interdisciplinary journals.
CAP response: It would help us if you would convey that information to us in your case materials.
CAP comment: It all comes down to making a case. Characterizing a journal should not be left to us. You need to explain that to us. We're all scholars, but we come from different fields, and you have to give us the raw material to work with.
Faculty response: We can't anticipate the arguments that CAP is going to forward. Having some sort of communication through appropriate channels with CAP to point these things out would be helpful to both parties.
CAP response: We only read the files. We don't go out and do our own research. You can decide whether the citation element is important or not. If it is important to you, put it in your case. We need this information because we only read what is in the file.

Faculty question: What about the evaluation of articles?
CAP response: It is very important. It is difficult for us to make a list of what we have to have on each case because it depends on the case. There are certain journals that are well known and don't need a lot of documentation. Again, it is all about making the case.

CAP comment: We advise you to avoid duplication in your case materials. We have had cases where the Department committee letter will cite four paragraphs from the letter of recommendation and the Dean's letter will cite three of those four paragraphs. And it is not useful to take the letters and do superficial, movie-type reviews.

Faculty question: In the science field, we hire people who are Post Docs. They have generally been TAs, but they don't have student evaluations. I am always being told they need them. I would like some clarification.
CAP response: I heard cases several times last semester in which the candidate was a Post Doc with no teaching experience but the scholarship looked great so we voted for appointment. We have people on the panel who understand that aspect of your field.
CAP comment: Some candidates might have made copies of their evaluations. Or, they might have been an Outstanding TA. We would take that in account.

CAP comment: If the candidate does not have evaluations and has not done much teaching, it is better to just state that in the letter.
Dr. Ojcius: I have advised people that if teaching evaluations are available, include them. If they can't get them, they should mention that they tried to obtain them but couldn't.
CAP comment: We had a case in which the candidate had some teaching evaluations, but it was apparent that the candidate chose them. We went back and asked for all the evaluations.

CAP comment: The system has something called acceleration that lets you move from one step to another before the appointed time, or allows you to skip a step. That has been inserted in the process to allow for recognition of extraordinary work over a period of time. Almost exclusively, extraordinary work is scholarship. Sometimes, it is the production of scholarship and sometimes it is the recognition of scholarship (e.g., Nobel Prize or election to a national academy). It introduces an element of flexibility. It doesn't occur often, but it is there. One of the issues that has come up specific to UC Merced is the suggestion that extraordinary service can also be taken as justification for acceleration. We have discussed this on the committee. There will be cases where acceleration will be recommended to CAP basically on the grounds of extraordinary service. It probably won't happen more than once in the academic life of a person. And it won't happen to everybody. It can not take the place of continued superior scholarship and excellent teaching; it will stand alongside it. Also, acceleration is not there to compensate for what people think are deficiencies in salary. There are other methods in place for people who think they are undervalued or who think they were appointed at too low a level. (Career Equity Review.)

Attest: David Ojcius, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel
Joseph Cerny, In-coming CAP Chair (2008-2009)