August 25, 2021

To: Elizabeth Watkins  
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor  

Daniel Jeske  
Vice Provost for Academic Personnel  

CC: Katina Napper  
Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Personnel  

From: Jason Stajich  
Chair, Riverside Division  

RE: Proposed Change to Search Approval Workflow for Academic Searches

Dear Liz and Dan,

As usual, the Senate appreciates the window to opine and welcomes further discussion and collaboration around the Proposed Change to Search Approval Workflow for Academic Searches. Committees, including the Executive Council, begin meeting for the 2021-22 service year in October and I welcome you as a guest at a mutually amenable date and time. Until then, I write to provide consultative feedback regarding the subject item including the attached response memos from the consulted standing and faculty executive committees.

Executive Council discussed the proposal during their August 23, 2021, meeting. Members expressed agreement with concerns brought by the BCOE Faculty Executive Committee opposing the proposal. While there were not substantial written comments from other committees, the Council members voiced appreciation for the points of concern by the BCOE FEC. In particular, during the discussion, Council wondered why it would be necessary for there to be another layer of review in addition to the Equity Advisor and EEO Office. The current academic hiring process at UCR already requires an equity and diversity review as a key step and the proposal is not clear if the new process replicated work already done or if it would be another layer of bureaucracy that could be perceived as rubber stamping with a lack of analysis. A theme of Council’s discussion was that the proposal was “a step in the wrong direction”.

Finally, a concern was raised about any aspects that cause searches to be delayed. Due to the quarter system, UCR is already engaging candidates late in the search season and this proposal as written in this draft does not necessarily improve UCR’s competitive position in consideration of potential hires. UCR is left with a much smaller pool; and it is then harder to recruit excellent faculty candidates.

Sincerely,
/s/ Jason
July 31, 2021

TO: Jason Stajich, Chair
    Academic Senate

FROM: Philip Brisk, Chair
    BCOE Executive Committee

RE: Proposed Change to Search Approval Workflow for Academic Searches

Dear Jason,

The BCOE Executive Committee reviewed the Proposed Change to the Search Approval Workflow for Academic Searches.

Before I begin this letter, I think it is important to acknowledge that I am simultaneously Chair of the Faculty and Faculty Equity Advisor (FEA) for BCOE; and, to the best of my knowledge, I am the only individual on campus to hold both positions simultaneously. Both myself and Dean Lynch (an ex-officio member of the BCOE Executive Committee) have intimate knowledge of the role of the FEA in BCOE, whereas the median faculty/Committee member may not. For these reasons, I am going to write feedback coming from Committee members other than myself initially, with some notes of my own in italics; I will then write some additional comments that provide my own perspective as a FEA.

Committee Feedback

The Committee would like to remind the UCR Administration that the elected members all have 9-month academic appointments, and that requests to review proposals during the summer months is effectively a request for Committee members to perform unpaid labor. Moreover, some Committee members may be 100% committed (in terms of summer salary) to funding agencies. As such, there is little taste among the Committee members to review proposals during summer, unless they are to deal with exceptional circumstances, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the Committee members worry that if they refuse to review proposals, the administration will take advantage of this fact in order to ram through adverse proposals during the summer months, to take advantage of the lack of Senate oversight. In this case, the Committee agreed to review the proposal, noting that Dr. Jeske is effectively working overtime as VPAP and as acting VPAR. The Committee recognizes that Dr. Jeske may not have had time to develop this proposal during the 9-month academic year due to this dual-commitment.

The Committee did not view the proposal favorably; the sentiments expressed ranged from skeptical / unsure to moderately negative.

- I see this as an indirect consequence of the fact that the role of the FEA has not been institutionalized; each FEA reports directly to the Dean, with the basic idea being that each College has unique challenges that need to be addressed. At the same time, the median faculty member of any given College does not necessarily know or understand the scope and work of the FEA, making it challenging for them to assess whether or not this proposal is reasonable.
The Committee felt that the proposal was unclear regarding precisely what problem that it is trying to solve. The rationale articulated in the second paragraph of the cover letter is essentially that decentralization is preferable. Several Committee members suggested that the proposal comes across as an unfunded mandate, which pushes a function that has previously been supported centrally onto the Colleges. There is concern that the APO might be understaffed, and that this is an attempt to transfer workload onto faculty as a way to sidestep appropriately staffing the APO.

- It would be useful to know if the FEAs perform a similar function at the other UCs.
  - If so, what was the rationale for inserting them into the approval workflow? Are there any success stories?
  - Are there known best practices from other UC’s that can be adopted?
- Within a given college, the FEAs are trained to focus on DEI issues, often within a larger framework of trying to improve the climate. It was surprising that the stated purpose of this proposal was not to improve the diversity of the candidate pool, long list, short list, and, ultimately hiring outcomes. At the same time, if this is the intended direction, there should be a clear explanation of how the inclusion of FEAs in this process will advance diversity, and what shortcomings may be present in terms of the present process.
  - Are there target benchmarks? If so, where do they come from?
  - Is there a minimum threshold that needs to be met?
  - What accountability is built into the system as-is, and how would that accountability mechanism change as a result of the proposed workflow?

Some committee members expressed concern about increasing the workload of the FEA, especially during years where a given College is hiring aggressively. These Committee members worried that allocating these duties to the FEA would limit their ability to make impacts elsewhere in the College (e.g., there would be less time to provide training, limited bandwidth to be directly responsive to faculty concerns, etc.).

- An implicit assumption among the Committee members is that the approval workflow is primarily administrative; the case for why these tasks should be allocated to a faculty member, rather than (appropriately qualified and trained) staff was unclear.

Several Committee members also articulated a concern that the FEA may not understand the applicant pool diversity across multiple disciplines.

- Some, but not all, disciplines represented in BCOE compete directly with industry, and cannot offer competitive salaries; this skews the applicant pool toward individuals who can afford to chase a passion for lower remuneration.
- It is also very challenging to assess the qualifications of applicants who are applying for positions in very well-defined subdisciplines; they may be qualified for a faculty position in a given Department, but may not be a good match for a search that targets a specific growth area. This is particularly critical when hiring faculty in areas in response to criticism from ABET to address perceived programmatic weaknesses.
My Personal Feedback as FEA

I think that UCR has not yet institutionalized or operationalized the role(s) of the FEAs in a manner that is either understandable or transparent. Each FEA reports directly to the Dean of their respective College, with a dotted line to the Vice Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer (VC/CDO). Since the long-term plan is for the Deans to fund the FEAs, I can see how it may come across as awkward for an administrative unit that is not a College to prescribe specific roles for the FEAs, especially as that unit divests itself from its established role in the Search Approval Workflow. It is certainly possible to both decentralize the current search approval workflow process without requiring the FEAs to play a specific role across every College.

I believe that the Committee members made a valid point when they asked what problem(s) this proposed change is trying to solve. My initial reading of the proposal, which may completely have been wrong, was that its objective was to better institutionalize the FEAs. If the problem is something else, yet naturally lends itself to a decentralized solution, it may make sense to ask the Deans and Faculty Executive Committees of each College to propose bespoke solutions, in which the Dean can match the role of the FEA to College-specific needs. Just as an example, the time that an FEA spends on the search process is time not spent mentoring pre-tenure junior faculty from minoritized groups, or directly intervening to address climate challenges involving hostile or toxic Departments; in such a case, diverting the FEA’s time and energy elsewhere may be detrimental to the College.

Somewhat more generally, it is important to remember that FEAs are still faculty who run active research programs, teach courses, and may perform other service at the Department, College, or Campus/Senate level in addition to the FEA role; hence, their time should be treated as a scarce resource. If too many FEA-specific requirements are prescribed or imposed by the central administration over time, then opportunities to address College-specific challenges and to create College-specific opportunities for other faculty members may be limited or lost. The scope of this particular proposal may be reasonable, but if a few similar proposals (in terms of FEA workload requirements) are adopted over the next few years, the responsiveness of the FEAs to the Deans who are expected to pay them, and to their colleagues in the Colleges, may become severely curtailed. In this respect, it would be much more beneficial to start with a wider discussion of how best to institutionalize the FEAs rather than to impose institutional requirements upon them one proposal at a time. If there are some uniform expectations or activities that all FEAs should undertake regardless of College, then that discussion should be had for its own sake; the FEAs themselves should also be part of that discussion.

As noted above, the proposal does not clearly explain why this role in the Search Approval Workflow is an appropriate (or perhaps the best) use of the FEAs. For example, language such as the following does not build confidence: “The Equity Advisors would be added as a level of review in the proposed state, …” In the current workflow, the VPAP performs a review, whereas in the proposed workflow, the FEAs will perform a review, but the VPAP will not. While I didn’t initially notice this, I can see how this comes across as the VPAP/APO simply trying to offload a portion of their workflow onto other units. The key issue, which really does need to be added to the proposal, is the following: what value can the FEAs bring to the Search Approval Workflow process that the VPAP/APO cannot under the present workflow? A clear answer to this question
would go a long way toward allaying some of the concerns articulated by other Committee members.

If the proposal is to be sent back for a subsequent round of review, I would also suggest clearly delineating the expectations of the FEA in comparison/contrast to the Affirmative Action Compliance Officer (AACO), who is a designated member of each Search Committee:

- What will the FEA do that an effective AACO would not?
- Would the FEA effectively replace the AACO as a member of all Search Committees for a given year?
- Are there expectations for how the FEA would interact with each Search Committee?
- Are there guidelines, expectations, or requirements that outline the criteria under which an FEA would intervene with or otherwise stop a search that go beyond what the AACO or EO/AA would do? If so, they should be clearly delineated and outlined this proposal and not left TBD or deferred for subsequent discussion.

Lastly, I would like to point out that this proposal has not been transmitted to the FEAs for comment; the fact that I have seen it is purely coincidental, due to my being a member of CoDEI and being Chair of the Faculty for BCOE. Given that this proposal effectively creates new work for the FEAs outside of the existing agreement structure with each Dean, I personally feel that their feedback should be solicited. I write solely for myself and not for the other FEAs.

I hope that some of this feedback is indeed useful.
At its meeting on June 30, 2021, CAP discussed the proposed change to search approval workflow for academic searches. CAP expressed no concern about the proposed change and voted unanimously in support of the proposal. Nevertheless, CAP recommend that relevant bodies should check for consistencies of this change with existing campus policies, and campus community should be informed about this change.
COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

July 15, 2021

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
    Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Xuan Liu, Chair
    Committee on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Re: [Campus Review] (Proposal) Proposed Change to Search Approval Workflow for Academic Searches

The Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion reviewed the Proposed Change to Search Approval Workflow for Academic Searches and is in support of the proposal.

One member had a question about the role of the Provost, VPAP, and APO in this process. The document indicates that the VPAP and Provost are involved when the Dean submits hiring requests prior to initiating a search. Therefore, is it correct to assume that the process prior to the workflow shown in the document looks like this: Dean requests search/hiring line --> Provost (potentially consulting VPAP and APO)? This member thus appreciates further clarification if possible.
July 21, 2021

To: Jason Stajich, Ph.D., Chair, Academic Senate, UCR Division

From: Declan McCole, Ph.D., Chair, Faculty Executive Committee, UCR School of Medicine

Subject: SOM FEC Response to Proposed Change to Search Approval Workflow for Academic Searches

Dear Jason,

The SOM Faculty Executive Committee has reviewed the Proposed Change to Search Approval Workflow for Academic Searches. We approve of the proposed changes and have no additional comments.

Yours sincerely,

Declan F. McCole, Ph.D.
Chair, Faculty Executive Committee
School of Medicine
August 19, 2021

TO: Jason Stajich, Chair
    Riverside Division of the Faculty Senate

FROM: Lucille Chia, Chair
     CHASS Executive Committee

RE: Proposed Change to Search Approval Workflow

The CHASS Executive Committee approves the proposed change to the search approval workflow. We would like, however, more detailed information on what the responsibility of the Faculty Equity Advisor entails—e.g., does this advisor provide a report to the EO/AA office and the Dean, as well as to the Department Chair? Does this advisor have the authority not only to recommend or not that the search go forward, or the authority to block a search from going forward?