



Vice Provost for Academic Personnel
Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost
900 University Avenue
Riverside CA 92521
951-827-3541

January 20, 2021

To: Jason Stajich, Chair of Riverside Division

From: Thomas Smith
Interim Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

Daniel Jeske
Vice Provost of Academic Personnel
Acting Vice Provost of Administrative Resolution

Via: Cherysa Cortez, Executive Director of Riverside Division

RE: Proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation for UCR

Dear Jason,

As part of an effort to identify how the campus can more efficiently use resources, the Academic Personnel Office has looked into an option to delegate approval authority to Deans for a narrow subset of merit and promotion (M/P) files. The attached memo describes a proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation in full detail and offers supporting data analyses to quantify workload reduction and demonstrate how implementation of the delegation would maintain the integrity of the M/P review process.

In brief, the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation gives final approval authority to Deans for one-step, within-rank, no new off-scale, merit files that have unanimous and positive department support and for which the Dean's recommendation is positive. In those cases only, the Deans decision would be final. All other M/P cases continue with the current M/P review process. A more complete description of the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation will be found in Section 3 of the attached memo.

To-date, the formative ideas surrounding this proposal have been discussed with Chairs, Deans and CAP. At this point, we respectfully request full senate review, and look forward to ongoing consultation that would bring this proposal for reducing APO and CAP workload to fruition for AY21-22.

Thank you.

A Proposal for a Dean's Final Merit Delegation

1. Introduction

The review of merit and promotion (M/P) files at UCR for senate faculty members includes recommendations and reviews from the department(s) the faculty member belongs to, the faculty member's Dean, the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP), and the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (VPAP). In the case of merit advancements, the recommendations are presented to the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor (PEVC) for a final decision. In the case of promotions, the Provost adds a recommendation and the Chancellor makes the final decision. In recent years there have been about 400 files per year across the UCR academic units that have gone through this review sequence.

Nearly all of the other UC campuses have implemented policies delegating final authority for a subset of M/P files to Deans. The different approaches taken at other UC campuses are described in Section 2 of this memo. The primary goal of this memo is to propose a Dean's Final Merit Delegation that would meet the current needs of UCR. A primary motivation for looking into this possibility is a renewed emphasis on identifying and eliminating low-value/high-cost work across the campus. Within the context of the M/P review process, significant time is spent by AP analysts in the colleges/schools, APO, and the Academic Senate handling files during the review stages that involve CAP, VPAP and Provost/Chancellor. Additionally, significant time is spent by faculty members on CAP, the VPAP, and the Provost/Chancellor reviewing files in order to issue a fair and equitable recommendation/decision. If a subset of M/P files can be delegated through a Dean's Final Merit Delegation in such a way that the integrity of the review process is not diminished, increasingly scarce resources of staff and faculty time on the campus can be used more productively.

The Dean's Final Merit Delegation proposed in Section 3 of this memo would reduce the number of files being reviewed each year by CAP, VPAP and Provost by approximately 100, which represents a 25% reduction. The total time saved for each faculty member on CAP, the VPAP, and the Provost would be on the order of 50-100 hours, and at least the same amount of returned file processing time to staff members in the colleges/schools, APO and Academic Senate. In addition to the time savings to the campus, an additional benefit is that decisions on M/P files that qualify for the Dean's Final Merit Delegation would be made and announced to an estimated 100 faculty much sooner than is currently the case, and enable the files that do not qualify for the Dean's Final Merit Delegation to move through the existing review process more quickly.

Any change to the M/P process requires careful attention to the potential impact on outcomes. Data analyses presented in Section 4 of this memo provide evidence that the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation would change few outcomes made with the existing review process, and the changes would be toward the benefit of faculty members. A detailed examination of the differences that do exist shows they are better interpreted as differences in defensible interpretations of the CALL or APM rather than as "mistakes." Also examined in Section 4 are some questions relating to the consistency of M/P decisions across departments and Deans and how that might change with the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation.

2. Other UC Campuses

Results of a survey of if/how Dean's Final Delegations are set up at other UC campuses reveals the following:

- At UCSB, a Dean's Final Merit Delegation applies to one-step advancements (when there is no change in O/S) unless the advancement is for promotion or to Assistant V or Associate IV. The Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Personnel audits Dean's Authority cases and could choose to send any of those cases to CAP.
- At UCB, there is no Dean's Final Merit Delegation. Departments, however, do not vote on normal merit advancements. In some Departments, the Chair alone makes a recommendation in these cases while in other Departments there is an advisory committee that makes a recommendation to the Chair.
- At UCSC, there is a Dean's Final Merit Delegation for routine merit advancements. However, for these files there is CAP review prior to the Dean so in essence only the EVC is removed from the review process for the routine merits.
- At UCLA, there is a Dean's Final Merit Delegation for on-time advancements, one year accelerations at assistant professor and associate professor ranks, and up to two year accelerations at full professor rank.
- At UCSD, there is a Dean's Final Merit Delegation for all on-time merit advancements. Dean's authority files are audited by CAP in the following year and the feedback is used to help maintain consistency.
- At UCD, there is a Dean's Final Merit Delegation for all on-time merits.
- At UCI, there is a Dean's Final Merit Delegation for all regular merit advancements, except that CAP reviews every other merit at associate professor rank and above. At one point in time, but no longer, CAP audited the Deans authority files in the following year.
- At UCSF, Deans have final approval authority for all on time merit advancements.
- At UCM, Deans have final approval authority for what are called 'short form' merits, that are simple one-step merit reviews. In cases where the Department and Dean disagree,

the case goes to CAP for another level of review/recommendation with the VPAP as the final decider. Short form merits are limited in use to the following: 1) first, second and third merit reviews for assistant professors, 2) every other merit review for associate and full professors.

The survey of other UC campuses also invited comments on the wisdom of delegating some final authority to Deans. Two concerns at UCB that might have influenced their choice to not delegate authority to the Deans were: 1) concerns of bias toward leniency in some of the decanal units, and 2) concern that normal advances would be recommended for cases where a greater than normal advance is warranted.

Regarding the first concern, UCLA reported that Deans differ in how they handle salary increases in that some tend to be more generous than others, but that they are similar in terms of following basic procedures. UCSF reported it has been uncommon to identify patterns of gratuitous Dean delegated advancements. Unevenness amongst Deans is counter balanced by the use of CAP and/or Provost office audits at some of the campuses. While the audits do not impact the outcome, they provide an opportunity for CAP to note any concerns or issues that the Dean might not have noted. In addition, the audit helps inform the Deans about their patterns in decision-making relative to the broader campus. The question of potential unwarranted leniency within departments and schools/colleges, as it impacts the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation for UCR, will be discussed further in Section 4. The second concern at UCB can be addressed by encouraging candidates, Departments, and Deans to recognize outstanding files where greater than normal advance should be considered, and by doing so the case would go through the traditional M/P process.

3. Proposal for a Dean's Final Merit Delegation at UCR

Considering the value of significant time and effort that will be saved for staff, CAP, and the VPAP, the organization of the M/P reviews at other UC campuses, and supporting data analyses described in Section 4 that provide evidence the integrity of the M/P review process will not be diminished, the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation at UCR is as follows:

- a) M/P files are eligible for the Dean's Final Merit Delegation if they are normal on-time merit advancements. Specifically excluded from the Dean's Final Merit Delegation are acceleration files, deceleration files, advances with additional O/S, promotion files, advancement to Full Professor Step VI, advancement to above scale, advancements within above scale, reappointments, appraisals, quinquennial files, and career reviews.

- b) An eligible M/P file falls under the purview of the Dean's Final Merit Delegation when there is unanimous support from the Department and the Dean is positive.¹ The Dean's positive recommendation, then, is the final decision for the file and the review of the file is complete.
- c) In the case of joint appointments, both departments would need to unanimously support the M/P file and both Deans would need to be positive.
- d) Files eligible for the Dean's Final Merit Delegation but not having unanimous department support, or not having positive support from the Dean, will proceed along the existing M/P review process that includes CAP, VPAP and Provost/Chancellor.
- e) At the end of each academic year, M/P files that were reviewed according to the Dean's Final Merit Delegation will be made available to CAP for an audit review. The audit review report will be shared with the Deans, VPAP and Provost to generate discussion on the level of consistency in Dean's Final decisions across the campus and can also inform The CALL for the following year.

In what follows, the potential impact of employing the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation is investigated by comparing what would have happened with M/P files in the past three academic years had the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation been in place. In addition, sensitivity studies on the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation are presented, and some insight on the level of consistency that can be expected from departments and Deans will be discussed.

4. Data Analyses

4.1 Proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation

The three year period that includes AY17-18, AY18-19, and AY19-20 was used for the data analyses described in this section. Over this period there were 347 files that satisfied conditions (a) and (b) in the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation. Figure 1 shows the CAP recommendation and the PEVC final decision for the 347 files, all of which would have been approved by the Dean had the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation been in place.

¹ Unanimous support from the department is defined as no negative votes.

2017-18AY, 2018-19AY, and 2019-20AY Data

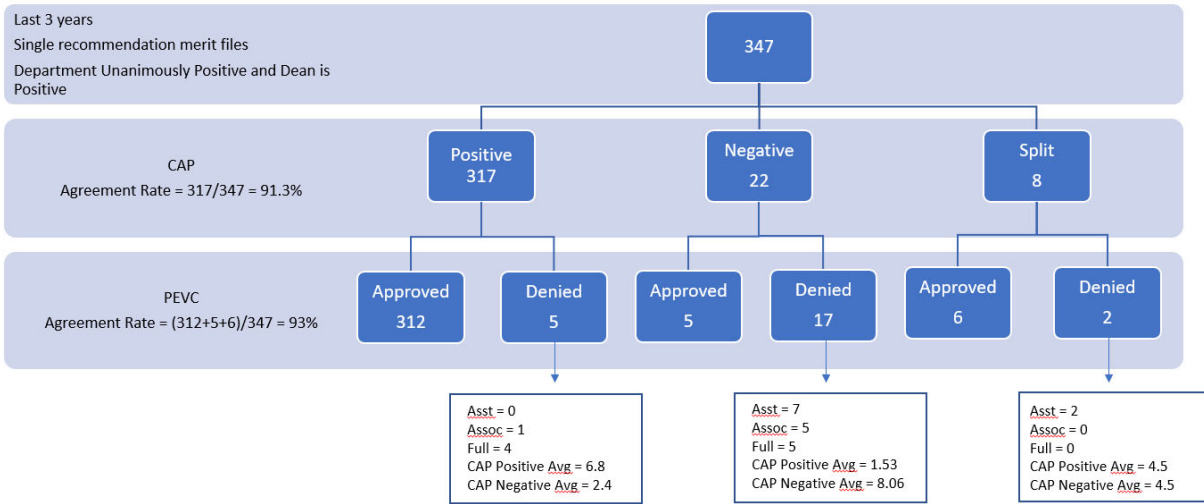


Figure 1. Proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation vs. Actual Results

Referring to the third level in Figure 1, the agreement rate between what actually happened to the 347 files and what would have happened with the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation is 93.1%. Across the three years, there are only 24 files that were denied merits by the existing review process which would have been approved with the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation. An APO review of these files was used to construct Table 1 which details where the perceived weaknesses in these 24 files. It can be seen that the concerns for the Assistant Professor files were with research productivity, whereas the concerns were more evenly distributed for the Associate Professor and Full Professor files. It is very important to recognize that the approvals of these 24 files under the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation should not be considered “mistakes.” The fact that the Department is unanimously positive and the Dean is positive, but CAP and/or the PEVC is negative, suggests differences in interpretation of the CALL or APM. Further, the subtending boxes in Figure 1 show that the average CAP votes on these files demonstrate significant support at CAP.

Area	Rank			Total
	Assistant	Associate	Full	
Research	8	2	2	12
Teaching		1	3	4
Service			3	3
Research and Teaching		1	1	2
Research and Service		1		1
Teaching and Service	1			1
All Areas		1		1
Total	9	6	9	24

Table 1. Reasons for the 24 M/P Files that were denied

4.2 Sensitivity Analysis

Two more expansive alternatives to condition (b) in the Proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation were investigated as a sensitivity analysis. Those two alternatives are:

- (Alternative 1) If an eligible M/P file for the Dean’s Final Merit Delegation receives no more than one negative vote from the Department and the Dean is positive about the file, then the Dean’s positive recommendation for the file becomes the final decision for the file and the review of the file is complete.
- (Alternative 2) If an eligible M/P file for the Dean’s Final Merit Delegation receives at least 75% support from the Department and the Dean is positive about the file, then the Dean’s positive recommendation for the file becomes the final decision for the file and the review of the file is complete.

Table 2 compares the impact of the alternative and less stringent variations of condition (b) with respect to the number of files that would have been eligible for the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation.

Condition (b) in Dean’s Final Merit Delegation	Eligible files
Unanimous Department Support (proposed)	347
Alternative 1: No more than 1 negative vote in the department	372
Alternative 2: At least 75% support in the department	379

Table 2. Alternatives considered for proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation

Table 2 suggests there is minimal impact with regard to the number of eligible files for the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation under the less stringent alternatives to the existing condition (b). Figures 2-3 are the corresponding versions of Figure 1 for each alternative. There continues to be very little change to the 93.1% agreement rate between what actually happened to the files and what would have happened with the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation.

There are six additional files that were denied merits and would have been approved by the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation with one or the other of the less stringent versions of condition (b). Table 3 details where the perceived weaknesses in these 6 files were. Research productivity is a perceived concern for all 6 of the additional files.

Area	Rank			Total
	Assistant	Associate	Full	
Research	1	1		2
Research and Teaching	2			2
Research and Service			2	2
Total	3	1	2	6

Table 3. Reasons for 6 Additional M/P Files Denied

2017-18AY, 2018-19AY, and 2019-20AY Data

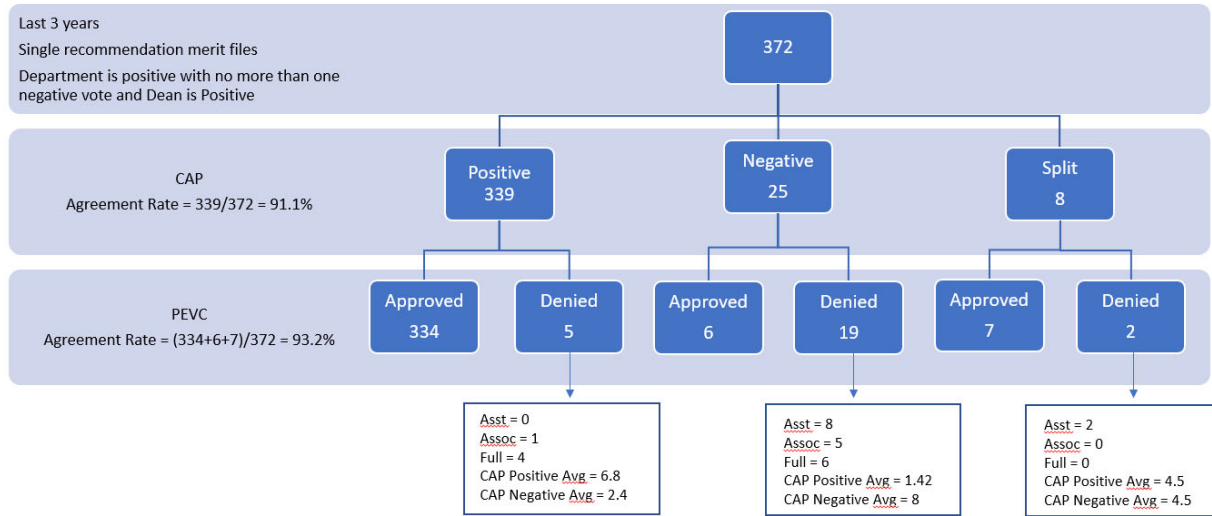


Figure 2. Alternative 1 of condition (b) of Proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation

2017-18AY, 2018-19AY, and 2019-20AY Data

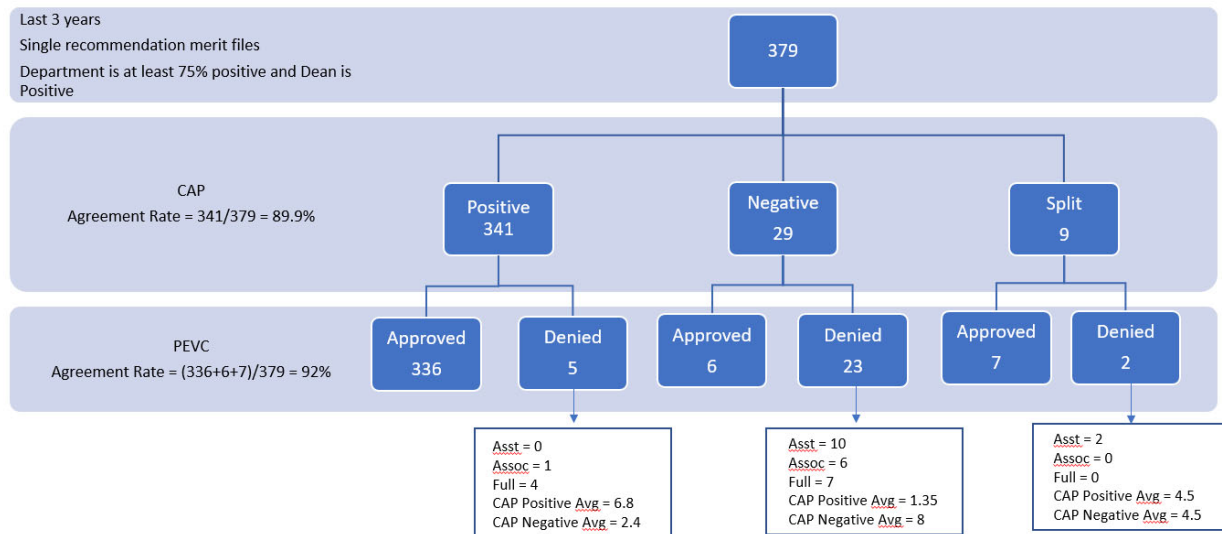


Figure 3. Alternative 2 of condition (b) of Proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation

4.3 Department Comparisons

The data analyses in this section quantify the level of variability across departments for providing unanimous support for files. The analyses aim to provide insight into the questions as to how often individual departments show unanimous support, and if there are departments with unusual trends for providing or withholding unanimous support.

Across the 45 departments in the study window, there were 421 files meeting the eligibility criteria (a) and 357 of those files received unanimous support at the department level. Figure 4 shows the individual department data on how frequently they supported eligible M/P files with unanimous support. Each point in the figure represents a department, with the x-coordinate being the number of eligible files for the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation in the three year study period, and the y-coordinate being the number of those eligible files that the department unanimously supported.

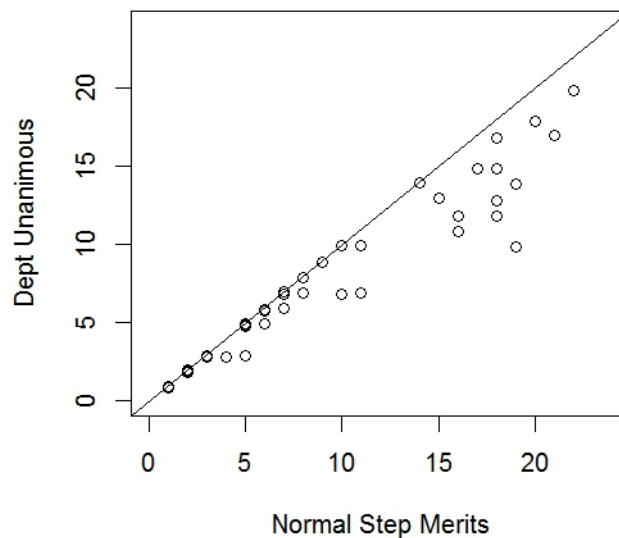


Figure 4. Department Unanimity for Normal Step Merits over the 3-year Study Period

While half of the departments provided unanimous support for all of the eligible files they reviewed, those departments tended to be the departments with a small number of eligible files reviewed during the study period. To adjust for the size of the departments, Figure 5 plots the number of unanimous support files versus the expected number of unanimous support files. The expected number of unanimous support files was calculated based on the 84.8%

campus-wide rate for unanimous support.² The good agreement between observed and expected demonstrates that after adjusting for the number of eligible files, the departments tend to be consistent with respect to the rate that they provide unanimous support.

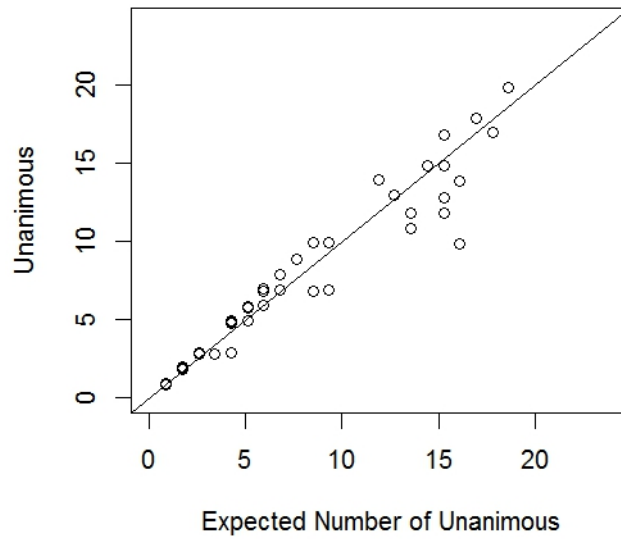


Figure 5. Observed vs. Expected Unanimity for Departments

To gain insight on how equitable the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation would be across the departments, Figure 6 displays the departments in terms of the number of proposed dean’s final positive decisions versus the number of actual final positive decisions. For twenty-three departments there is complete agreement between the proposed final positive decisions and the actual final decisions. For twenty departments there is one disagreement over the 3 year period and for two departments (shown as solid circles) there are two disagreements. These two departments are medium and large relative to the number of files that qualified for proposed final positive decisions. Figure 6 suggests equity across the departments could be anticipated.

² The estimate 84.8% is calculated as the ratio of 357/421. Here, 421 is the total number of files campus-wide that were eligible for the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation in the three year study period, and 357 is the number of those files that received unanimous department level support.

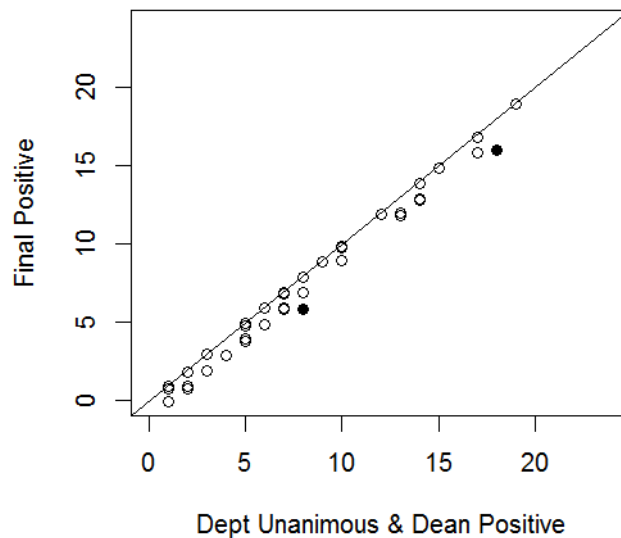


Figure 6. Positive Decisions versus Proposed Positive Decisions for Departments

5. Conclusions and Discussion

The proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation is designed to apply to routine merit files and only delegates authority to the Deans to make positive final decision in the circumstance where the department is unanimously supportive. The proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation is projected to have a 93.1% agreement rate to what would happen with files that proceeded through the existing M/P review process. The agreement rate translates to approximately 8 files a year that would be approved under the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation which would otherwise have been denied. It is important to recognize these disagreements are not “mistakes,” but rather, in light of unanimous department and Dean support they reflect differences in the interpretation of the CALL or APM.

The proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation will reduce the workload at CAP, APO, and the Provost’s/Chancellor’s office that is associated with the review of approximately 100 M/P files/year. In addition, significant reduction in staff time relating to checking compliance of files, exchanging files, and writing memos about files at APO and CAP will be realized. A conservative estimate of time returned to the campus associated with the proposed Dean’s Final Merit Delegation is 2,000 person-hours. In addition, the time to issue decisions on M/P files will be reduced for all faculty.

There appears to be little difference between the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation and the two alternatives based on the less stringent versions of condition (b), although each offers something if there is concern about the potential for an individual or small minority of faculty to consistently obstruct the expedited review process afforded by the Dean's Final Merit Delegation.

The audit role of CAP for files handled by the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation is key to maintaining consistency in implementation. With approximately 100 files in the audit pool, distributing 10 files to individual CAP members for the review is one way to conduct the audit while managing the workload.

Some have raised concerns that assistant professors who have all their pre-tenure merits be approved via the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation would not have sufficient feedback from CAP, the VPAP, or Provost prior to a promotion review process that includes review by CAP, VPAP, Provost and Chancellor. It is important to note that a pre-tenure appraisal file is not eligible for the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation and therefore would be reviewed with the existing review process. We might also consider encouraging assistant professors to put up their pre-tenure appraisal files at the same time as their 4th year merit in order to maximize feedback and provide more time between this feedback and a tenure decision.

Finally, institutionalizing the proposed Dean's Final Merit Delegation will require strong communication efforts with faculty, Department Chairs, Academic Personnel Staff, and Deans. Communication efforts would start by explaining the Dean's Final Merit Delegation in the upcoming AY21-22 CALL, followed by ensuring it is discussed in department meetings, Chair 201 Meetings, Dean's Office meetings, Academic Personnel Office Meetings, and APO workshops. Faculty need to have a clear understanding that they can still request extra consideration in the review of their file such as additional off-scale salary and multi-step advancements, but with the understanding that these types of merit actions will continue to be reviewed via the existing procedure. Deans would need to uphold their responsibility for reviewing files independently of the department review and be open to opposing unanimously supported files from the department if there is clear evidence in the file as to why a merit is not warranted.



COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PERSONNEL

February 26, 2021

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Yinsheng Wang, Chair *Yinsheng Wang*
Committee on Academic Personnel

Re: Proposal for a Dean's Final Merit Delegation at UCR

CAP discussed the VPAP's proposal on dean's final merit delegation. CAP recognizes the intention of the proposal to achieve cost savings and to enable more rapid decisions on faculty members' normal merit advances. CAP also appreciates the more detailed analysis provided by VPAP of the ways how other UC campuses handle similar situations and of the potential number of merit cases that might be affected by the proposed action. It is, however, not clear to CAP to what extent the proposed changes would solve the issues raised and whether the potential benefits would outweigh the pitfalls outlined below. Moreover, CAP would like to learn more about the results from VPAP's formal consultations about this issue with department chairs and deans.

CAP would like to reiterate the value of its review of merit and promotion files. Owing to concerns about confidentiality, privacy and fairness, CAP appears to be a mysterious committee about whose processes the campus knows little; nevertheless, CAP would like to note the importance of its role. In particular, CAP's review of merit and promotion files constitutes a very important component in the career advancement of faculty in the campus community and a key element of shared governance, where faculty peers, not administrators, are central to the assessment of faculty performance.

CAP is responsible for maintaining standards and equity for merit and promotion of faculty across the entire campus. To do so, CAP evaluates files that are grouped by similar action and recommendation for rank/step across all disciplines. This ensures a fair evaluation of evidence in a file based on consistent criteria and helps ensure equity across the campus.

When reviewing individual files, CAP evaluates substantive issues of academic life and research output based on observations of trends and/or recurring features. In that process, CAP tries to understand and takes into consideration different expectations in the three areas of review across various fields and departments. Research and creative activities can appear in various formats and mature at different rates. In some rapidly evolving fields, peer-reviewed journal publications may not carry as much weight as conference presentations, and the average time to publication may be much longer in some fields than others. Moreover, multi-disciplinary and collaborative research has become the norm in many fields, where a single research problem may require different technologies/approaches and involve multiple faculty members. Thus, it can be challenging to gauge an individual faculty member's contribution to research.

Evaluating normal on-time, one-step merit files is helpful to CAP in understanding the level of expectations for a given field and assists the committee in identifying whether a candidate's performance is above the bar. Such evaluations also allow CAP to better understand the expectations of engagement for different levels of the professoriate and to balance recommendations among files. By thus comparing peers from across the campus, CAP can elevate faculty beyond the recommendations of departments and deans.

Given CAP's contribution to the review process for merit and promotion files as explained above, the committee has noted some potential pitfalls of the proposed dean's final merit delegation that may need further consideration:

- 1) CAP reviews files within the boundaries set by the Call. The review of all files by CAP provides a wide purview of the entire campus; this allows for better fairness and consistency in merit/promotion reviews. Faculty in some departments may be more generous in supporting their colleagues than those in others, which may create inequality in merit advancement across different departments.
- 2) The analysis provided by the VPAP showed that ~approximately 8% of merit files with unanimous support at the department and college levels received negative recommendations by CAP. This result indicates that not a small number of cases will be impacted by the new policy.
- 3) There were multiple occasions where, after review, CAP recommended a higher step for merit advancement or additional off-scale for those files that received unanimous support for a normal merit at the department and dean levels. The proposed changes would eliminate the possibility of such recommendations.
- 4) Some CAP members felt that a delegation of final merit decision to the deans would erode the spirit of shared governance.
- 5) The majority of cases for normal, one-step merits involve Assistant Professors. With the new policy, these junior faculty members may not obtain (adequate) feedback from CAP before they submit their appraisal and tenure files.
- 6) Complications in merit and promotion files due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as well as the change of senior campus leadership (i.e., the appointment of the new provost) raise additional concerns.

While CAP is open to further discussing the changes outlined in VPAP's proposal, the committee would like to offer suggestions for consideration, more specifically about imposing some restrictions:

- 1) Restrict the new policy to those normal merit files that receive unanimously positive vote at the department level and have the dean's support. In addition, the file should have votes from at least 75% of eligible voting members in the department.
- 2) Limit those merit files involving merit advancement at or below the rank of Full Professor, Step V.
- 3) A large majority of CAP members suggest that, for those files meeting the requirements described in 1) and 2), we follow a process implemented at UC Irvine, where deans have final merit delegation for all regular merit advancements, and CAP reviews every other merit at or above the rank of Associate Professor. A small minority of CAP members, however, felt that this is not necessary.

CAP appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on this proposal and looks forward to continued conversations with the administration before a decision has been made or any changes implemented.