DATE: September 10, 2019

TO: Faculty and Student Policy Committee
    Academic Senate

cc: PAC
    Department Chairs

FROM: Debra S. Larson, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: RTP Observations from 2018-19 and Request for Consideration to FPPP

For the past two years, I have asked the faculty by way of the Academic Senate’s Faculty and Student Policy (FASP) Committee to consider clarifying and enhancing certain elements of the FPPP (Faculty Personnel Policies and Procedures). I have also asked departments and colleges to apply the FPPP more consistently. As a result, this year’s FPPP (dated 2019-20) contains changes to a number of FPPP sections. Please refer to the Office of Academic Personnel’s (OAPL) [website](#) for the current FPPP and a summary of the changes. I appreciate the care that the FASP committee has given to these past requests. This is time intensive, complicated work. Similarly, departments and colleges improved in their management of the period of review and were more mindful of the FPPP standards as applied to accelerated tenure and promotion.

I am writing today as follow-up to the 2018-19 RTP (retention, tenure, and promotion) cycle, and am asking FASP, colleges, and departments to discuss and give consideration to the items below. I offer this memo for the purpose of benefiting our faculty, because RTP clarity encourages equity and excellence.

1. **Determine if and how administrative appointments (such as serving as department chair or a unit director) should be integrated into the RTP standards.**

   Our FPPP is silent on the role of significant administrative assignments on progress towards RTP. It assumes a traditional faculty portfolio of instruction, professional growth and achievement (also referred to as professional development and scholarship), and other contributions (also referred to as service). Furthermore, our FPPP and department standards place the greatest emphasis on instructional quality, followed by professional growth and scholarship, and then service.

   If there is an agreement that these types of administrative appointments should be considered in the evaluation of accomplishments during RTP processes, then this agreement should be accompanied by associated definitions and criteria for evaluation. If, however, there is agreement that RTP is more or less confined to the traditional, non-
administrative role of faculty – as is often the case in higher education – then a statement reflecting this position should be added to the FPPP.

2. **Require a simple accounting of annual work load in the WPAF.**
   Our evaluation process is premised on the notion that all applicants carry a nearly similar distribution of workload such as 80% to instruction and 20% to professional growth and service. This assumption, however, creates uneven evaluations of scholarly productivity from across the campus as candidate workloads can be significantly different than this presumed underlying distribution of load. A case might be made that the scholarly productivity of a candidate with greater and regular release time for research and other scholarly pursuits and/or less involved teaching loads should be measured against a higher standard of scholarly productivity than a candidate who regularly carried a 12 WTU teaching load with multiple topics, large class enrollments and/or demanding experiential expectations. I encourage the FASP to discuss adding to the WPAF a table depicting AWTU, annual teaching assignments, the number of students served through instruction, and any other information to contextualize instructional workload (e.g., number of different course preps, writing intensive courses, graduate education, etc.)

3. **Promotion and tenure.**
   Our FPPP requires two sets of review documents prepared at each level of review when a candidate is applying for both promotion and tenure (FPPP 8.0.4). My observation is that the content of these reports are often identical, except for the title of the specific action. This practice, however, is not in compliance with the FPPP. The FPPP provides criteria for each evaluation (e.g. for tenure and promotion) and states that these actions are “independent personnel decisions” (FPPP 8.0.4, 10.4.4, 10.4.5). Our campus practice is out of compliance with policy, and, as such, diminishes the integrity of process. Please grapple with this FPPP requirement, and at a minimum, provide greater distinction to the two separate required actions.

   I similarly ask the FASP to develop additional FPPP language about the qualifications of the rank of Professor. The FPPP’s criteria for promotion to Professor, although improved in the FPPP 2019-20, is not robust nor does it adequately differentiate it from the criteria for promotion to Associate Professor.

4. **Other Contributions – Quality of Evidence and Evaluation.**
   Often, WPAFs are incomplete within the section of Other Contributions and read like a grocery list of committee appointments. This leaves the evaluator to guess and bring in assumptions about the scope of activities and quality of participation. FPPP 8.1.3.e.4 emphasizes that service is to be judged not only on quantity (e.g. the list), but also by the quality of service. Candidates are encouraged to include explanatory materials and evidence. Committees are encouraged to take care in providing an objective assessment of the quality of contributions. FPPP 10.3 also speaks to the quality of contributions.

   The 2019-20 FPPP combines the former third area of review, "Other Contributions to the University and Community (service)" and fourth area of review, "Contributions to Strategic Plans and Goals of the Department/Unit, College and University (which may include service activities)", into one area of review. In other words, there are now only three areas of review and comment. The new third area is entitled "Service that Contributes to the
Strategic Plans and Goals of the Department/Unit, College, and University as well as the Community (Service)” (FPPP 10.3.3).

5. **Evaluation Ratings.**
   Some of our department standards do not differentiate between ratings of superior and effective. In other cases, department rating guidelines are set lower than the definitions provided in the FPPP 10.3.3.

   Departments are often generous with acknowledgment of “works in progress.” This may be reasonable during the retention process. However, a work in progress that spans multiple years without explanatory context, begs a question about scholarly productivity, especially at the summative evaluation stages. In other words, the weight given to “works in progress” at the tenure and/or promotion stages should be minimized, and limited to only well-qualified items.

   There appears to be widespread rating inflation as evidenced by the written summaries. For example, a faculty member may receive a rating of effective, yet the associated comments will acknowledge that substantial improvements are needed. These comments suggest that a rating of adequate is more appropriate as guided by FPPP10.3.3. Similarly, a rating of superior should be reserved for when the accomplishments truly rise to the level of exceptional excellence per FPPP10.3.3. The FPPP relies on the language of “consummate professional,” or in other words “perfect”, or “faultless.” It also states that the evidence of superior is “unambiguous.” These are descriptors of exceptionality and uniqueness, and are above and beyond the achievement of “substantial competence” to which the evaluators often assign a rating of superior instead of the more appropriate rating of effective in accordance to the FPPP.

6. **Update FPPP 2.0 - Affirmative Action.**
   FPPP 2.0 uses outdated language and perspectives reflective of a previous time when our student population was traditionally-aged and predominately white. In contrast, Chico State has experienced dramatic shifts in recent years becoming a majority-minority university, receiving designation as a Hispanic Service Institution and over half of our students identifying as First Generation and Pell Grant eligible. Similarly, we are increasingly interested in the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and want to encourage practices that promote student success in our changed student body. Recognition needs to be given for activities that foster student success, improve curriculum, and encourage teacher-scholar excellence. The FPPP might highlight relevant activities such as: inclusive pedagogy, extraordinary mentoring, undergraduate research experiences, quality learning assessment practices and meaningful program and accreditation reviews, etc.

   FPPP 2.0 also refers to a University Campus Equity Council per EM 12-014, a council that may no longer exist. The Academic Senate should sort out this EM and sync it up with the newly released university strategic plan.

7. **Review Documents.**
   Department, chair, college and dean level reviews, especially during annual retention process, should provide, when warranted, suggestions for improvement. Each level of the evaluation should be conducted with independence and objectivity. Differences in review
conclusions between levels of review need to be explained. Every rating at each level of review must be accompanied by an explanation. An evaluation report of ratings with little explanation is insufficient and does not comply with the "Due Care" required by the FPPP when conducting these reviews (10.2.2., 10.3.1, 10.3.2). Furthermore, the review comments of department committees, chairs, college committees and deans need to be consistent with the language and criteria of department standards and the FPPP.

8. Department Standards.
In her role as faculty diversity officer, Dr. Michelle Morris completed in the spring of 2019 a review of 45 department personnel policies and procedures for the purpose of identifying best practices in support of recruiting and retaining a more diverse and inclusive faculty. Through this review, Dr. Morris made a number of findings important to improving our practices.

“There is great disparity across and in some cases within colleges in terms of department standards as currently written. Many have not been substantially revised for several years, several do not address lecturer evaluation and the 5-year periodic evaluation of tenured faculty, and some include sections on department chair selection and hiring committee policies, while others focus solely on RTP. Many make outdated references and/or use acronyms and terms that are not clearly defined.

The few documents that address the University Strategic Plan refer to a version before some or all of the priorities related to sustainability, civic engagement, and diversity, equity, and inclusion were added. None address the University’s HSI status and few acknowledge the increasingly diverse student populations and/or inclusive teaching and assessment practices. Few refer to campus affirmative action and non-discrimination goals.”

I agree with Dr. Morris that an important tactic for increasing workforce diversity, inclusivity, and equity are through well-constructed RTP standards that include enough detail to guide candidates, conform to community values and regulatory norms, and are concise and clearly written. Dr. Morris has provided a list of best practices in her report which is available on the OAPL website.

I ask the FASP to plan for and initiate a department standards review and update process. The FASP might consider developing a guide for departments, building upon an existing reference guide (completed in the spring of 2019) that is available on the OAPL website. It is my hope that revised standards will encourage teacher-scholar excellence that is in balance with the University’s newly released strategic priorities and enduring commitments and the practicalities of growing robust programs and departments through service, innovation, and continuous improvement.

In last year’s memo, I ended with a paragraph about what it means to me to be a member of the academe. I am repeating this missive to underscore the value of RTP and FPPP.

We are part of an honored worldwide profession. Our University tenure and promotion processes and values should reflect this global context and reach beyond a local and statewide
focus. As academics, we have had the opportunity to pursue advanced degrees in our disciplines for which we should be both grateful and humbled. Society has invested in us and subsidized our educations because it needs us to: think deeply and innovatively, push society towards greater humanity, challenge assumptions and boundaries, discover and create, and professionally disseminate insights to our students, our disciplines, and each other.

“From the beginning, therefore, the commitment to academic freedom was inextricably linked to a commitment of nurturing and enforcing the norms of an expert, professional scholarly community. More generally, the integrity of the enterprise presupposes the existence of meaningful standards of quality and professional conduct that can guide decision making within the academy.”

Additional Information:

Department Standards Best Practices:  

Department Standards FPPP Reference Guide:  
https://csuchico.box.com/s/5f9ezu7ysfhzmcmxobshrfdqw6n05yd

Office of Academic Personnel’s Website on Department Standards:  
https://www.csuchico.edu/oapl/faculty-development/department-standards.shtml

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