

February 8, 2021

Shane White, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: Systemwide Item for Review: Faculty Salary Scales Task Force Report and Recommendations

Dear Chair White,

At its meeting on January 25, 2021, the Council on Planning and Budget (CPB) had an opportunity to review and discuss the Faculty Salary Scales Task Force Report and Recommendations.

Members offered the following comments:

The report implies that UC is a homogenous institution, when in reality it is composed of very different campuses, located in distinct areas, populated by very different faculties facing dramatically different living costs. This is a cause of inevitable tension. Members appreciated that the report acknowledged the variance in housing costs across campuses, but worried that the limited solutions proposed were vague and likely impractical.

Members stated that our campus is lagging behind compared to our counterparts outside the UC system. Changing the scale would not fix that problem. Several faculty criticized what they considered to be an under-appreciation of the variation in salaries across fields. The scales system recognizes those differences to a degree by establishing several scales, but those several scales are clearly not sufficient to accommodate the contemporary variation in market competitiveness across the many fields. Members specifically questioned how professional schools such as Medicine and Law are expected to remain competitive without competitive salaries. Members stressed that disciplines are unique and not easily comparable in terms of salaries.

Changing the off-scale compensation does not eliminate concerns about bias. Administrators would still make decisions—which could be seen as arbitrary and biased—whether conscious or unconscious. The single largest benefit of having scales is having predictability. This proposal would only work if the points in section III (“Findings”) are addressed. As a campus, we would need to see detailed data and not only averages. How this will play out at UCLA? What would this mean at a campus and at a systemwide level? Would it have an effect on recruitment and retention? This is ultimately hard to interpret and assess without UCLA-specific data.

Members noted that the task force did not include UCLA representatives. There may also be equity differences that may be difficult to explore and could be masking a challenge that we are facing as an organization and university. Members suggested simulating for diverse populations.

Because the report indicated that nearly all faculty salaries in the UC system are already off-scale, the main benefit of the scale is no longer to set salaries, but rather to offer a predictable sense of the rate at which salaries will increase if faculty perform well. The proposal to revise these scales (along with a proposal by UCLA Vice Chancellor of Academic Personnel to systematically reduce off-scale salary percentages) threaten to undermine this predictability to the detriment of faculty welfare.

If you have any questions for us, please do not hesitate to contact me at groeling@comm.ucla.edu or via the Council's analyst, Elizabeth Feller, at efeller@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Groeling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Groeling, Chair
Council on Planning and Budget

cc: Jody Kreiman, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Academic Senate
Michael Meranze, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
Elizabeth Feller, Principal Policy Analyst, Council on Planning and Budget
Members of the Council on Planning and Budget