

April 23, 2021

Emily A. Carter
UCLA Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Re: Proposal for Modified “Off-Scale” Salary Components

Dear Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Carter,

At its meeting on April 1, 2021, the Executive Board of the UCLA Academic Senate discussed VCAP Levine’s Proposal for Modified “Off-Scale” Salary Components. In that meeting, members appreciated the responsiveness of VCAP Levine in particular and the administration in general to feedback provided by Senate bodies. Per your letter of March 22, 2021, we understood that the proposal will be delayed for at least one year during which VC Levine will work with a new committee, the Off-Scale Salary Advisory Committee, as well as the appropriate committees of the Academic Senate, to begin to redesign guidelines for determining off-scale components of faculty compensation with the intent of improving equity. In this context, members wanted to provide high-level feedback from their own deliberation on the subject.

In brief, we concluded:

- Efforts to improve equity and standardization of off-scale salary components are most laudable.
- The long term solution to the use of substantial off-scale salary components and consequent inequities is to bring the base scales closer to market, our peer comparators. Thus, salaries would be more largely determined by our unequaled peer-driven career-long merit review system than by one-on-one negotiations.
- A linkage of any reduction in off scales to a commitment to restore the base scales is extremely important.
- There is some value to making off-scale salaries naturally deflate over time, such that early career off-scale decisions are not permanently enshrined in salaries, especially when they perpetuate inequities or fail to recognize differences in performance over time.
- There does not appear to be a clearly-articulated financial targets for savings. This makes it difficult to determine whether the VCAP’s proposal is necessary, or if a less-extreme change might prove sufficient.
- The now tabled proposal has produced strong backlash among faculty and seems almost certain to create additional costs in terms of retention, faculty dissatisfaction, and equity concerns.
- It is unclear as to whether the marginal savings from such a proposal would outweigh the potential costs and risks associated with that plan—especially over the next decade, when potential savings would be relatively small

- As Prof Jeffrey Lewis' simulator shows, the recent change (from consistently maintaining off-scales, to maintaining off-scale salaries only at advancement) has already produced major savings and has not produced similar backlash, equity concerns, or perceived pressure to seek outside offers.¹

We hope that these points will be considered in the formulation of a new proposal.

Sincerely,



Shane White
Chair
UCLA Academic Senate

Cc: Ali Behdad, Chair Council on Academic Personnel, UCLA Academic Senate
April de Stefano, Executive Director, UCLA Academic Senate
Tim Groeling, Chair Council of Planning and Budget, UCLA Academic Senate
Jody Kreiman, Vice Chair/Chair Elect, UCLA Academic Senate
Michael Levine, Vice Chancellor, Academic Personnel
Huiying Li, Chair Faculty Welfare Committee, UCLA Academic Senate
Michael Meranze, Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
Members of the Executive Board

¹ Our discussion relied heavily on a "Salary System Simulator Dashboard" (<https://jblewis.shinyapps.io/salary/>) created by Prof. Jeff Lewis. The simulator helped us more clearly compare the VCAP's salary proposal to a prior off-scale system (which maintained the off-scales at every action) and the more recent status quo (which only maintains the off-scale percentage at advancement)