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Council of Chairs Meeting, June 18, 2012 - Proposals for New Faculty Hiring

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Council of Chairs Proposals for New Faculty Hiring

One of the most important, yet time consuming, activities for Departments is the hiring of tenure-track faculty. While Chairs recognize that there are legal and institutional rules that must be addressed, we believe that there are a number of changes to the current system that could improve the process while not significantly increasing the workload outside of Departments or exposing the university to additional liability. We recommend that a number of procedural changes be made to facilitate the process of hiring new tenure-track faculty and would like to work with Academic Affairs and Human Resources in developing htem. Three classes of comments appear repeatedly in recommendations made by individual chairs:

i) **The speed of the process must be increased**. Chairs find the current process frustratingly slow. Documents sent out for approval frequently take weeks for approval. In the vast majority of cases, those documents are approved without revision.

ii) **Tracking documents electronically would aid the process**. Documents leave Department offices and are sometimes delayed or lost. The process of finding them is time consuming. Knowing where a document was last signed would speed the process in many cases.

iii) **Known, standard operating rules would simplify the process**. Different Departments and Colleges are told different rules and regulations. While we realize there are times where waivers of rules should occur, having a set of standard operating rules would be greatly appreciated. That list should also identify the office that is responsible for the rule so that when waivers or modifications are needed, Chairs and Deans know where to make the request.

Proposals

1) *Set the initial deadline for submitting requests to August 1*. Some disciplines have hiring windows in which the best candidates are available. Delaying the initial deadline also can cause problems if a second or third round of interviews is required. Beginning the process of considering requests for new faculty on September 30 is too late.

2) *Approval for the position should come with approval to advertise*. This would save a step and probably a week or more. The advertisement could be submitted with the position request to facilitate this suggestion.

3) *Shorten the time between submission of the Proposed Appointment Form and the generation of the offer letter to no more than 1 week*. Many Departments report having lost candidates because this process can take over a month.

4) *Allow Departments to select candidates with fewer boxes checked off on the Proposed Appointment Form*. A rigid check-off system does not allow for how the candidates interview. We request the right to provide a written justification for selecting candidates with fewer points over those with more.

5) *Allow Departments to rank order candidates on the Proposed Appointment Form and have multiple candidates approved*. When a Department's first choice declines, it would immediately move to its second choice without having to resubmit paperwork through university channels.

6) *Have permission to contact references for additional information*. We may not contact references despite the fact that the vast majority will say that we may contact them. While

not a common desire, there are times where clarifying issues would help Departments make decisions on whether or not to site interview candidates.

7) ***Allow Departments to discuss salaries or salary ranges with candidates prior to onsite visits***. Many Departments report having lost candidates either onsite or when an offer is made because the salary is too low. Not being able to eliminate these candidates early wastes both time and money.

8) ***Develop an online system to submit and track the progress of documents through the approval process***. This would allow Chairs to quickly identify the location of documents when delays occur. Each document that Departments submit would have the list of approvers online. Each approver should have a back-up identified because sometimes the approver is on vacation and this adds to delays.

9) ***HR and AA should produce a document listing all rules and expectations regarding the hiring process***. For example, hiring foreign nationals has special rules and those should be made known at the very beginning of the process. This document should include information on <u>all</u> common activities and problems and should be updated annually. Someone in HR and AA should be designated to take suggestions for updates.

10) ***Publish a list of acceptable responses for the Applicant Flow Data sheets***. Most candidates that are unacceptable are rejected for a very limited number of reasons. Having a pre-approved list would save time in having to re-write the reasons.

11) ***Establish a way to address potential spouse hires as early in the process as possible***. Waiting until candidate raises the issue after an offer is made is increasingly a problem. The reason for this is that the university has hiring procedures that must be followed, but candidates expect that positions will be made available in 1-2 weeks. This results in a (near) 100% turn-down rate.

12) ***Allow flexabiity for some preliminary off-site interviewing***. For several disciplines interviewing candidates at national meetings is standard practice. Among those departments that seek to do off-site interviewing at national meetings, there is some disagreement over the need for the entire Search Committee to be present at such interviews. The Council of Chairs would appreciate more information on this issue and a discussion to develop a process that complies with the law and university policies while meeting our hiring needs.

As described earlier, the purpose of this document is to recommend procedural changes to improve the process of new faculty hires. Nonetheless, many chairs mentioned, and all believe, that attracting better faculty will ultimately require higher starting salaries. Unfortunately the lack of regular raises for existing faculty leads to salary compression that prevents higher starting salaries without inversion of existing faculty. The long term history of the university not correcting inversions in a timely fashion makes Departments reluctant to follow that path.