

# Memo

**To:** Dr. Tayloe Harding, Interim Provost  
**From:** Dr. Bethany A. Bell, Chair, Faculty Welfare Committee  
**cc:** Dr. Mark Cooper, Faculty Senate Chair  
**Date:** January 6, 2020  
**Re:** Merit Raise Process Recommendations



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Thank you for consulting the Faculty Welfare Committee regarding faculty compensation. As you know, the Faculty Manual (page 12) specifically charges the committee to “consider ... faculty salaries, other compensation and benefits, and any matters affecting the workplace environment” and “to comment upon proposed university action affecting faculty welfare.”

The committee greatly appreciates the commitment, expressed by both you and the president, to make faculty compensation more equitable and competitive through a compression (or market-equity) exercise as well as a merit raise for tenure-line faculty. We further appreciate your willingness to seek a merit raise package for non-tenure track faculty, who have been excluded from past compression exercises.

After deliberation, we recommend the following principles for the merit raise component. Please note our advice would differ if asked to recommend a regular annual-review based system of merit evaluation. The following suggestions recognize, first, that this is a one-time exercise after a long period in which no systematic merit raises have been given and, second, that the precise timeline to develop merit recommendations is unpredictable and may be short.

For both of these reasons, however, we underscore that to be considered fair and legitimate, the merit exercise must be conducted transparently and in the spirit of peer review. In addition, because the annual review process and criteria differ across units on campus, the merit exercise should not be added to a unit’s annual review. However, a unit may decide that past annual reviews may inform merit decisions.

For tenure-line faculty, we recommend:

- Faculty become eligible for merit raises after their third year of employment. All faculty, regardless of years of employment, should receive equal consideration for retention offers.
- For the purposes of this merit exercise, the evaluation period should not be fewer than three years.
- Tenure-unit heads (for departmentalized colleges, chairs; in non-departmentalized colleges, deans) should develop criteria for merit recommendations in consultation with a committee comprising equal numbers of faculty of each rank (assistant, associate, and full professor) in

their unit. This may be a standing committee or an ad hoc committee assembled for this purpose.

- This merit exercise should favor rank and file faculty over those receiving supplements for administrative service, particularly when that service has been long standing and relatively well compensated. Deans should develop written criteria for faculty in administrative roles who report to them (chairs, directors, assistant deans, and associate deans) in consultation with at least two faculty members not currently serving in any administrative role that reports to the dean.
- Criteria should:
  - distinguish outstanding, excellent, good, fair, and unacceptable performance (criteria may reference unit tenure and promotion guidelines but are not required to do so)
  - respect and reflect faculty members' assignments of duties (research, teaching, and service should be given proportional weight in evaluation)
  - specify the term of review if greater than three years
  - make explicit any factors that may qualify or limit determinations of merit (e.g., if the unit intends not to consider for the highest level of merit faculty awarded competitive counter-offers within the past three years)
  - recommend how merit should be apportioned by rating (e.g., those deemed "outstanding" should receive twice the supplement as those deemed "excellent," with those deemed "good" receiving no merit raise) with the understanding that ratings of "fair" and "unacceptable" are not eligible for merit raises.
- In advance of evaluating faculty for merit raises, unit heads should present the criteria to faculty in their units, their dean (if applicable), and the provost; deans should present criteria for faculty administrators to all faculty in their colleges and to the provost.
- Unit heads should rate faculty in their units according to the criteria; for jointly appointed faculty, the head of the non-tenure unit shall be given the opportunity to review and respond to the rating.
- Funds available should be differentially distributed based on the rating, i.e., a record judged "outstanding" should receive a larger raise than a record judged "excellent"
- Units will report all faculty ratings to the Office of the Provost, along with the recommended amount of merit raise for each faculty member, expressed as a percentage of base salary.
- Faculty undergoing tenure and promotion review should be rated, and a portion of the merit pool funds should be held back to provide merit increases commensurate with that rating upon successful promotion.
- Faculty who believe they have not been treated fairly should be allowed to grieve decisions through the formal grievance process, based on the unit criteria used for merit raise consideration.
- As the relative size of the compression and merit pools becomes known, the Office of the Provost should tune each package in relation to the other. For example, were the compression pool large relative to the merit pool such that the compression exercise could bring tenure-line faculty to 90% of national averages regardless of merit, this might argue for a steep merit curve, limiting merit to those deemed "excellent" or better. In contrast, a less-well-funded compression exercise that brought tenure-line faculty to 80% of national averages might call for a shallower merit curve, one that distributed some award to "good" performance while rewarding "excellent" and "outstanding" performance more highly. Faculty Welfare should be consulted regarding such decisions as the size of the pools becomes clear.

- The process of developing criteria and rating faculty should begin as soon as the existence of a merit pool is certain, notwithstanding uncertainty over the details of distribution.

For nontenure track faculty, we recommend:

- The merit exercise should reflect that there is no compression component for non-tenure track faculty, and that long-serving nontenure track faculty have been overlooked in the past decade of compression adjustments.
- Faculty become eligible for merit raises after their third year of employment.
- For the purposes of this merit exercise, the evaluation period should not be fewer than three years.
- Each unit shall constitute a merit review committee of at least three members, with adequate representation of unit non-tenure track faculty, to develop criteria.
- Criteria should:
  - distinguish outstanding, excellent, good, fair, and unacceptable performance
  - respect and reflect faculty members' assignments of duties (research, teaching, and service should be given proportional weight in evaluation); nontenure track serving in administrative roles should be eligible for merit and the criteria should encompass such duties as needed
  - specify the term of review if greater than three years
  - make explicit any factors that may qualify or limit determinations of merit
  - recommend how merit should be apportioned (e.g., those deemed "outstanding" should receive twice the supplement as those deemed "good"), with the understanding that ratings of fair and unacceptable are not eligible for merit raises
- In advance of evaluating faculty for merit raises, unit heads should present the criteria to faculty in their units, their dean (if applicable), and the provost.
- Unit heads should rate faculty in their units according to the criteria; every non-tenure track faculty member with a rating of good or better should receive a merit raise.
- Funds available should be differentially distributed based on the rating, i.e., a record judged "outstanding" should receive a larger raise than a record judged "excellent," with preference given to the units' recommendations regarding distributions. However, the Office of Provost should reserve the right to normalize the distribution formula to ensure equity across units if necessary.
- Units will report all non-tenure track faculty ratings to the Office of the Provost, along with the recommended amount of merit raise for faculty member, expressed as a percentage of base salary.
- Faculty undergoing promotion review should be rated, and a portion of the merit pool funds should be held back to provide merit increases commensurate with that rating upon successful promotion.
- Faculty who feel the criteria have been unfairly applied must be free to appeal the judgement of the committee without fear of reprisal.
- The process of developing criteria and rating faculty should begin as soon as the existence of a merit pool is certain, notwithstanding uncertainty over the details of distribution.