ACTION NEEDED: CLARIFY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REQUESTING TO REPLACE RETIRING FACULTY AND REQUESTING NEW FACULTY POSITIONS
Geoffrey Dyer, March 9, 2017

Overview

Changes to the timeline for ranking new position requests, disparities in the time at which preliminary decisions about faculty hiring are known, uncertainty about when faculty retirements are announced, and inconsistency between the Academic Senate’s new faculty position request ranking process and actions to endorse replacing retiring faculty have made it difficult to determine the senate’s official position on where the institution should allocate hiring resources when faculty retirements have been announced subsequent to the senate already providing the superintendent/president with recommendations for new faculty. A widespread belief that retiring faculty would be automatically replaced has contributed to the senate treating new faculty requests and replacement of retiring faculty as separate matters, but from the perspective of applying resources for hiring appropriately, the issues are interrelated. The senate needs to act to clarify its preferences and processes for replacing retiring faculty and to clarify the relationship between these requests and requests for new faculty members. The process should be redesigned in a manner that promotes examination of existing needs through program review, acknowledges budgetary and external factors, and promotes prompt hiring of full time faculty whenever resources are available to do so.

Based on my understanding of the concerns expressed at the February 6 and March 6 Senate-of-the-whole meetings, and the February 15 Academic Senate Council meeting, I recommend that we adopt one of the following three courses of action, my personal preference being the first:

1. Integrate ranking of retiring faculty position requests into the process for ranking new faculty position requests. Move ranking process to January. (I have authored resolution for this)
2. Allow divisions with retiring faculty to recommend an appropriate replacement position to administration, independent of new faculty position requests. Request that administration fill these positions within a maximum of one year, when sufficient resources are available.
3. Recommend that retiring faculty are consistently replaced with another full-time, tenure-track faculty position within one year, when sufficient resources are available.

These proposals are mutually exclusive—we cannot choose more than one. Clarifying our own processes, needs, and position better enables administration to act with assurance that the senate’s voice has been heard. Additionally, I recommend that we request preliminary, tentative information about the possible number of new and replacement faculty for the following year from administration by December 1 of each year to inform our planning.

Institutional Context and Statewide Context

Until recently, many members of the senate operated under the assumption that retiring faculty were automatically replaced, as this had often—but not always—been the practice. As a result, the senate’s new faculty position request ranking process has not included replacing retiring faculty since its inception in January of 2012, at which time the number of new positions authorized by administration
was known in advance of ranking new position requests, and the senate voted to replace most retiring positions that year, giving those positions higher rank than any new requests. Upon learning of another retirement after receiving new faculty position requests, the senate voted to replace most retiring positions that year, giving those positions higher rank than any new requests, indicating a flexibility in the process and the relationship between replacing retiring faculty and creating new faculty positions. In some subsequent cases, faculty replacing retirees would have a different disciplinary assignment within their division than the retired faculty whom they replaced. However, not all retired faculty have been replaced, and the institution’s ability to dedicate funding to faculty positions is dictated by a variety of variables.

Total Full Time Equivalent Faculty (FTEF) is an important factor in determining our Full Time Faculty Obligation (FON) from the Chancellor’s Office. In times of growth of FTES, the FON can increase, but only if sufficient resources in the state budget exist. Title 5 dictates that “By November 20 of each fiscal year the Board of Governors shall determine whether funds provided for cost-of-living adjustment, less any net reductions to the programs and allocations specified in subsection (b), are adequate to allow full or partial implementation” of an increase to districts’ base FON (§ 51025). “However, increases in the FON in times of growth are reversed in times of revenue decline. Consequently, since the creation of the FON, the percentage of instruction provided by full-time faculty in the system has decreased rather than increased and progress has not been achieved toward the system’s 75% goal” (Bruno, Duncan, Serrano et al.). Local budgeting concerns and prioritization of resources for purposes other than hiring faculty also impact the institution’s ability to dedicate resources to faculty positions.

The necessity of full-time faculty to provide quality instruction and attend to academic programs is documented in AB 1725, Section 4(b) (see page 11), and supported by a wealth of research (numerous examples in ASCCC Rostrum article). While no one disputes the necessity and importance of full time faculty, the senate should acknowledge that the institution’s ability to dedicate funding to faculty positions is contingent on many variables. Clarifying the senate’s own position and process for recommending replacements of retiring faculty and the relationship between these recommendations and ranked new faculty position requests will assist administration in making a final determination about which new positions and replacement positions should be filled.

Possible Courses of Action

Option 1: Integrate ranking of retiring faculty position requests into process for ranking new faculty position requests. Move ranking process to January. If a late retirement is announced after the presentation of new faculty requests, evaluate the replacement faculty request, at the Chair’s discretion, alongside the highest ranked new faculty position requests to determine if a change in ranking is appropriate—this provision can only be applied if the District has not already announced openings based on allocated resources and previous ranking of faculty position requests.

- Allows for evaluation of retiring positions, in the broader context of institution-wide resource requests
- Uses existing process of ranking new faculty position requests
- Integrates planning
- Preliminary data about possibility of new positions become available in late November
- Aligns with completion of Annual Program Reviews, so data are current and program review informs planning
• Does not account for late retirees who announce their retirement subsequent to the superintendent/president’s announcement of which positions will be filled the following year
• Has potential to slow the hiring process and augment the length of time a position is vacant
• Replacing retiring faculty and hiring new faculty are not possible when resources are not available

**Option 2: Allow Divisions with retiring faculty to recommend an appropriate replacement position to administration, independent of new faculty position requests. Request that administration fill these positions within a maximum of one year, when sufficient resources are available.**

• Promotes stability within divisions
• Allows latitude to determine greatest need for instruction, within a division
• Includes examination of disciplines list to determine multiple disciplines qualified by same degree
• Prohibits replacement of retiring faculty from one division with a position in a different division
• Does not clarify if replacement faculty positions are granted precedence to new position requests
• If resources are not available, position cannot be refilled

**Option 3: Recommend that retiring faculty are consistently replaced with another full-time, tenure-track faculty position within one year.**

• Seeks to maintain number of full time faculty
• Does not delineate process of determining appropriate replacement position
• Does not rank the replacement alongside new faculty position requests
• If resources are not available, position cannot be refilled

**Separate Resolution: Request that Administration inform the Academic Senate by Dec. 1 of adjustments to FON and projected, tentative number of new faculty positions for following year.**

• Basic preliminary information, such as the number of possible new or replacement positions for the following year, informs the senate’s planning and division chairs’ determination of how many position requests, and of what nature, to put forward
• May marginally accelerate hiring process
• Requires significant budget work and reporting in late November
• Actual number of new or replacement positions will differ from projected number, due to the state budget, unknowns, and external factors

Please review these options and make your reactions known to your Academic Senate Council representative. If you are interested in pursuing option 2 or 3, please work with your Academic Senate Council representative to author and submit a resolution. [A resolution advocating option 1 and a separate resolution requesting preliminary information from administration are being submitted for consideration at the March 15 Academic Senate Council Meeting].