



OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST -
ACADEMIC PERSONNEL AND PROGRAMS

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
1111 Franklin Street, 10th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200

March 28, 2024

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLORS/PROVOSTS
ACADEMIC COUNCIL CHAIR JAMES STEINTRAGER

Dear Colleagues:

In response to the ongoing disruptions that the COVID-19 pandemic caused to University of California faculty members and at the direction of President Drake, then-Provost and Executive Vice President (EVP) Michael T. Brown convened the Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working Group (MCIF-WG) in April 2021. The MCIF-WG, which consisted of 17 Senate-Administration representatives from across all campuses, reviewed the 21 recommendations issued by the Academic Council in January 2021 to mitigate negative effects of the pandemic on UC faculty. The MCIF-WG submitted its final report to President Drake in April 2022.

In May 2022, then-Provost/EVP Brown distributed the final report for systemwide review. Following consideration of systemwide feedback, then-Provost/EVP Brown supported a proactive intervention strategy to prevent further disruptions to the scholarly programs of UC faculty. As part of this intervention strategy, each campus was asked to develop programs to support faculty and to incorporate Achievement Relative to Opportunities (ARO) principles in the academic personnel review process. Simultaneously, President Drake directed then-Provost/EVP Brown to appoint a Senate-Administration Working Group to develop systemwide guidelines on how to equitably assess acceptable levels of performance and apply ARO principles, while maintaining both flexibility for local implementation and ensuring communication in accordance with principles outlined in the 2022 MCIF-WG Final Report.

In January 2023, Provost and Executive Vice President Katharine Newman charged my office with fulfilling President Drake's directive. I appointed and convened the ARO Principles Working Group, which included 16 Senate-Administration members representing all ten campuses. The ARO Principles Working Group met between May and October 2023. Using the MCIF-WG Final Report as a point of departure for its deliberations, the ARO Principles Working Group considered whether the application of ARO principles should entail exercising flexibility in the review process versus adjusting or relaxing review standards in recognition of disruptive external circumstances. Such disruptive circumstances extend beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and could include natural disasters, labor strikes, or other unforeseen developments that occur at the collective or individual level. The ARO Principles Working Group also endeavored to balance the goal of developing consistent, systemwide guidelines with the need to maintain flexibility at the departmental level.

The Final Report of the ARO Principles Working Group contains four recommendations, all of which I support:

Recommendation 1: Locations should raise awareness that reasonable adjustments are possible in the academic personnel review process for faculty impacted by external circumstances.

In addition to continuing current programs and policies that support faculty experiencing career interruptions and other disruptive circumstances, each campus should consider and implement any additional initiatives, consistent with local practices, that heighten awareness about UC programs, policies, and resources that further work-life integration. In collaboration with the Divisional Senate, each campus should develop a communication strategy to educate faculty and reviewers that reasonable adjustments may be applied during normal advancement and, to a more limited degree, career reviews, subject to the expectations of individual departments and disciplines.

Section 210 of the Academic Personnel Manual (APM) already provides a basis for the application of reasonable adjustments by reviewers. It was a task of the ARO Principles Working Group to assess the degree to which ARO principles should build upon existing policy by allowing faculty to advance when external circumstances have limited their opportunities for achievement. As members of the ARO Principles Working Group acknowledge, it is the role of departments to articulate to reviewing bodies the standards for merits and promotions. Each campus should engage departments in considering how to apply and customize these standards to various circumstances during normal merit reviews and career reviews.

Recommendation 2: Locations should provide additional support to faculty impacted by external circumstances.

The ARO Principles Working Group recommended that each campus should provide faculty members impacted by disruptive circumstances with avenues of additional support that are consistent with local practices. These could include the use of impact statements, temporary relief from service or teaching obligations, or, in accordance with Section 133 of the APM, the provision of additional time through extension of the tenure clock. Campuses should develop and apply supportive mechanisms that yield similar outcomes in review cases involving similar disruptive circumstances.

Recommendation 3: Locations should develop template language for inclusion in letters to external referees, which will signal to referees that the campus applies ARO principles to the academic personnel review process.

As an additional means of demonstrating the University's commitment to supporting faculty negatively impacted by disruptive circumstances, each campus should partner with the Divisional Senate to develop language for inclusion in solicitation letters to external reviewers. The Final Report of the ARO Principles Working Group provides sample template language that campuses can adopt to signal UC's institutional commitment to ARO principles.

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Recommendation 4: Locations should develop processes for assessing the application of ARO principles at the campus level.

The Final Report of the ARO Principles Working Group applauds the efforts of individual locations not only in mitigating but, in many ways, overcoming the negative impact of the pandemic on UC faculty. Based on the Working Group's recommendation, I ask each campus to develop a process to evaluate progress and success in applying ARO principles to support faculty growth and success. Despite the likelihood that the most disruptive repercussions of the pandemic have passed, it will be important to continue assessing the impact of the University's efforts to help UC faculty who experience disruptive circumstances advance and thrive.

I invite campus leadership to circulate the Final Report of the ARO Principles Working Group broadly. I also request that the Academic Council share the report to each Divisional Senate. I look forward to your continued and active engagement in maintaining and expanding efforts to support UC faculty as they fulfill the vital research, teaching, clinical, and public service missions of the University.

Sincerely,



Douglas Haynes
Vice Provost
Academic Personnel and Programs

Attachment: Final Report from the Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARO) Principles Working Group

cc: President Drake
Provost and Executive Vice President Newman
Chancellors
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Nava
Executive Vice President Rubin
Senior Vice President and Chief Compliance & Audit Officer Bustamante
Director Witherell
Vice President Humiston
Vice President Maldonado
Vice Provosts/Vice Chancellors for Academic Affairs/Personnel
Academic Council Vice Chair Cheung
ARO Principles Working Group members
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