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University of California
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July 8, 2004

M.R.C. GREENWOOD
PROVOST AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Re: Report of the Professorial Step System Task Force

Dear M.R.C.:

The Academic Council received the attached report of the Professorial Step System Task Force at its June 23, 2004 meeting. The task force was appointed in January 2003 by Academic Council Chair Gayle Binion with the charge to review the placement and number of "barrier" steps within the full professor ranks, with a focus on the barrier review between Professor Step V and Professor Step VI. The Academic Council is grateful to the Task Force for its hard work and informative report, which highlighted a number of important issues that in the Council's view warrant further investigation before it is prepared to go forward with a recommendation.

The most troubling issue raised in the report was the conclusion that women and non-Asian minority groups may be disadvantaged in surmounting the barrier review for advancement to Step VI. Over the next year, the Academic Council plans to begin a careful study, in close cooperation with Administration, that will enable the collection of data over several years time to confirm or deny the suspicion that the Step VI barrier disadvantages women and non-Asian minority groups. As a first step, three members of the Academic Council have agreed to work together over the summer to propose a research plan and identify the type of data needed to carry out a study of this kind. Once that is determined, the Academic Council leadership will ask Administration to begin to collect those data and to make them available to the Senate. One problem that the Task Force faced in compiling its report was mediocre and incomplete data, which is an issue that has been discussed with Administration in the past. We are disappointed that no progress has been made in this area and hope that Administration will begin taking immediate steps to remedy this problem.

Another issue that surfaced in the report was consistency of campus practices in the implementation of CAP reviews. I have asked the division chairs to prepare and submit a report on their respective campus personnel processes. The reports will be discussed by a joint administrative-Senate workgroup formed to review and recommend on how the academic personnel process might be improved. The workgroup will meet sometime during the month of July or August.

A third area identified in the report as needing further review was the APM language describing the criteria for advancement to Step VI. As currently written, it is difficult to distinguish it from the language in the criteria for advancement to Above Scale. I have asked the University Committee on Academic Personnel (UCAP) to review and recommend language that would be more appropriate for Step VI criteria. Since the work of most of the Senate's standing committees is completed for this academic year, UCAP has agreed to make this a priority item for the 2004-05 committee.

Cordially,



Lawrence Pitts, Chair
Academic Council

Encl. 1 Report of the Professorial Step System Task Force
Copy: Academic Council

March 24, 2004

REPORT OF THE PROFESSORIAL STEP SYSTEM TASK FORCE

Executive Summary

The Professorial Step System Task Force was appointed by Academic Council Chair Gayle Binion in January 2003 with the charge to review the placement and number of special review or “barrier” steps within the full professor ranks, with particular emphasis on the barrier review between Professor Step V and Professor Step VI.

Task Force deliberations were premised on the linked convictions that the central function of any faculty performance review system at the University of California is to help the institution maintain faculty excellence, and systems which closely relate reward for performance to assessment of performance are most effective in assuring that excellence is maintained and enhanced throughout the length of a faculty career.

Central themes of Task Force discussions were informed by a variety of data closely related to the questions that were posed in our charge. We studied systemwide demographic data showing population of the full professor steps listed separately according to campus, age, gender and ethnicity as well as local campus data listing time of service of faculty at each step. Task Force members also reviewed the deliberations and recommendations of several prior groups who studied the UC personnel review system and consulted with various administrative officials who are deeply involved in the personnel review system at their home campuses.

Based on this information, the Task Force reached several conclusions relevant to the charge we were given. These conclusions are as follows:

- When Step VI was introduced in 1969, the barrier step was located near the final stage of faculty career development. Since then, Steps VII, VIII and IX have been added, moving the timing of the barrier step to a point many years removed from the final career development stage.
- Since introduction of the Step VI barrier in 1969, faculty governance through CAP participation in review of personnel cases has eroded.
- Step VI has become a true barrier to advancement on many campuses rather than a means to stimulate improvements in faculty performance.
- The “barrier” review for advancement from Step V to Step VI occurs too late in a career to assure that high quality academic achievement has been maintained throughout the extensive period between promotion to full professor and the review at Step VI.
- Step VI review guidelines are interpreted very differently across the UC campuses.
- Women and non-Asian minority groups are at a particular disadvantage in surmounting the barrier review for advancement to Step VI.

The Task Force unanimously endorsed the following recommendations:

- 1) **The special criteria associated with the review for advancement from Step V to Step VI should be eliminated.**
- 2) **The special criteria used in review for advancement from Step IX to Above-Scale should be retained.**
- 3) **All campuses should institute regular, non-delegated review of personnel cases of full professors by CAP. At least every other merit review following promotion to full professor must include a full CAP review without delegation of authority.**
- 4) **The present APM wording that guides review for advancement to Steps VII, VIII and IX should be retained. Advancement to each of these steps should be granted on evidence of continuing achievement at the level required for advancement to Step VI as modified by recommendation 1). However, the wording emphasizing the potential indefinite length of service associated with these steps as well as with Step VI should be eliminated.**
- 5) **Reviews of personnel cases for advancement to Steps II through IX should not require external letters. However, external letters may be sought at any step by prerogative of CAP, the Department or the Candidate.**
- 6) **Upon approval of these recommendations, personnel cases of those full professors who are presently at Step V should be reviewed in accordance with the normal review cycle that is presently in operation.**

Introduction

The University often discusses and periodically modifies the personnel system for professors. In 1999, the University Committee on Academic Personnel (UCAP) and the University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) began formal discussions about some disturbing patterns of data, including a disproportionate number of professors at Step V and large imbalances on selected campuses. As a result of the discussions, Academic Council Chair Gayle Binion appointed the Professorial Step System Task Force in January 2003.

The Task Force focused attention on questions regarding outcomes and effects stemming from the special status associated with the review for advancement from Step V to Step VI and whether the outcomes of review practices at this step are consistent the purposes and goals of the academic personnel system.

Task Force members began with the assumption that, by and large, the University of California's merit review system works well. Although compared to their peers, UC faculty are not among the most highly compensated, they are—as a body—among the most excellent, effective and accomplished scholars in the world.

We started the search for effective improvements by recognizing that each campus has a different culture, and it would be a mistake to attempt to impose the academic personnel operating system of any one campus on any of the other campuses. We would need to discover or devise general modifications of the merit system that could be adopted at every campus.

As the Task Force conducted its work, it became clear that the various members approached issues from different angles and sometimes held quite different opinions. The diversity of viewpoints was advantageous because all members of the Task Force agreed that our deliberations should be guided by two fundamental and multifaceted questions:

- What are the purposes and goals of the personnel review system for faculty after they have reached the rank of full professor?
- Are the outcomes and effects stemming from the special status associated with the review for advancement from Step V to Step VI consistent with these purposes and goals?

All members of the Task Force further agreed that answers to these fundamental questions would come from interpretations of patterns of data and consultation across local campuses. The Task Force gratefully acknowledges the enormous help given by staff at the Office of the President and at the campuses.

The History and Role of Barrier Steps in the Academic Personnel System

Prior to 1962, UC used a system of three professorial steps with no special barrier step. In 1962, a fourth step was added, and in 1963, a fifth step was added. In 1969, the barrier step concept was introduced for the first time with the addition of Step VI and recognition of a special set of review standards that would be used in consideration of promotion from Step V to Step VI. Additional steps were added to the professorial ranks in 1979 (step VII), 1988 (step VIII) and 2000 (step IX), but the special barrier review for advancement from step V to step VI has remained in place since it was introduced.

The wording of the standards applied in review for advancement from step V to step VI has been changed several times since Step VI was introduced. Excerpts taken from the Academic Personnel Manual summarizing the initial standards and modifications that have followed are reproduced below. New wording added in any revision is underlined. In each version an opening sentence that reads, “**Service as Professor V may be of indefinite duration,**” is included.

- 1969: Advancement to Professor VI calls for *great distinction and highly meritorious service.*
- 1985: --*great scholarly distinction and national recognition, highly meritorious service, and evidence of excellent University teaching.*
- 1987: --*great scholarly distinction and national or international recognition, highly meritorious service, and evidence of excellent University teaching.*
- 1992: --*highly distinguished scholarship, highly meritorious service, and evidence of excellent University teaching.*
- 1999: --*highly distinguished scholarship, highly meritorious service, and evidence of excellent University teaching. In interpreting these criteria, reviewers should require evidence of excellence and high merit in original scholarship or creative achievement, teaching and service and, in addition, great distinction, recognized nationally or internationally, in scholarly or creative achievement or in teaching.*

For comparison, the current wording of standards that apply to the review for advancement from Professor Step IX to Professor Above-Scale [APM 220-18-b-(04)] is included below.

“Advancement to an above-scale salary is reserved for scholars and teachers of the **highest distinction whose work has been internationally recognized and acclaimed and whose teaching performance is excellent.** Except in rare and compelling cases, advancement will not occur after less than four years at Step IX. Moreover, mere length of service and continued good performance at Step IX is not justification for further salary advancement. There must be demonstration of additional merit and distinction beyond the performance on which advancement to Step IX was based.”

Current regulations governing the professorial rank step system are found in APM 220-18-b-(04) and 200-0. The regulations most relevant to the considerations of the Task Force are summarized below.

- Normal period of service is three years in each of the first four steps.

- Service at step V may be of indefinite duration.
- Advancement to step VI usually will not occur after less than three years of service.
- Step VI will be granted on evidence of highly distinguished scholarship, highly meritorious service, and excellent University teaching.
- Reviewers should require evidence of excellence and high merit in original scholarship or creative achievement, teaching and service and, in addition, great distinction, recognized nationally or internationally, in scholarly or creative achievement or in teaching.
- Service at Professor, Step VI or higher may be of indefinite duration.
- Advancements to Step VII, VIII and IX usually will not occur after less than three years of service at the lower step.
- These steps will only be granted on evidence of continuing achievement at the level required for advancement to Step VI.
- Every faculty member shall be reviewed at least every five years.

Prior Studies of the Step V to Step VI Barrier Review Process

Throughout the history of the University, there have been numerous discussions about the academic personnel system, and various actions taken to modify it.

The Universitywide Task Force on Faculty Rewards, 1990-91

The charge of the current Task Force can be traced to the report of the Universitywide Task Force on Faculty Rewards (UTFFR) that was established in 1990 by former Senior Vice President Frazer and chaired by Professor Karl Pister. UTFFR sent its report to former President David Gardner in June 1991. The UTFFR recommendations included one that is related to later developments that led directly to the formation of the current Task Force.

- “A review occurring at about the twelfth year of service at the full professor rank should replace the current special Step VI review for Professors. Special criteria now in place for advancement to Step VI should be removed” (Recommendation 6 of the Universitywide Task Force on Faculty Rewards, Karl Pister, Chair)

The UCAP – UCFW Workgroup, 1999-00

In January and February 2000, a joint University Committee on Academic Personnel (UCAP) and University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) workgroup met to discuss the step system. The process was stimulated by UCFW concerns that the major career review at step VI comes too early and should be moved to a higher step closer to retirement, as well as systemwide data showing a disproportionate number of professorial rank faculty at Step V relative to the other nine steps. This data raised concerns about how the review for advancement from Step V to Step VI and the resulting “bulge” at Step V might be affecting the career development of faculty.

The Workgroup recommended replacement of the system of nine steps plus above-scale with a system of six steps of five-year duration and a final seventh step, equivalent to the current above-scale rank. The barrier step would be retained at a level two steps below the review for advancement to Professor Above-Scale.

The new system would reduce the number of professorial rank reviews and instate longer intervals between reviews, which would economize faculty and administrative time in the review process, give faculty additional research time to produce outcomes that could be considered as part of each review; and clarify the level of achievement that should be reached at each step.

In April 2000, UCFW unanimously supported a resolution requesting that Academic Council form a “Blue Ribbon Commission to examine and review the Professorial Ladder Step System.” In response, a Joint Senate-Administrative Salary Scale Workgroup was formed.

The Joint Senate-Administrative Salary Scale Workgroup, 2000-01

This Workgroup included four Senate members and five Administrative representatives. It began meeting in fall 2000 and completed its deliberations in May 2001.

The primary points of discussion during the Joint Workgroup deliberations included criteria for advancement, the barrier at step VI, frequency of reviews and addition of steps.

The Workgroup concentrated on two central issues: the placement and advancement criteria for Professor VI and the length of service and frequency of reviews at the full professor rank. The Workgroup confirmed a build-up of faculty at Professor Step V, and data from Davis, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz confirmed that the normal period of service at Professor Step V “was considerably longer than the normal period of service at other steps.”

The Joint Work Group discussions led to a draft report recommending that additional criteria for advancement to Professor VI should be eliminated; additional criteria for promotion to Professor Above-Scale should be retained; APM 220-18-b should be revised to add “continuous merit performance” as the standard for merit advancement; and Professor Step IX should be eliminated. Finally, the normal period at step of Professor V through VII should be normalized at 4 years, with Professor VIII being an indefinite step.

The discussions and recommendations of these two workgroups motivated Academic Council Chair Binion to appoint the current Professorial Step System Task Force.

Deliberations of the Task Force on the Professorial Step System

Summary of Task Force Studies

The Task Force met three times between April 2003 and January 2004. Members reviewed the historical development of the current professorial step system as well as the deliberations and recommendations of prior workgroups. Discussions with Assistant Vice President Switkes (member of the former Joint Senate Administrative Salary Scale Workgroup) and a report by Task Force member Robert May (member of both prior workgroups) provided detailed accounts of the pertinent discussion points of the two workgroups.

Professor May related a discussion he had with Clark Kerr about the Step VI barrier. According to Kerr, one factor leading to the introduction of the indefinite status of Step V may have been a desire to keep all UC campuses close to parity in their distribution of professorial rank faculty at a time when some campuses were rapidly increasing their numbers of Above Scale faculty.

The Task Force deliberated pro and con arguments regarding the special status of the review at Step VI at each of its meetings. Several salient discussion topics were noted as central themes throughout these deliberations. These included:

- Peer review workload
- Costs related to any proposed changes.
- Equity across gender, ethnicity and UC campus.
- Retention of excellent faculty after they have entered the professorial ranks.
- Career access to merit incentives for productive faculty.

Patterns of Data Relevant to Discussions of the Step VI Barrier

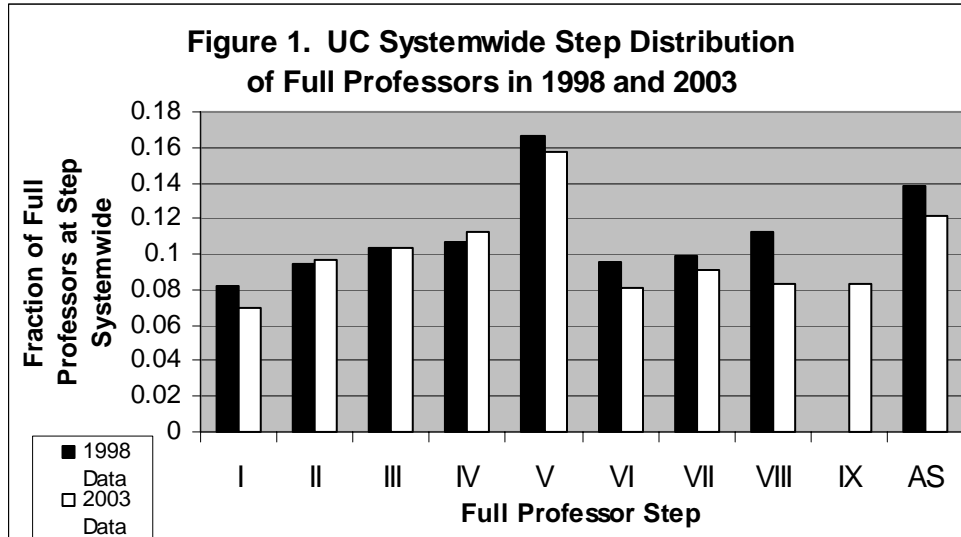
In order to address the question of whether or not the UC Professorial Step System adequately provides its faculty with career access to merit increases, the Task Force began its work by studying systemwide demographic data on the numbers and age of faculty at each step within the full professor ranks and comparing that to similar data for each of the UC campuses. The Task Force solicited additional data from several local campuses that included the length of time that faculty remained at each step, with particular focus on Professor, Step V.

The Task Force reviewed October 1998 systemwide data (used by prior workgroups) for numbers of faculty at the nine steps in use at that time (Step I – Step VIII and Above Scale). The data show a bulge in the number of faculty at Step V relative to the other professorial steps. The data for each UC campus at that time also show a substantial variation in the population numbers and percentages of faculty at each of the professorial steps. An even distribution of faculty at each of the nine professorial steps in use during 1998 would have resulted in 11.1% of all professors at each step; however, 16.7% of full professors were at Step V.

Updated systemwide data from 2003 show a small change in faculty distribution over the Professorial Rank steps plus Above Scale compared to 1998. Most of this change is probably due to the addition of Step IX, which distributed faculty over ten ranks, rather than the nine used in 1998. However, a significant bulge at Step V was still evident with 15.8% of all professors at Step V compared to an even distribution that would yield 10% at each step. The systemwide data from 1998 and 2003 are summarized in Table 1 with the number of full professors at each step, and displayed in Figure 1 as the fraction of full professors at each step.

TABLE 1. UC Systemwide Distribution of Professorial Rank Faculty at Steps

Year	Number of Professorial Rank Faculty at Step									
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	AS
1998	413	475	522	536	839	482	496	570	---	691
2003	375	518	552	600	843	431	484	443	443	654



The Task Force reviewed data that show the age distribution of faculty at each of the professorial steps. 1999 systemwide data show that the average age of faculty at Step V was 55.3 years and the median age was 56 years. A sampling of the 1999 data illustrating the distribution of several age groups at Step V is shown in Table 2.

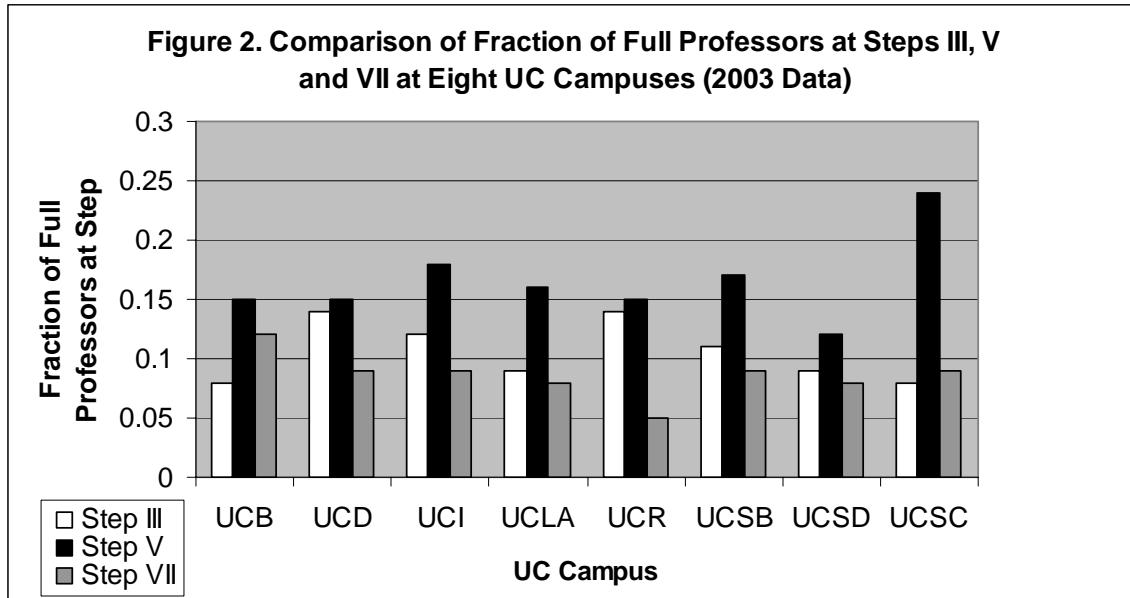
TABLE 2. UC Systemwide Age Distribution of Faculty at Step V in 1999

Age Group	Number of Faculty at Step V	Number of Faculty at All Full Professor Steps	% of Full Professors at Step V
41-45	56	579	9.7
46-50	107	890	12.0
51-55	241	1169	20.6
56-60	265	1247	21.3
61-65	129	696	18.5

The age data indicate that large numbers of UC faculty reach Step V well in advance of an anticipated retirement age. The bulge in the population of professorial rank faculty at Step V, taken together with the age data, indicate that some productive faculty are likely stalled at Step V with no opportunity for merit increases of salary unless they are granted over scale increments or are able to pass the Step VI review barrier. Our focus throughout this report will be on the age groups 51-55 and 56-60, since the combined Step V population of these two includes over 60% of the Step V full professors in the UC system.

Local UC Campus Differences.

Extending the analysis of Step V demographics to the local level, the Task Force reviewed data from 2003 for the percentage of full professors at Step V for each campus. These data are summarized in Figure 2 for eight of the UC campuses and include all age groups represented in the full professor ranks. UCSF is not included due to the special medical school orientation of the campus.



The Figure displays substantial variations in the fraction of full professors at Step V across these eight campuses. UCB, UCD, UCLA and UCR are near the systemwide average of 15.8 % of full professors at Step V. UCI, UCSB and UCSC are substantially above this average value, while UCSD is substantially below the systemwide average. Comparison of the Step III, V and VII data indicate that UCSD is also the only campus that closely approaches a uniform distribution of faculty (10% per step) across these three steps. Santa Cruz has a far greater percentage of full professors at Step V than any other campus

Further insight into the impacts of the Step VI barrier is found in data revealing the number of years Step V Professors have served at that step. Data sets obtained from Academic Personnel Offices on several campuses include the average number of years of service at Professor Step V for faculty within this rank during 2000-01 and 2002-03. They also show the number of faculty at Professor Step V who have been at this step for five years or longer. These data are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Length of Time Served at Step V for Several UC Campuses

Campus	<i>Data for 2000-01</i>			<i>Data for 2002-03*</i>		
	Number of Step V Professors	Average Years At Step V	Longer than 5 Years	Number Of Step V Professors	Average Years At Step V	Longer than 5 Years
UCI	85	5.72	42%	103	5.39	41%
UCSB	94	5.05	43%	87	6.00	49%
UCSD	97	3.76	22%	85	3.73	20%
UCSC	63	5.63	54%	67	5.90	51%

* UCI Data is for 2003-04

Table 3 indicates that at three of these four campuses, the average time at Step V is in excess of five years. The number of faculty who have been at Step V for more than five years ranges from 41% to 54% over the academic years included in the data set.

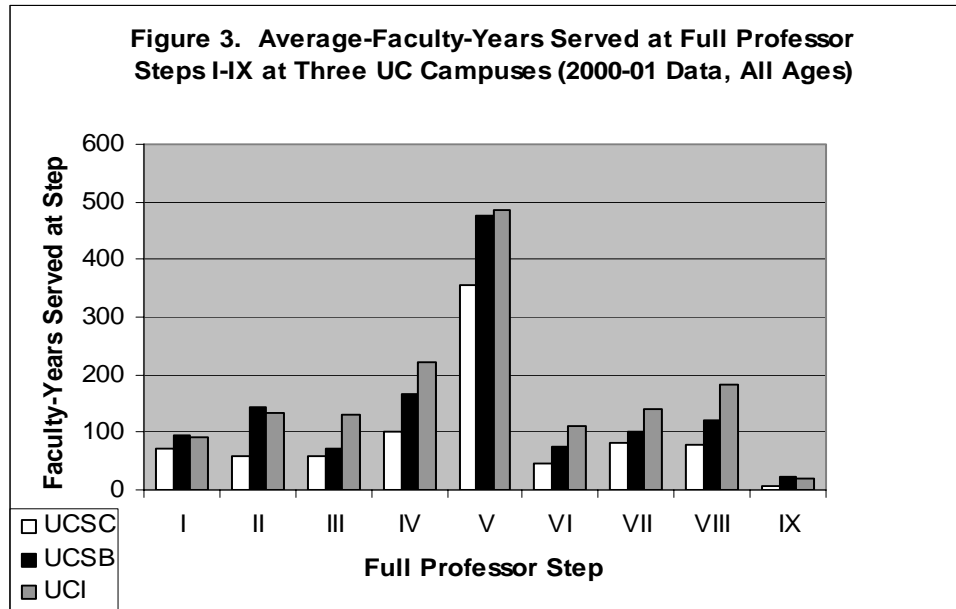
The unique demographics associated with Step V at these three campuses is illustrated by comparing the Step V data to the average time spent at several other full professor steps. Table 4 compares the Step V data with Step III and Step VII at UCI, UCSB and UCSC. The choice of Step III and Step VII for comparison is arbitrary, and other steps reveal the same general trends. Table 4 data includes the product of the number of faculty at the step times the average years at that step (average-faculty-years at step).

TABLE 4. Length of Time Served at Steps III, V, and VII from Data for 2000-01

Campus	Step	Number of Faculty	Average Years at Step	Average-Faculty-Years at Step
UCI	III	44	2.95	130
	V	85	5.72	486
	VII	44	3.16	139
UCSB	III	36	1.97	71
	V	94	5.05	475
	VII	43	2.35	101
UCSC	III	21	2.76	58
	V	63	5.63	355
	VII	28	2.86	80

Step V is distinct from the other steps both for the number of faculty at Step V and for the average number of years faculty serve at this step at these three campuses. Far more faculty years are spent at step V than at any of the other steps on the full professor ladder.

The full data set for average-faculty-years at step for the three campuses in Figure 3 shows the dominance of the number of faculty-years at Step V relative to all other full professor rank steps. At all three campuses, the number of faculty-years served at Step V is greater than the sum of all faculty-years served at Steps VI – Above Scale. The greatest differential occurs at UCSC where the total faculty years served at Steps VI-AS (210 faculty-years) is less than 60% of faculty-years at Step V (355 faculty-years). Similarly, at two of the three campuses the sum of the faculty-years served at Steps I – IV is less than the faculty-years served at Step V. The only exception occurs at UCI where faculty-years at Steps I-IV (578 faculty-years) exceeds the number of faculty years served at Step V (486 faculty-years).



Campus CAP Practices

The data showing varying percentages of professorial rank faculty at Step V from campus to campus suggest wide variation in the interpretation of the standards applicable to review at the barrier step. Extensive discussions of this topic within the Task Force and of Task Force members with campus colleagues were pursued in order to gain clarification of this point. Are the guidelines, practices and standards for review of personnel cases uniform across UC campuses? Is the Step VI review interpreted the same way across UC campuses, or are there substantive variations in the interpretation and application of standards?

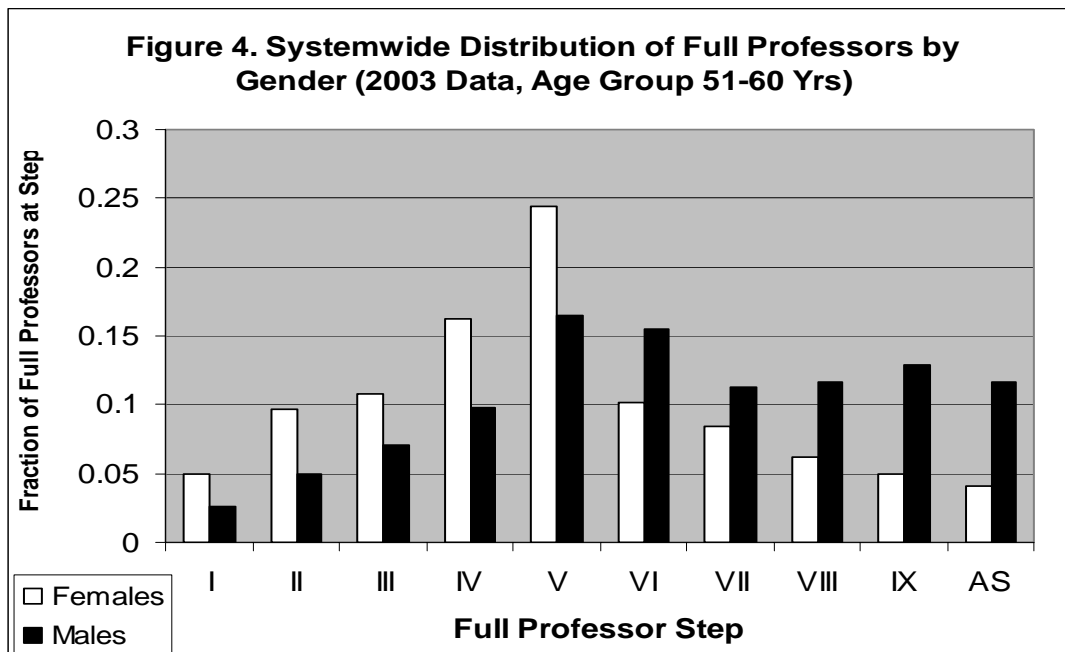
Task Force members reviewed a document—commonly called the “CAP Grid”—detailing CAP procedures at each of the campuses (University Committee on Academic Personnel Division CAP Activity Survey Compilation Sent October, 2002 for AY 2001-02). This document indicates that several general features of personnel review, as well as practices related to review at Step VI, are not uniform across campuses. The CAP Grid indicates that delegation of authority by CAP to Deans is not practiced for any steps at UCB, UCR and UCSC. However, various delegations of authority are used at UCD, UCI, UCLA, UCSD, UCSF and UCSB. With regards to Step VI advancement, final authority for approval is reserved for the Chancellor at all campuses. A few campuses utilize ad hoc committees for review at Step VI, but most do not. Most campuses seek outside letters for this review, but several do not.

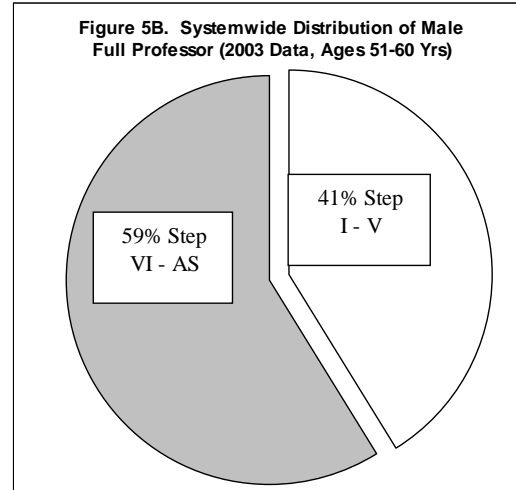
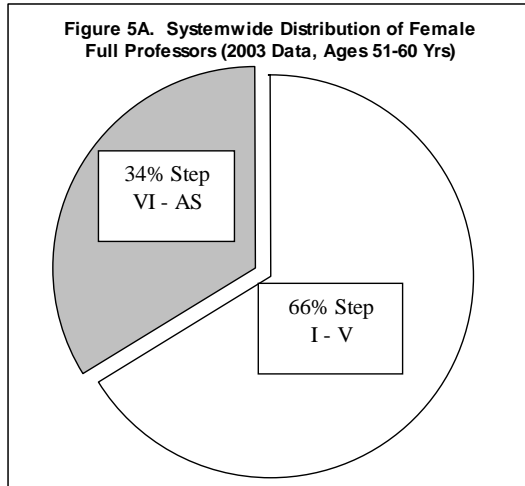
The Task Force did not find reason for any concern regarding specific CAP procedures used in Step VI advancement reviews. However, more general concerns were raised about the impact of delegation on such reviews. If campus CAPs delegate authority for normal merit reviews between Step I and Step VI, there is a likelihood that the CAP review at Step VI will be emphasized with higher standards than might be applied with regular CAP participation in merit reviews at all full professor steps. Infrequent CAP participation in full professor merit cases leading up to the review at step VI might lead to interpretations of review standards that emphasize the “barrier” nature of this step.

Substantial variations in the interpretation of barrier step review standards do exist across UC campuses. Some campuses regard the Step VI review as a mid-career check to determine whether faculty members are progressing in a manner consistent with the trajectory of progress achieved when they entered the full professor ranks. If a steady rate of progress is evident, the review is generally positive. Other campuses consider the barrier step review differently— as a very special review to determine whether or not a faculty member has achieved an exceptionally high status within his or her area of expertise. On these campuses, steady progress is not generally sufficient for advancement to Step VI. Rather, professors must demonstrate that they have added very high impact new achievements to those that were observed when Professor I status was approved. A substantial change in the trajectory of progress that was noted at Professor I is required in order to pass the barrier step.

Gender Differences

The Task Force reviewed systemwide data showing the distribution of faculty in the full professor ranks by campus, age and gender. We concluded that the age group of 51-60 years was most relevant to our considerations, because it has the highest population of full professors and is also the group where stalling at the Step V level will have the greatest career impact. Figure 4 compares the distribution of females and males among the full professor ranks for this age group. The data indicate that women are overrepresented at Steps I through V, but underrepresented at steps VI through Above Scale in the 51-60 age group. Comparisons of cumulative percentages for steps I–V with those for steps VI–Above Scale are shown in Figures 4. We concluded that a barrier at Step V has a greater impact on career-long merit advancement of females than of males.

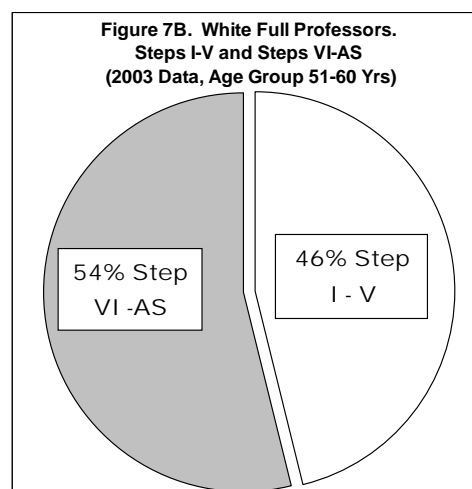
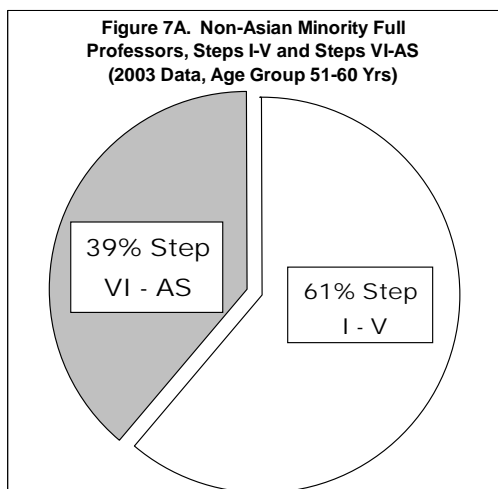
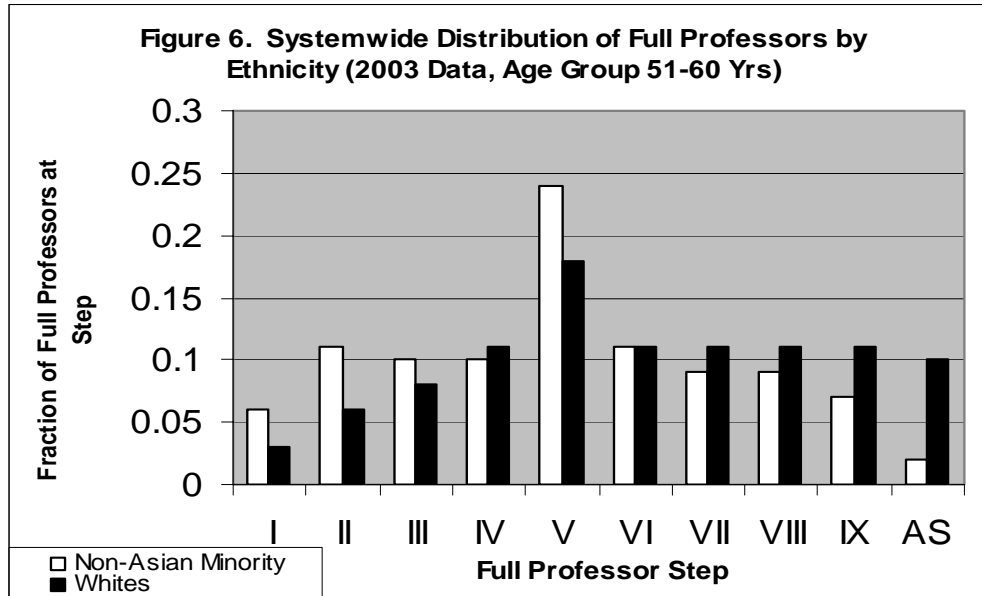




Ethnic Differences

The Task Force also reviewed systemwide data showing the distribution of faculty in the full professor ranks by campus, age and ethnicity. Although no obvious differences were noted in comparisons of fractional populations of Asian Americans and Whites at full professor rank steps, the differences in cumulative American Indian, African American and Chicano/Latino fractional populations relative to Whites is substantial. We again chose to emphasize data for the age group of 51-60 years where the greatest population of Step V full professors is found.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of cumulative fractions of American Indian, African American and Chicano/Latino faculty in the full professor ranks compared to the distribution of White faculty. The distribution pattern is similar to that for female and male full professors. The fraction of minority full professors at steps I-V is substantially larger than it is for White full professors. This fraction is substantially smaller at steps VI – Above Scale for minority full professors than it is for White full professors. The cumulative percentage for Step I – V is compared with the cumulative percentage for Step VI – AS for the two groups in Figure 7A and 7B. We concluded that the barrier at Step V has a greater impact in slowing career-long merit advancement of minority faculty than it does for White faculty members.



Interviews with Deans and Administrative Officials in Academic Personnel Offices

Task Force members discussed perceptions of the barrier step review process with deans and administrators in Academic Personnel Offices at the five campuses represented by the membership of the Task Force – UCB, UCI, UCSD, UCSB and UCSC. No clear consensus emerged, and opinions varied from no change needed, to move the Step VI barrier to a higher step, to eliminate the barrier step and replace it with more frequent non-delegated reviews throughout the full professor ranks.

Several insights regarding the barrier step emerged in these discussions. UC is unusual in using a barrier step review at a mid-point in the professorial ranks, and outside letter writers are often confused about the distinction between the barrier step review and the Above Scale review.

Several campuses reported that those who fail to cross the barrier often succeed on a second attempt. However, there are known cases where faculty have retired due to failure at the barrier step, and cases where careers have stalled out at this step. In general, campuses with the greatest bulge of faculty at Step V were the ones with the most demanding interpretation of barrier step review standards and also the ones expressing the greatest desire to change the system.

Step VI review guidelines are interpreted very differently across the UC campuses. Statistical data indicate that there is a bulge in the percentage of professors at Step V relative to the other steps. The magnitude of this bulge depends upon the local UC campus in a manner that suggests the opportunity for advancement to Step VI and above varies substantially across the campuses. The faculty at the UCSC, UCSB and UCI campuses have less opportunity for advancement incentives throughout their careers than those at the other five campuses included in this review.

On some campuses, there is now an unfortunate stigma attached to a failure to advance to Step VI. Depending on local approaches to the barrier step, career faculty who have engaged in solid, productive teaching and research for most of their careers, yet who are not “superstars” may end up languishing at Step V, become discouraged and lose motivation. The barrier may also influence some productive faculty members to retire early and not pursue steps above Professor Step V.

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Task Force

Members of the Task Force share the view that it is imperative to maintain the excellent quality of UC faculty. The personnel review process plays an important role in ensuring that high standards are met, and the Task Force has been careful to consider whether or not any modification might be regarded as a lowering of our standards for faculty excellence.

A high priority goal of the UC personnel system should be to encourage productivity through advancement incentives for as long as possible in the careers of faculty members. This goal is consistent with maintaining and improving the level of excellence that is evident within the professorial ranks of UC faculty.

Career access to incentives for growth through professional activity is an important feature that the personnel review system should ensure. However, this feature does not appear to be uniformly available at all campuses, to both genders, or to all ethnic groups. Substantial differences also exist across local campus academic review cultures. Those campuses with the greatest percentage of professorial rank faculty at Step V have a serious problem with access to merit increase incentives for career development. Many faculty who reach Step V are unable to advance, even though they are professionally active. The Task Force concluded that attempting to change the culture of local campuses to modify their interpretations of standards for review at the barrier step would be inappropriate and probably ineffective.

Data indicate that systemwide, there is a bulge in the percentage of professors at Step V relative to the other steps, but the magnitude of this bulge varies substantially across the campuses. Faculty members at the UCSC, UCSB and UCI campuses have more faculty members “stuck” at step V than those at the other five campuses included in this review.

The removal of a barrier step between Professor I and Above Scale can be achieved without loss of review standards by replacing the barrier step with a sequence of carefully conducted reviews at several professorial rank steps. However, additional CAP reviews will require a change in delegation authority for the present system of review at several campuses and perhaps some increases in faculty and administrative resources at these campuses. The perception and reality of excellence that is assured by peer review are features that must be preserved in any possible modification of the UC personnel review process.

In our charge we were asked to address three questions that guided the discussions and studies of the Task Force. Our deliberations led us to answer those questions in the following way.

1. Review the placement and number of special review steps that are regarded as “barriers” to advancement through the professorial ranks and consider whether they are appropriate. ***We conclude that the placement of Step VI barrier is not in keeping with our conviction that the central function of performance review should be to help the institution maintain excellence by closely linking performance and assessment.***
2. Review the number of steps used in the professorial ranks and the number of years of service faculty members accumulate as they proceed through the steps. Determine if the step VI barrier results in a “bottleneck” of senior faculty who do not advance beyond step V, and whether this is institutionally defensible. ***We conclude that the Step VI barrier does result in a serious bottleneck of senior faculty who do not proceed beyond Step V in a manner that provides career access to advancement incentives. The severity of the problem is not uniform across all UC campuses, and evidence suggests that the problem is more severe for women and minorities. We regard these inequities among campuses, genders and ethnic groups to be indefensible.***
3. Does the professorial step system provide the faculty at all of the UC campuses with career length access to merit increases after they reach the full professor level? ***Data indicate that the number of faculty-years served at Step V is particularly large at three of the eight campuses we studied. We conclude that faculty at these three campuses do not have the same career length access to merit increases as faculty at the other five campuses. Even among these five, only one campus has a distribution of full professors at the nine steps and above scale that does not show a large population bulge at Step V.***

The conclusions we reached regarding the first three elements of our charge led us to extensive discussions related to the fourth element of our charge. Are there steps that could be taken to improve upon the present system? The following three alternatives were considered:

- A “No Change” option. We agreed that our UC Faculty are excellent, and although we found problems associated with the Step VI barrier, we agreed that no step should be taken that might diminish the current level of faculty excellence.

- A change to move the barrier step review to a higher step. We discussed at length a recommendation to move the barrier step review to a higher level, specifically Step VIII. The Task Force membership regarded this as an improvement that could serve to extend the nominal period during which access to the incentive of merit increases would be expanded by six years. This would place the barrier much closer to a reasonable retirement age for many faculty and maintain the barrier format that has been in place for over thirty years.
- Eliminate a barrier step between Step I and Step IX. This would leave the only barrier step after Professor Step I at the review for advancement to Above Scale.

The “no change” option merits support if the full professor merit system is working well enough to leave it unchanged. Simply put, if it’s not broken; then don’t try to fix it. Consideration of the data in Figure 1 alone might be taken to mean that the barrier step is working in some fashion, by holding back non-productive faculty while advancing those who remain active. Does this situation merit systemwide action, or should it be left to individual campuses to resolve any difficulties they may have?

The disparity in distributions of faculty among the full professor steps across different campuses and the degree of the bulge at Step V (Fig 2) indicate that the systemwide data tends to downplay the severity of the Step VI bottleneck problem experienced at several local campuses. Specific campus data showing average years served as well as numbers of faculty at each step suggests that there is an even more serious bulge in the faculty-years served at Step V at these campuses (Fig 3). Still, one might envision this to be a really serious problem at only three of the eight campuses we studied, and a more moderate problem at four of the remaining five. Again we asked whether this should be left to individual campuses to resolve, or whether systemwide action might be more appropriate?

The Task Force concluded that systemwide action should be taken. We further concluded that either movement of the barrier to a higher step or elimination of the Step VI barrier represent better options than no change. Thus we answered the fourth element of the charge:

4. Determine whether changes are needed to improve the current step system, and if so, what changes and how they will be an improvement.

We believe that changes can and should be made that will help to resolve the problems noted in our response to the first three elements of the charge. Senate and Administrative action to approve and implement the following recommendations will help ensure improved access of all professors to merit increases throughout their careers and thereby to enhance the level of academic achievement and excellence of UC faculty members.

Our expectation is for a personnel system that promotes excellence by providing encouragement to success through merit incentives for as long as faculty remain active. A system that meets this expectation should not include one single, major barrier step prior to reaching review for advancement to Above Scale status. Faculty should expect the possibility of merit increases or delays at any step depending upon a fair evaluation of the progress in achievement. It should be possible to make adjustments to overcome some delay at any step up to Above Scale, and to have

a reasonable prospect that achievements will be rewarded with merit increases. A system that works in that way can be expected to have a relatively even distribution of faculty at each step throughout the full professor ranks when averaged over time. Each step would represent a reward given in recognition of progress, a delay that could be overcome by renewed progress, or a final level marking the progress in achievement that a full professor was able to attain in a career.

Although no campus would be reasonably expected to have a precisely equal distribution of full professors at each step, a distribution that shows some random and moderate variation from the average of 10% at each step and changes annually within a range of moderate variation might be realistic if a single barrier step were replaced by a periodic review using the full review resources available at each campus. In fact, the data for 2003 displayed in Figure 2 does indicate that only moderate variations in the distribution of faculty at steps III, V, and VII occur at UCSD even though that barrier step is in place. With that expectation as a rough guideline, systemwide action to remove the barrier step and replace it with periodic full reviews is likely to lead towards a far more even distribution of full professors among all of the steps at seven of the eight campuses we studied. At UCSD, where a roughly even distribution of faculty among the full professor ranks already occurs, little or no change would be anticipated.

If removal of the barrier step is accompanied by the periodic full review process we envision, there should be no danger of degrading academic excellence. The very best of our faculty will continue to progress upward, as they have in the past, toward Above Scale. Many of those who have been stopped at the barrier, even though they progress in their achievements and remain active, will achieve levels that reflect their progress and provide merit incentive for further achievement. Conversely, some who have been stopped at Step V will remain there if no career progress is evident. Finally, some who might have advanced between Step I and Step V with little effort due to the emphasis placed at the Step VI review, will be stopped at lower steps due to the more careful periodic full reviews at those levels. These faculty, like those stopped at Step V, will have access to merit increases when appropriate progress is made, and there will be no special stigma associated with a delay in progress at any step. Rather than degrading the UC's high standard of academic excellence, this system would encourage and enhance the quality of faculty throughout all of the steps.

The need for systemwide action is also strongly supported by data regarding the distribution of faculty at the full professor steps as a function of gender and ethnicity. It is clear that the distribution of systemwide faculty in the full professor ranks is influenced by both gender and ethnicity even when the age group is controlled. We regard this as a problem that is shared by all local campuses, one that requires both systemwide and local action to resolve. The inequities in the distributions of full professors among the steps according to campus, gender and ethnicity are institutionally indefensible. We recommend implementation of the recommendations of this report as a step towards remedying these inequities.

Although the upward movement of a barrier review from Step VI to Step VIII would be an improvement upon the present system—it would delay the barrier review for a nominal period of six years, so that many faculty who reach this level would be closer to a natural retirement age—it would not resolve some of the serious problems associated with the presence of a barrier prior to review for Above Scale status. The barrier would continue to encourage delegation and

discourage faculty from working toward fully reviewed merit increases on a continual basis. Movement of the barrier to Step VIII accompanied by a full “mid-career” review might provide some level of continued incentive for progress to Step VIII. But in the end, a barrier step does not ensure the type of career length access to merit increases needed to stimulate the highest level of achievement from our faculty. That goal is best achieved by eliminating the barrier step and replacing it with a sequence of full reviews of merit advance cases.

Cost Estimates

The Task Force requested a financial analysis of the added costs that would result upon implementation of a recommendation to remove the barrier at Step VI. The estimate we received from the Office of Academic Advancement at UCOP is based upon the assumption that 20% of those who reach Step V do not progress to Step VI under the current system. The model assumes that faculty who are stalled at Step V would proceed to Step VI and continue to advance following the Task Force recommendation. This would result in an incremental increase in cost over a period of five years. After five years, the system would stabilize. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Estimated Added Costs Due to Elimination of the Step VI Special Criteria. (Information provided by UCOP Office of Academic Advancement)

Year Following Implementation	Increased Cost	Increased Cost as % of Total Cost
1	\$475,800	0.1%
2	\$951,600	0.2%
3	\$1,419,600	0.3%
4	\$2,285,700	0.4%
5	\$3,144,000	0.6%

Task Force discussions surmised that any estimate of the costs related to its recommendation would be very crude at best. Factors such as the decrease in costs associated with more stringent review at all steps cannot be estimated with any degree of reliability. The Task Force concluded that the UCOP estimates represent a worst-case scenario, and that costs above these estimates are very unlikely. We further concluded that a net incremental cost increase of 0.6% to help remedy the severe inequities noted in our study seemed acceptable.

Again, based upon the full range of data, discussions and principles presented in this report, and the conclusions that the Task Force reached, the Task Force recommends the following actions to improve the present system of review of full professors. These actions will ensure improved access of all professors to merit increases throughout their careers and thereby to enhance the level of academic achievement and excellence of UC faculty members.

- 1) **The special criteria associated with the review for advancement from Step V to Step VI should be eliminated.**
- 2) **The special criteria used in review for advancement from Step IX to Above-Scale should be retained.**

- 3) All campuses should institute regular, non-delegated review of personnel cases of full professors by CAP. At least every other merit review following promotion to full professor must include a full CAP review without delegation of authority.
- 4) The present APM wording that guides review for advancement to Steps VII, VIII and IX should be retained. Advancement to each of these steps should be granted on evidence of continuing achievement at the level required for advancement to Step VI as modified by recommendation 1). However, the wording emphasizing the potential indefinite length of service associated with these steps as well as with Step VI should be eliminated.
- 5) Reviews of personnel cases for advancement to Steps II through IX should not require external letters. However, external letters may be sought at any step by prerogative of CAP, the Department or the Candidate.
- 6) Upon approval of these recommendations, personnel cases of those full professors who are presently at Step V should be reviewed in accordance with the normal review cycle that is presently in operation.

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