

Faculty Representative Mary Gilly
Remarks to the Board of Regents
July 2015

Thank you, Chair Lozano. These are my final remarks before I pass the Academic Senate baton to the very capable hands of Vice Chair Dan Hare. To wrap up my year, I want to introduce you to the post-tenure review process that sustains faculty excellence throughout a career at UC.

You may know about the rigorous reviews junior faculty at UC undergo before they are offered tenure. You may not know that faculty undergo equally stringent reviews of their research, teaching, and service each time they seek promotion to a higher title. They undergo a substantive review at every salary step, which occurs every two to five years. And you may not know that this sequence of repeated reviews – unique among American universities – has been in place at UC since the 1920's. As a result, the University of California has very few unproductive scholars among its tenured faculty. Indeed, a study completed in 2008 found that fewer than 1% of the faculty considered for review that year were what we call “non-progressing.”

A colleague of mine once characterized UC's practice of faculty review as a “what have you done for me lately” system. And, this pretty much describes it. While other universities may allow senior faculty to rest on their laurels and reward them for contributions in the distant past, we really don't do that at UC. It truly is a merit system.

Our reviews are rigorous and multi-layered. In a 30-year UC career, a professor has typically been evaluated by students more than 100 times, by peers in the school or college a dozen times, by peers campus-wide 10 or so times, and by external experts in his or her field 3-4 times.

Let me briefly describe a typical simple merit review for a tenured UC professor. This is the review required for every merit pay increase – a faculty member's move to a higher “step” in his or her rank. This description comes from the Academic Personnel Manual and my own experience as member and chair of my campus Committee on Academic Personnel. To begin the process, faculty assemble a dossier describing their accomplishments in research, teaching and service since the last review. The dossier includes publications, creative works, research grants, invited presentations, teaching evaluations, evidence of doctoral mentoring, and service to the profession, university or public. Department colleagues, the department chair and the Dean each provide separate, written reviews. All then go to the Senate Committee on Academic Personnel. This committee makes recommendations to the Provost and Chancellor on all promotions and most merit cases for the entire campus to ensure that standards are consistent.

Promotion to Full Professor involves a career-review and evaluation by 5-10 external letter writers in addition to what I have just described. At other institutions this is the last comprehensive review faculty undergo. Unique to UC, advancement to Full Professor Step VI (6-10 years post-promotion to Full Professor) and Above Scale (several years after that) are viewed as “barrier steps” and also typically require outside letters of evaluation.

Whew! When I lay it all out, it seems like a huge amount of effort both for the faculty member and the reviewers; hardly that stereotype of lazy tenured faculty. But what happens if a tenured faculty member comes up short in a review? In the short run, there is no merit increase to salary – or no promotion, and the faculty member, with the department chair, must submit a development plan. In the long run, the faculty member may be encouraged to move to another employee series that requires evaluation in fewer areas. Since reviews are closely tied to merit increases, UC payroll records for faculty provide an accessible metric for faculty accomplishment. That 2008 study I cited found that the small number of cases of “non-progressing” faculty typically reflected deficiencies in only one of the three areas in which we are held accountable. The Academic Personnel Manual and Senate Bylaws also spell out how non-performing tenured faculty can be dismissed.

Knowing that your colleagues will be reviewing your dossier and evaluating your accomplishments is a strong motivator to ensure you measure up to UC standards. Did I mention that we don’t have an option? We are *required* to undergo a review at least every five years.

Some other universities instituted post-tenure review of their faculty in the 1990s, but they tend to be more form than substance. Contrast the UC process I described with what a professor at University of Texas, Austin says about their post-tenure review: “It was a complete waste of time,” says the professor, whose most recent review was about five years ago and entailed filling out a “few forms.”

The recent budget agreement suggests that State officials think UC should focus on processing undergraduate California residents as quickly as possible. While we do offer an excellent undergraduate education, that is only a part of UC’s excellence. At the May Regents meeting, I talked about UC’s value of excellence and how the key to that excellence is the faculty. The rigorous peer-review process for all UC faculty, both untenured and tenured, ensures a productive and engaged faculty.

While my term as Academic Senate chair is ending, you will continue as Regents, some of you for many more years. I urge you to resist pressure to change UC into an undergraduate degree

factory and instead garner support for all aspects of the research, teaching and service missions that faculty embrace and are rewarded for. Writing together recently in *Time*, President Napolitano and President Faust of Harvard said, "Discovery is at the heart of what universities do." And, Michele Siqueiros, President of The Campaign for College Opportunity recently called UC "one of our state's biggest treasures." The University of California is a treasure because of our commitment to discovery. As Regents, your highest priority should be keeping UC an excellent research university.

Chair Lozano, this concludes my remarks. I want to thank all of the Regents for your service to the University of California and for listening to the faculty perspective from me this last year.