Utah Valley University
Unique Educational Mission
Faculty Qualifications Subcommittee
Final Report
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Executive Summary

A total of four proposals are offered. Proposal One suggests that UVU offer multi-year contracts for at least some of the full-time, non-tenure track faculty members that are currently employed on a year-to-year basis. Proposals Two through Four address tenure-track faculty members. Proposal Two creates two different faculty tenure tracks, tentatively called the Professorial Track and the Professional Track. Proposal Three describes the use of faculty role statements and role assignments. Proposal Four is a hybrid model which incorporates elements of Proposals Two and Three. The Faculty Qualifications Subcommittee unanimously believes Proposal One should be adopted. Additionally, for Proposals Two through Four, there was no clear preference among the subcommittee members.

Problem Statement

Over the past 10 years, UVU has emphasized the growth of bachelor degree programs and initiated three graduate degrees. The emphasis in faculty hiring has been on individuals with terminal degrees and a traditional academic background. Tenure and rank advancement policies have been developed which emphasize this traditionally qualified and credentialed faculty member.

In the face of a recent renewed emphasis on one-year certificate programs and Associate Degree programs, UVU needs to be more flexible in its policies and practices regarding faculty hiring, tenure, and rank advancement. One particular issue of concern is that non-academic, professional experience be valued in a manner comparable to more formal educational credentials.

Examples of the current situation:

1. College of Humanities and Social Sciences. An individual with a career in journalism may only hold a Bachelor's degree but have 20+ years in the business.
2. School of the Arts. Someone may hold a BFA yet have a distinguished career as a performing or fine artist.
3. College of Technology and Computing. Someone with a BS in computer science who has enjoyed a productive career in software.
4. Most programs limited to AAS degrees employ faculty with less than Ph.D. degrees, some requiring special certification instead of degrees.

It seems clear in each of the above scenarios that the individual in question could contribute significantly to UVU. However, in each of the above cases, it would be difficult to hire the individual into a tenure track position with appropriate opportunities to advance through faculty ranks. If hired, current policy would prevent advancement to professor since there are terminal degrees available in these disciplines or in education. In these cases, our current hiring and RTP
processes may restrict the institution’s ability to hire and promote the best-qualified individuals.

A second problem relates specifically to our current approach to non-tenure track full-time faculty (e.g. lecturers, artists/scholars/writers/professors in residence). These individuals are currently maintained on a year-to-year basis. Each year they receive a letter effectively informing them their employment is being terminated and there is no guarantee they will be offered a contract for the next year. In some cases, these individuals have been working at UVU for many years. In other cases, the individual is merely serving as a “place holder” for a tenure track position. However, our current practice does not distinguish between the two situations. As a result, the more “chronic” full-time, non-tenure track faculty members work in a considerably marginalized status.

Proposal 1: Multi-year Contracts for Full-time, non-Tenure Track Faculty

We recommend that Utah Valley University adopt multi-year contracts for lecturers. One approach would be to hire lecturers initially into a one-year contract for the first year or two and then offer a three or five year contract. This would provide some greater security for lecturers. It is a cost neutral proposal but would provide a significant boost in morale for the increasing number of faculty we employ in full-time positions but who are not on tenure track.

Proposal 2: Two Separate Tracks for Tenure Track Faculty

Utah Valley University could develop and implement a process in which there are two separate tracks for hiring, retaining, tenuring, and advancing faculty. Track 1 would resemble our current process, with its emphasis on traditional academic experience and credentialing. Track 2 would be flexible in including faculty members with other sorts of experience and credentialing. Several possible names have been suggested. For example, Track 1 could be called the Professorial Track and include traditionally credentialed faculty members working towards the rank of Professor. Track 2 could be called the Professional Track and include faculty members with non-traditional credentials working towards the rank of Professor of Practice. We are open to other alternative names for the tracks and alternative titles for faculty ranks.

Determination of appropriate credentials for hiring remains with the departments and schools/colleges in consultation with the VPAA. Similarly, criteria for tenure and rank advancement remain at the departmental and school/college level in consultation with the VPAA and consistent with institutional policies. As a matter of practice, deans and department chairs should be charged with identifying the best candidates to fill specific faculty positions in the disciplines under their charge.

In many, if not most departments, current hiring practices emphasize the terminal degree (e.g. Ph.D.). However, many courses are taught, and taught well, by individuals holding less than a terminal degree (e.g. MA or MS). Most such individuals are teaching as adjuncts. The new system would allow such individuals
to be hired as full-time faculty if they had the kind of professional experience that was needed by the department. These individuals would have the opportunity to earn tenure and rank advancement in the Professional Track.

Admittedly, such individuals can be hired as lecturers in our current system. However, lecturers do not necessarily enjoy the job security and protection of academic freedom that tenure provides. One alternative to opening up tenure track lines to such individuals would be to offer multiple year contracts as lecturers (See Proposal 1). While this would provide limited additional security for these faculty members, it does not address the issue of academic freedom.

It is important to realize that issues related to salary are not necessarily dictated by which track a faculty member is on, nor what courses s/he teaches. As with our current salary process, compensation would be based primarily on discipline, rank, and highest degree held.

This new system would provide flexibility to hire faculty with a wide range of educational and experiential backgrounds to serve UVU’s unique education missions. The system would allow all tenure track faculty, once hired, to proceed along a career ladder which provides opportunity to not only achieve tenure but rank advancement to Professor, provided they meet approved criteria.

There might be differences between the tracks in terms of instructional load. Most faculty members on the traditional track have scholarly/creative work as a component of workload. Teaching loads for these faculty members are typically around 12 credit hours per semester with most receiving 3 credits for research/scholarship/creative activity. Conceivably, (some) faculty on the proposed new track would not have similar expectations regarding scholarly/creative work and would more likely have teaching loads of around 15 credit hours per semester. Criteria for tenure and rank advancement need to be flexible and open enough to address considerations for faculty in each of the proposed tracks and the assigned workload of each individual.

**Advantages of this proposal**

1. Allows greater flexibility in hiring faculty to support our unique educational mission.
2. Allows a path to tenure and advancement for individuals who are disadvantaged under our current policies and practices.
3. Provides an opportunity for cost savings. Hiring someone with a Master’s Degree or less can be more cost efficient than hiring someone with a Ph.D.

**Disadvantages of this proposal**

1. Some faculty may perceive this as an inherently unfair system which would marginalize certain faculty members. In fact, our current system marginalizes certain faculty members. In many disciplines, faculty members
with less than terminal degrees are not eligible for advancement to professor.

2. The development and maintenance of two separate policies is more challenging than having just one and will require a degree of sophistication in the policies that we have not had in the past.

Proposal 3: Faculty Role Statements/Role Assignments

This model operates at a much more granular level. Faculty role statements are generated, typically at the level of the college/school. These are fairly broad descriptions of what is required for a faculty position. Then, individual faculty member role assignments are generated, which provide much more specific expectations. In particular, the role assignments include evaluative weights for each general area of faculty responsibility (teaching, scholarship, service). Faculty members are hired with a general role statement. The faculty member is then assessed against his/her role assignment for decisions regarding retention, tenure, and promotion.

A faculty member’s credentials would be a major determining factor in deciding which role statement would be appropriate. Someone with extensive teaching experience would most likely fall under a teaching emphasis. Someone with a strong research background would most likely fall under a teaching emphasis. Determinations of which role statement would be the best fit for specific faculty members would be made by the department chair and dean.

At Utah State University (USU) there are a small number of role statements that provide details regarding the kinds of things that faculty are expected to do. Each college/school has only a few role statements. Typically, these fall under the categories of a teaching emphasis, research emphasis, or administrative emphasis (for department chairs). The overlap between role statements from the different colleges/schools is over 90%. See the appendix for samples of various role statements from USU.

Faculty workload expectations would be derived from the role statement under which they are hired. Obviously, someone with a teaching emphasis would have higher teaching loads then someone with a research emphasis. Similarly, teaching and research assignments would be less for someone with an administrative emphasis.

As a teaching university, most UVU faculty would fall under a teaching emphasis role statement. However, within that role statement there would be flexibility in individual role assignments regarding the evaluative weights for each dimension of faculty work. The evaluative weights are not a measure of how much effort the faculty member expends in each area. Rather, the evaluative weights indicate how much emphasis the outcomes of the various areas of faculty work receive during evaluative processes. Tenure and promotion decisions would be made based on performance measures which reflect the evaluative weights in the role assignment.

As with Proposal 2, salary determinations would be made based on rank, highest degree obtained, and discipline. Faculty role statements would not have an impact on salaries.
Advantages of this proposal

1. This system provides exceptional clarity in terms of expectations for individual faculty members in a way that is not present in our current RTP processes.

2. This system allows considerable flexibility in crafting faculty role statements to serve the wide range of programs we offer and students we serve.

Disadvantages of this proposal

1. This system would require considerable work at the outset in develop the various role statements.

2. Different role statements may create a perception of a caste system in which one type of role statement is viewed as superior to another (e.g. someone with a teaching emphasis is more valuable than someone with a research emphasis).

Proposal 4: Hybrid Model-Faculty role statements/individual role assignments with two separate tracks for tenure track faculty

This represents a hybrid of Proposal 2 and Proposal 3. There would be two major faculty tracks as outlined in Proposal 2 (Professorial and Professional). Within each track, role statements would be developed to represent the various faculty roles that might be required in different programs around the university.

Advantages of this proposal

This proposal shares the advantages presented for Proposals 2 and 3.

Disadvantages of this proposal

This proposal shares the disadvantages of Proposals 2 and 3.