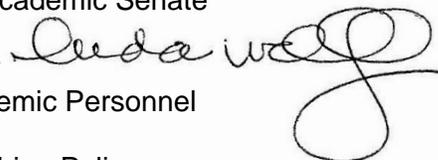


UC RIVERSIDE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA | **Academic Senate**
COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PERSONNEL

January 12, 2015

To: Jose Wudka, Chair
Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Linda Walling, Chair
Committee on Academic Personnel



Re: Draft of CNAS Teaching Policy

At your request CAP has reviewed the May 2014 draft of the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences' teaching policy document and the responses from six of the CNAS departments. CAP thought that Senate evaluation of the CNAS Teaching Policy was premature. As this Teaching Policy was a draft sent to CNAS Departments for comments, the College has not had the opportunity to respond to departmental concerns and adapt the policy accordingly. It would have been more appropriate for the Senate to evaluate the final, revised CNAS Teaching Policy. Never-the-less, CAP provides the following comments.

- (1) The teaching policy document was not preceded by the formal rationale that was needed for the fair evaluation of this draft document. It is not clear if this policy was being developed to rectify current or past imbalances in teaching loads and prevent imbalances in the future, create a more inclusive evaluation of CNAS faculty contributions to the UCR teaching enterprise, or both. While not provided to CAP, some members were aware of a Teaching Load Policy Report of 2012 that provided some of this rationale.
- (2) The rationales for weighting each of the teaching contributions, and the particular weights assigned, were not sufficiently iterated. Without clear justifications, faculty buy-in will likely be more difficult to obtain. While Chairs of departments may feel in the loop, there is anecdotal evidence that the faculty-at-large are less informed about the need for the teaching policy.
- (3) Several CAP members indicated that the proposed CNAS teaching policy document was developed (in part) as a mechanism for the college to equitably allocate teaching resources to departments. However, due to the lack of rationale for the policy, this premise is not clear. CAP believes that due to the detailed data that is being collected for each individual CNAS faculty member, CNAS faculty have rightfully expressed concern that the CNAS policy may be used to evaluate individual faculty member performance in the future. This might be exacerbated at the time when a change in CNAS leadership occurs and institutional memory is clouded or lost.
- (4) There is deep concern that only six of CNAS' 13 departments provided comments regarding the policy draft. One must presume that the silent departments have no objections to implementing the draft policy without further revision. If this is not the case, CAP recommends that the Chairs of the "silent" departments provide their written

comments for transparency and improvement of the policy to the Deans office for consideration.

- (5) While it appears that CNAS synthesized the departmental responses it did receive, it is not clear if the college is working on a revised teaching policy document to accommodate the concerns that were spelled out. CAP is concerned that engagement of faculty has been limited since the release of the draft policy and the call for responses. As iterated earlier, it would have been more valuable for the Senate to evaluate a revised teaching policy document rather than the May 2014 draft.
- (6) CAP recognizes that a transparent method to acknowledge teaching contributions and excellence is needed with the college and this policy will formalize processes that have remained largely informal. However, CAP suggests that the college clarify the use of courses or course-equivalents for the proposed teaching policy.
- (7) CAP was concerned about the fact that there were so many problems in the accurate collection of the vast amounts of data that drive this policy. It is acknowledged that the college is trying to be analytical and quantitative, but the cumbersome nature of recovery of accurate datasets seems like a major administrative drain and will lead to an inefficient and error-prone process. It is surprising in our high-technology era that UCR's databases are not more accurate, accessible and integrated; this is not a CNAS problem but a campus-wide problem that frustrates many initiatives to collect accurate campus data.
- (8) CAP discussed the complex nature of the teaching formula that is proposed. This is likely to lead to faculty confusion and may be demoralizing, especially to those faculty teaching upper-division and graduate classes with lower class numbers. Furthermore, it was not clear how the policy and its metrics will help the college to determine if teaching is being distributed fairly within the college and departments. Some CAP members thought that the blanket codification of UC faculty teaching does not belong in the UC and it is something that might be anticipated within the Cal State University system.
- (9) In alignment with comments from some departments, CAP is concerned that the value of small faculty-intensive upper-division and graduate-level classes may be eroded by the teaching policy metrics system. Furthermore, it appears that faculty who are teaching very large lower-division classes may be getting extra-teaching credit for some of the largest classes and that also counting extra time in TA mentoring for such courses "double dips" the system.
- (10) The rationale for increasing the life science teaching load of non-OR faculty to three classes (or class equivalents?) is not adequately justified within the policy document draft. Three decades ago, there was wide variation in the teaching loads of OR and IR faculty, with OR faculty teaching close to the percentage of their IR appointment. At that time, it was not uncommon to find IR faculty teaching three classes per year and OR faculty teaching one graduate-level class on alternate years. Since that time, life science faculty equilibrated their teaching loads with all faculty presumably teaching 1.5 classes annually. CAP voiced some concern regarding the return to "older" criteria. CAP recommends that teaching loads (classes not teaching equivalents) for IR and IR/OR faculty at UCB and UCD should be investigated and revealed to UCR faculty to enable fact-based discussions.
- (11) CAP discussed the fact that the mentoring of undergraduate research may not be completely captured by 197 and 199 classes. Many students volunteer or are paid by grants and perform research; these students might be "lost" with the current metrics.

- (12) The multipliers associated with mentoring of graduate students appear to be flawed, as recognized by some of the Chairs comments, with little credit given for students in their first two years when more coursework and less research credit is allocated. However, graduate students generally are getting more intense mentoring by their major professors in the formative years of their dissertation research. CAP suggests that students should be counted as unit metrics (i.e. a faculty member is a major professor for x students). This would better reflect faculty workload.
- (13) Finally in considering the CNAS teaching policy and collection of the data that support its deployment annually, CAP discussed the fact that CNAS cannot parse classes easily since each department uses class numbers for very distinct types of teaching. The best example is 240 classes, which in Physics is a lecture-based class, in Biochemistry reflects lab group meetings and journal clubs, and in Botany and Plant Sciences is a 2-U seminar class with intense and focused reading of the literature. Perhaps finding more uniform class designations that are adhered to by all departments in the college would enable the annual fact finding mission for establishing teaching contributions.