

February 1, 2018

To: Dylan Rodriguez, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Ward Beyermann, Chair, Executive Committee
College of Natural and Agricultural Science

Re: Campus Review: Cluster Hiring Initiative: Status and Future Plans

The CNAS Executive Committee discussed the Cluster Hiring Initiative: Status and Future Plans from Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Larive at its January 9, 2018 meeting. After a lengthy discussion, the committee felt this is a complicated issue and expressed a range of opinions. The committee members were given more time to consult with their departments, and what follows is a summary of the discussion and responses sent after the meeting.

As mentioned above, opinions on the proposed models varied, ranging from strong support for cluster hiring to complete disdain for the program. Despite this range of opinions, there seemed to be a consensus that the three models in the cluster hiring initiative lacked enough detail to make an informed decision on which is the best option. Also, the document focuses on how to proceed with the remaining cluster proposals, while much of the criticism of the program is directed at the initial proposal selection process. Instead of critiquing the options in the cluster hiring initiative, the committee felt it would be more productive to provide feedback on the overall hiring process focusing on those aspects of it that are important to faculty.

Two common complaints with the cluster hiring model are a lack of transparency in the process and a misalignment of the resulting hires with the department/program structure of the university. Many felt these issues were more a consequence of the implementation, not intrinsic to the basic concept. Additional time and better communication are needed to improve faculty buy in on the cluster proposal selection process, and while departments are not the main driver in cluster hiring, they still need to be consulted throughout the process to better integrate the new hires with the department programs.

However, on the plus side, cluster hiring is a quick means of achieving a critical mass in specific fields, usually at the interface of traditional disciplines where ground-breaking research often occurs. It was also pointed out that some of the problems associated with the

cluster hiring model, such as a lack of transparency in the process, existed with the old system. For example, before the cluster hiring program, departments provided hiring plans that its faculty felt best supported the research and teaching missions of the disciplines, only to have these plans upended by the administration with little explanation.

While individuals expressed diverse opinions on this subject, perhaps influenced by personal experiences, I think most would support a compromise strategy where both cluster hiring and department/program driven hiring play a role. Both models have merit in the process for attracting new faculty to UCR, and while clusters often target interdepartmental interests, we must not neglect important fields of study completely contained within departments. However, for any model to succeed, a well thought out implementation is needed that successively integrates participation for all the stakeholders throughout the process. Faculty need to be informed and have a guiding role because they best understand how fields of scholarship are evolving. Finally, UCR must be better prepared to receive these new hires once they arrive. The mismanagement of space and resources in the recent past jeopardized our investment and tarnished UCR's reputation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ward Beyermann". The signature is fluid and includes a long, sweeping tail at the end.

Ward Beyermann, Chair
CNAS Executive Committee