

POLICY ON PROBATIONARY PLANS AND FACULTY MENTORING

PURPOSE

It is the position of California State University, Fresno that the professional career of a faculty member should be one of continuing professional growth. The purpose of probationary plans is to communicate the standards, criteria and expectations of the department, college/school, and university during the probationary process and to provide clear, consistent, supportive, accurate, and dependable communication to the probationary faculty member.

The Policy on Retention and Tenure states ¹

The tenure decision is the most important personnel decision made by the university on individual faculty members. Therefore, this decision must be made with great care based upon documentation gathered and analyzed during the probationary period.

The probationary period should be one of professional growth and development in addition to being a period of evaluation. The department and the probationary faculty member share responsibility for establishing clearly the goals for the probationary period through the preparation of a mandatory probationary plan.

The faculty member should receive a continuing assessment of progress toward the goals established in the probationary plan, periodic opportunity to review the goals with the mentoring committee and the department chair, collegial guidance, advice and assistance and other mutually agreed upon support.

Tenure is not a right of a probationary faculty member nor solely a reward for services and accomplishments during the probationary period. A decision in favor of tenure must be based upon evidence that indicates that there is a high probability that the faculty member will continue to be a valuable and productive colleague.

The department and the probationary faculty member share the primary responsibility for establishing clear goals for the probationary period. Moreover, the probationary faculty member should be apprised clearly of the criteria that will be employed in the evaluation. Guidance, advice, collegial support, and periodic review of the goals are characteristic of the ideal probationary experience. Therefore, continuing assessment of progress toward the goals shall be made through the probationary review process.

All probationary faculty members will be appointed to a two-year initial appointment. A probationary plan will be developed and implemented for each new probationary faculty member in the first year of probationary status. The first probationary review shall take place in the second year of the appointment. This policy describes the process by which this is accomplished. Normal evaluations by students and peers as well as other normal procedures for gathering evaluative data will continue.

The responsibility for working with the mentor and taking full advantage of this process rests with the probationary faculty member.

¹ The Policy On Retention And Tenure (APM 325)

PROCEDURES

I. PROBATIONARY PLAN

Each department and/or college/school shall develop a model probationary plan. The probationary plan in the appendix to this policy should be used as a guide for formatting and style only; specific standards and language in a faculty member's individual probationary plan (e.g., number of publications, stipulations about order of authorship, etc.) shall conform to department expectations for tenure.

The department and/or college/school model probationary plan shall identify clearly the standards and expectations of the department that must be met for any future recommendation for tenure. While differences may occur in the probationary plans of individual faculty members in the department, departmental standards and expectations must be applied consistently to all probationary faculty members in the department. Consistent with the university policy, the plan shall reflect activities commencing with the initial appointment of the probationary faculty member to a tenure-track position at this university.

The faculty member, and/or any level of review may request a modification to the approved probationary plan. All such modifications shall follow the approval process outlined in sections III to V below at the time of the annual probationary review.

If at any stage in this process, the review of the proposed probationary plan has not been completed within the specified period of time, the proposed probationary plan shall automatically be forwarded to the next level of review.

II THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR

California State University, Fresno is committed to providing the support necessary to give a new probationary faculty member every opportunity to understand and achieve the goals for retention and tenure. Central to this commitment is the mentoring process that is an integral part of the probationary plan process.

A mentor is expected to

- a. Help the new probationary faculty member
 1. Develop a sense of belonging to our university community and participate in academic governance
 2. Understand the unique aspects and expectations of being a faculty member at California State University, Fresno.
 3. Prepare the draft probationary plan.
- b. Work with the probationary faculty member to achieve the expectations of the probationary plan
- c. Be a resource for answering questions, solving problems, providing support, and giving advice on professional matters, and
- d. Be sensitive and responsive to the needs and interests of the probationary faculty member.

To achieve these goals, the mentor(s) are expected to

- a. Meet regularly with the probationary faculty member and actively engage the mentee in dialog;
- b. Assist in identifying opportunities and establishing a network of contacts both on campus and professionally;
- c. Support scholarly development in the discipline and collaboration across disciplines;

- d. Assist in understanding the policies and procedures that are relevant to the probationary faculty member's responsibilities and advancement;
- e. Provide positive feedback, constructive criticism and encouragement;
- f. Assist the probationary faculty member to establish priorities including budgeting time between professional and other responsibilities, and the balancing of teaching, research, and service;
- g. Respect the independence and the academic freedom of the probationary faculty member;²

While the role of the mentor is not supervisory,³ the mentor may have greater contact with the probationary faculty member. Mentors may participate on peer review committees involved in the performance review of the mentee. Although comments by the mentor may be incorporated into the peer review, the mentor's comments should not be valued as substitute for or a preliminary evaluation of the department peer review committee.

Due to changing commitments, incompatibility, or where the relationship is not otherwise productive, either the probationary faculty member or the mentor should seek advice from the department chair. It is recognized that changes in mentoring relationships can and may be made without prejudice or fault for either person. Changes in mentors can be made without rewriting the probationary plan. However, such changes shall be noted in the annual probationary review. In any case, the probationary faculty member should be encouraged to seek out additional mentoring as appropriate.

III. DEPARTMENT PROCEDURES

1. The department chair shall appoint a mentor(s) at the time of the initial probationary appointment.⁴
2. The mentor(s) and the probationary faculty member shall prepare a draft probationary-plan.
3. The probationary plan shall:
 - a. Be appropriate to the individual's assignments and responsibilities
 - b. Provide stated standards and expectations that are reasonable, clear, and specific.
 - c. Ensure that the stated standards and expectations are consistent among faculty members in the department.
4. The mentor(s) and the probationary faculty member shall discuss the draft probationary plan with the department chair. Appropriate modifications may be made to the plan prior to submission to the tenured faculty of the department.
5. The probationary faculty member shall have input into the formulation of the proposed plan. However, it is the tenured faculty of the department, including the chair, who ultimately determine the criteria, standards, and expectations for the probationary faculty member.
6. A draft probationary plan shall be completed by the deadline noted in the Academic Personnel Calendar and submitted to the department peer review committee and the department chair for review, and possible modifications.
7. Differences between the candidate, the mentor, the department peer review committee, and/or the chair shall be resolved, if possible, at the department level.
8. The proposed plan, and unresolved differences, if any, shall be submitted to the appropriate college/school peer review committee and the dean by the date noted in the Academic Personnel Calendar.

² University Statement On Academic Freedom (APM 103)

³ Due to the nature of the role of the department chair, a department chair should not be a mentor.

⁴ Mentor(s) shall be tenured member(s) of the faculty. Ideally, the mentor(s) should be a member(s) of the tenured faculty of the department. However, a mentor(s) could be a tenured faculty member(s) selected from outside the department, as appropriate.

IV. COLLEGE/SCHOOL PROCEDURES

1. The appropriate college/school peer review committee⁵ and the dean shall review each proposed probationary plan to ensure that
 - a. The stated standards and expectations are appropriate to the individual's assignments and responsibilities; and
 - b. Stated standards and expectations are reasonable, clear, and specific; and
 - c. The stated standards and expectations are consistent among faculty members in the same department.
2. After appropriate consultation, the college/school committee and/or the dean may recommend modifications in the probationary plan.
3. The dean shall attempt to resolve any differences between the proposed plan submitted by the department and the plan recommended by the college/school committee and/or the dean.
4. The proposed plan and unresolved differences, if any, shall be submitted by the college/school peer review committee and the dean to the Provost by the date noted in the Academic Personnel Calendar.

V. PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS (PROVOST)

1. The Provost or designee shall review each proposed probationary plan.
2. The Provost or designee shall be the final arbiter of any outstanding disagreements regarding the content of the probationary plan, and may require additional modifications to the plan.
3. The Provost or designee shall approve the final, official version of the probationary plan.
4. The probationary faculty member shall be informed that the probationary plan has been finalized. A copy of the probationary plan shall be placed in the probationary faculty member's Open Personnel File accompanied with a signed statement by the probationary faculty member acknowledging receipt of the plan.
5. The probationary plan shall be placed in the designated section of the faculty members' RTP File for reference during each probationary review.

Reference: Policy on Retention and Tenure (APM)

Recommended by the Academic Senate

April 1988

April 13, 2015

Approved by the President

May 1988

June 1994

May 2002

July 15, 2011

June 16, 2015

⁵ This is the college/school peer review committee that handles retention and tenure recommendations; Librarians and SSP-ARs do not have separate college/school peer review committees.