

In the Fall of 2021, the Dornsife Faculty Council distributed a college-wide [survey](#) to faculty to solicit comments on the annual merit review process. A [second survey](#) was distributed in the Spring of 2022 to gain the perspective of the Dornsife chairs and directors who administer the merit review process. The surveys revealed the following concerns, which our recommendations seek to address:

- A lack of clarity and consistency in how merit review committees generate the quantitative score and qualitative feedback for each faculty member.
- A lack of clarity about the connection between the performance appraisal and the annual raise.
- Feedback that is not substantial, constructive, or useful to their professional development
- The existence of bias/unfairness in the merit review process, as well as in the student evaluations upon which the process is partially based.
- Some departments require a file that requires a disproportionate amount of work in relation to the financial or professional rewards received.

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## **Recommendations**

### *Composition of Committee*

- The members of the committee should be elected by each department's faculty.
- If the department has separate committees for TT and RTPC, the chairs of the respective committees should be composed of that stream of faculty.
- All merit review committees should be composed of both RTPC and TT faculty members (if the department has members of that stream within it).

### *Composition of the Merit Review File*

- If deviating from Dean Miller's criteria (CV, syllabi, one-page supplemental sheet), each department should set a clear maximum number of pages for each section of the merit file (except student evaluations and syllabi, the length of which will be different from instructor to instructor).
- Faculty members should not be required to put together a merit review file and a promotion file in the same year.

### *Assessment Criteria*

- Assessment should be based on clear and transparent rubric, created within each department and approved by faculty vote. These rubrics should be reviewed by the Dean to ensure consistency of expectations from department to department.

- The top tier of the service aspect of the rubric should set a ceiling for maximum service expectations.
- The service aspect of the rubric should take into account differing spheres of service activity (departmental, college/university, academic and local community)
- The rubric should take into account the differing expectations surrounding teaching different kinds of classes: seminars, introductory classes, GEs, etc.
- The rubric in all departments should quantify research expectations.
- Faculty should be assessed in regard to the expectations of faculty at their particular rank.
- No department should set limits on how many or how few instructors should be allowed to achieve a particular score.

#### *Use of Student Course Evaluations*

- All merit review committee members should be trained to read for bias/discrimination in both student and peer evaluations. This training should be led by the Office of Inclusion and Diversity.
- Faculty should be given autonomy in deciding how to include student voices in the merit review file. This might include:
  - Including a representative set of evaluations, rather than every one.
  - Including a preface to, or reflection on, the included course evaluations, to explain aberrations.
  - The right to exclude abusive or offensive evaluations.
  - Including written statements, besides course evaluations, from students one has worked with closely.
- The numerical score of the course evaluations should only be a factor in merit review assessment when considered in the context of the qualitative statements (if at all).
- Student evaluations should not be used as a primary measure of faculty merit.

#### *Outcomes*

- Quantitative feedback given should refer to (and be based upon) the rubric, and the connection between the two should be clear.
- Qualitative feedback should be a minimum of 200 words.
- The connection between the merit review score and the resulting raise (if any) should be made explicit.
- Qualitative feedback should draw connections to previous merit reviews, and recognize improvement when appropriate.
- Feedback must be accompanied by practical guidelines on how to improve, as well as instructions on how to receive the support and resources necessary to achieve this end.
- Details on how to appeal merit review scores should be included on the document provided to the faculty member.