Memorandum

Date: March 17, 2023

To: Dean/VP Shane Burgess

From: CALS, CES and AES CFOs; ALVSCE Faculty Council Co-chairs, and ALVSCE Staff Council Chair

Subject: Fairness and transparency in merit pay processes

The CALS Faculty Council has received and discussed several concerns related to the lack of fairness and transparency among faculty and extension specialists’ merit pay within and across units in CALS.

Although there have been calls for greater transparency in the merit increase process, there continue to be units within CALS where there has not been clear communication of the processes and metrics by which unit heads make decisions about merit raises.

The lack of clear guidelines for determining merit raises has led to confusion, frustration, and anger among faculty, and it is essential that we address this issue to ensure fairness and consistency in the review process. We request that clear and transparent guidelines for merit raises be communicated to all employees well in advance of the actual review period.

To achieve this goal, we suggest the following actionable items for oversight:

1. Each unit head develops a set of clear and objective criteria for determining merit raises in collaboration with faculty. These criteria should be based on factors such as job performance, contributions to the unit’s mission, and alignment with the unit, college, and university's goals and values.

For the current year’s process, unit heads will be tasked with (1) communicating, as early as possible, the criteria, considerations, and metrics they will use when deciding who shall receive merit and (2) being available for one-on-one discussions to inform faculty on what they could do to be considered meritorious.

As part of the Salary Increase notifications, a line will be added to the individual memo stating that “should they have questions about their individual salary increase, please speak directly with your supervisor/Unit Head”

1. The criteria will be developed with the input of and approval by the unit voting faculty. The criteria should be reviewed and reapproved by the faculty every 1 to 3 years.

Since merit is dependent upon performance, and performance is reviewed annually by a unit-level peer review committee, we suggest that each unit review the criteria by which they are conducting annual reviews and align their merit procedures and metrics accordingly. This process should be reviewed and communicated annually *prior to* the beginning of the annual review process.

1. These guidelines will be communicated to all employees prior to the start of the review period (i.e., no later than December 15 of the year preceding the start of the review process.)

As stated above, annual review guidelines will be reviewed and communicated to all faculty/staff prior to the start of the performance period. For the current guidelines, units are to begin to review their annual review procedures immediately and communicate to all faculty no later than the beginning of the Fall 2023 semester.

1. The college will disseminate information on the mechanisms for employees to provide anonymous feedback and raise concerns about the merit guidelines and their application, annually.
A page dedicated to the annual review and merit process will be developed on the ALVSCE Compass website with a number of sources available for review to all ALVSCE employees, including policies, guidance documents, and a repository of APR and merit processes and tools from different units. Within this webpage will be a reminder and direct link for providing feedback.

1. The Dean/VP of CALS/AVLSCE will provide oversight to ensure that the merit criteria are collaboratively developed within the units and that the approved merit criteria are faithfully applied.
 The 3 ALVSCE CFOs will review the criteria for transparency and suggested practices to the Unit Heads on Monday 03/20/2023 during the in-person leadership meeting.

By implementing these actionable items, we can ensure that the merit raise process is clear, transparent, and fair for all employees. We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your support in addressing this issue.