

# College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences

## DOMAIN #5: FACULTY/STAFF EXCELLENCE TO PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS

**Leader:** Rich Thompson, NRM

**Attendees:** Jay Noel and Rudy Pompa, AGB, Sue Tonik, CAFES Administration, Phil Tong, DSCI  
(provided input via email)

1. **Recruiting and retaining high-quality, diverse faculty, staff and administrators**
2. **Supporting high performance faculty, staff, and administrators**
3. **Demonstrating and valuing faculty quality as a key input to student success**
4. **Ensuring service excellence in every area to support student success**

One question emerged in the deliberation on this domain – *how do we define faculty and staff excellence or, more simply, productivity?*

**Proposition:** The reputation of any university is built upon the reputation of its faculty, the quality of the students, and the interaction between the two. The ability to sustain, much less advance, excellence in faculty and support staff is highly constrained by budgetary and institutional limitations. Because student success is so closely linked with the quality of faculty and their support staff, the outcomes Cal Poly aspires to imbue in its graduates will increasingly be unmet.

### **Assumptions and sub-propositions:**

1. A PhD is a research degree.
2. In general, full-time Cal Poly faculty are 100% teaching appointments.
3. Faculty at Cal Poly are in the midst of a transition from a technical skills educational model to a teacher-scholar model wherein scholarship in applied research or other creative endeavors is expected.
4. This transition is accelerated by a large turnover in faculty due to relatively rapid increase in the rate of retirements.
5. There appears to be a decreasing gap in reward-requirements between tenure-track and lecturer faculty.
6. The faculty salary/cost-of-living gap in San Luis Obispo has grown to the point where faculty vacancies in many discipline areas may go unfilled with even qualified faculty, much less high quality faculty.
7. The ability to respond to the salary-cost gap is constrained by the rigid salary structure established through collective bargaining.
8. The review and decision-making process for the tenure and promotion of faculty and staff lacks sufficient external peer review.

### **Actions/Recommendations:**

- A bifurcated faculty comprised of tenure-track PhDs and contract full and part-time lecturers needs to become the new paradigm. The PhDs will have split-appointments between teaching and research; the lecturers (holding MS degrees or BS with experience) will have 100% teaching contracts. Thus, there may be a need to convert more tenure-track positions to lecturer positions under this recommendation.
- Rules and regulations governing compensation for graduate student TA and RA appointments need to be reviewed to remove artificial barriers.
- Create funds for developmental activity for staff.

- Faculty need more staff support for teaching and especially research activity. Lack of staff support in the submission of grant proposals severely constrains faculty in their pursuit of research funding.
- Greater recognition for the scholarship of research – funding assistance, facilities, rewards, etc.
- There needs to be a clear difference in the rewards and responsibilities between tenure-track PhDs and full-time lecturers.
- A new accounting formula for teaching loads needs development, one that gives greater weight for teaching graduate courses and serving on graduate committees, within reasonable limits.

**Ideas:**

- Require peer-review, external to the College or even University, of tenure and promotion decisions on faculty and staff.
- There appears to be an “us vs. them” environment at Cal Poly, that is, the faculty & staff against the administration and vice versa. Require academic administrators to teach one formal course per year. Also, require academic administrators to remain active in their scientific discipline, possibly even maintaining an active research program.
- Support for the expansion of selective centers/institutes of excellence may aid in promoting faculty excellence.