

UCAR Management Committee (UMC)
Working Group #4
Administrative Efficiency & Agility

Selected Subject Matter Expert Meeting Notes
Ladder Track Issues

These notes were prepared to capture the major points of discussion from the two subject matter expert meetings on ladder track issues. They are meant to provide some context for the WG#4's recommendations, which are provided in a separate document.

Issue 1: LT Annual Performance Evaluations & Forms

a) It was noted that when the new LT performance appraisal forms were originally introduced in 2011, there were many questions about how it was supposed to be interpreted and how it would be used across NCAR. The instructions were modified to clarify some of the open issues. By the second year and after much debate, each Lab settled on its own process with somewhat different interpretations.

b) Staff feedback focused on the redundancy of the four tables that capture the percent of effort for each of the appointment criterion. The planning (next year) information can be captured in the narrative. In addition, staff feedback indicated that the tables require information at a detail level that is inappropriate (too much precision is expected) and that staff take a lot of time trying to calculate the correct percentages.

c) With respect to the appraisal matrix, the WG indicated that it's very hard to rank someone doing an outstanding job doing 5% community service vs. someone doing a good job at the 20% community service level. The ambiguity on how to deal with these questions causes significant angst each year.

d) The NCAR Directorate (ND) indicated that it was important to capture the information as objectively as possible since it was used for inter-comparison statistics, but they also understand that it could be seen as redundant by some. NCAR-wide statistics are being calculated based on that input, but that there is recognition that the entries are just estimates. The ND indicated that the appraisal matrix provides a quick-look (somewhat objective) summary of the performance for each supervisee and makes it easier to identify performance trends (and level of effort per criterion) across NCAR. Changing the performance appraisal form on a regular basis makes it difficult to understand and the long-term impact of the process cannot be evaluated. The ND would like to keep some semblance of continuity while keeping fundamental part of the assessment that was developed very carefully and thoughtfully. In the past there was very little equity in way

assessments were done in and across the labs. There are easy and hard graders and there was no attempt made to reconcile.

Issue 2: Post-ARG Review (PAR) Process

a) The WG reiterated the issues identified by staff and also commented that staff felt that the PAR is appropriate for a tenured position, but NCAR does not have tenure.

b) The ND indicated that the PAR was approved by the BOT as being appropriate for NCAR and regardless of tenure, a special review is needed since the LT positions are 'special' at NCAR as they are 'people based', include a NSF base salary (target) commitment, and come with a 1-year salary commitment should a RIS be required. The ND also stated that the PAR is not redundant with the annual performance reviews as it provides a summative assessment and it helps identify and possibly address scientists that are no longer productive.

c) The WG/SMEs reflected staff feedback that a substantial amount of work is required to prepare the materials for the PAR, especially if all the materials are included (including the optional ones) and that the workload at the Lab level required to prepare the packet is not appreciated at the ND level. The ND indicated that on average about 12-15 PARs are performed each year.

d) The WG/SMEs then asked whether the PAR process can be further streamlined to reduce the workload of folks preparing materials. The ND indicated that it probably could be streamlined and the ND is open to suggestions.

e) Should the WG recommendation to eliminate the formal PAR process not be adopted, the PAR process and supporting documentation should be reviewed, and where appropriate, streamlined. In particular, the inclusion of the retrospective cumulative performance evaluation process should be reconsidered since the annual performance appraisal process for LT staff is already designed to evaluate performance w.r.t. the NCAR LT criteria.

Issue 3: ARG Process

Staff feedback, which was primarily from the NCAR Scientist' Assembly, focused on issues and governance conflicts that are the jurisdiction of the ARG, ARG Bylaws Committee, and the NCAR Directorate; therefore, the recommendations are directed to these groups.