

Report of the Merit Review Committee for the Arts and Sciences May 1, 2013

Overview of the Committee's work

Dean Conley constituted a committee in fall, 2012 to study the Arts and Sciences merit review system. This committee has been co-chaired by Elizabeth Barnes and Joel Schwartz. Other committee members are Chris Abelt, Jamie Armstrong, Tuska Benes, Josh Burk, Paul Heideman, Brian Kreydatus, and Deenesh Sohoni.

The Committee has studied a broad continuum of topics, from the definition of “merit” by departments, to the processes they follow to evaluate faculty and to assign them numerical scores, to the procedure that the dean follows to convert these merit scores into salaries. The committee’s thinking has profited from an examination of several studies that have been conducted at William and Mary in recent years. These include a “Survey on Departmental Merit Evaluation Processes” that was conducted for the Dean of the Faculty in 2008; a “Report” of an ad hoc committee in 2007 that was appointed by the Dean to study the methodology for converting department merit scores to salary dollars; and a Faculty Compensation Board report to Provost Halleran on gender and racial/ethnic salary equity at William and Mary (2012)

The Committee identified two topics to which it wanted to give in-depth consideration: the treatment of faculty activities in interdisciplinary programs in the merit review process; and alternative approaches to the specific formulas that departments might use to evaluate faculty and the dean might use to convert department merit scores into salaries. We divided the committee into two subcommittees to study these topics, both of which developed questionnaires to solicit faculty opinion on these subjects. We found substantial agreement on the subject of the treatment of faculty’s interdisciplinary activities and some disagreement over alternative approaches to formulas. Both are discussed in this report.

This document also summarizes the committee’s conclusions and recommendations on the general principles that should govern our merit evaluation process and on the specific areas where departments and programs should be required to follow standardized policies and practices, and the areas where they should be given leeway to accommodate disciplinary differences and variations in department/program cultures.

Current Practices

Committee members were struck with the considerable variation that exists in the practices of departments. For example, most departments have elected personnel committees that conduct merit reviews, while others leave this to the chair alone. In at least one department (Physics) all tenure-eligible faculty evaluate all other faculty and the simple average scores are turned in to the dean.

Some departments (e.g., English and Psychology) have elaborate and detailed additive point systems for evaluating faculty merit (e.g., .3 for an independent study supervision, .5 for an

honors supervision), and some have weighted tier systems for ranking journals. Other departments arrive at overall evaluations without quantifying the component parts.

Some departments, but not all, report merit evaluations to faculty and then provide them with an institutionalized appeals option before the chair sends the merit report to the dean. Most departments give the Dean short paragraphs justifying the scores of each faculty member, while others do not provide the Dean with individualized narratives.

All departments we studied evaluate their faculty on a 15-point scale. Most departments use a 6-6-3 (teaching/research/service) distribution. Some chairs elect to be evaluated on a 5-5-5 scale. Other variations include Geology (7-5-3); Music (a standard 6-6-3 that can be altered annually by choice of each faculty member to 7-5-3 or 5-7-3, while the chair and the directors of bands and choirs can choose 5-5-5 because of extensive service obligations); Theatre, Speech and Dance (teaching 5-7, scholarly/creative activity 2-5, co-curricular 2-5, service 3, all points adding up to 15, and faculty can choose within these ranges each year), MLL (6-6-3 is the standard but faculty can request a 6-5-4, which must remain for a three-year period); and Biology (6-6-3 is the standard but faculty can request a deviation through a written agreement with the dean).

Principles

Drawing on our interviews with chairs/program directors and our own judgment, we suggest that the merit evaluation process should be governed by the following principles:

The Purpose and Limits of Merit Evaluations

The merit evaluation process exists in large part for the purpose of determining raises. It is not intended to serve as an overall assessment of every contribution that faculty members make or as an institutionalized opportunity to provide faculty with general professional advice.

Department Autonomy

Departments and programs are in the best position to judge the merit of their colleagues. This peer-review principle should be respected, as long as the Dean is in a position to judge whether departments are not violating other principles (e.g., that departments are being fair and consistent).

Recognition of Interdisciplinary Contributions

Given the College's stated belief in the value of interdisciplinarity, the interdisciplinary contributions of faculty should not be seen as "over and above" what faculty already contribute, but as valued and central.

Openness

Policies and procedures should be written, public, and accessible. Descriptions of factors (scholarship, teaching and service) considered components of merit should be made known to faculty.

Consistency

Factors that affect salary should be applied consistently to all faculty within a department and program, and, by the Dean, to all faculty in Arts and Sciences.

Feedback to Faculty

The merit evaluation process should provide faculty with feedback so that they can understand the merit score they have received, and faculty should be afforded the opportunity, if they wish, to receive guidance on how they might improve their merit performance in the future.

Tenure/Tenure Eligible Faculty Model

William and Mary places an equal emphasis on teaching and research, and the merit evaluation system should reflect this model, either literally or within a modest range of variation, and provide faculty with incentives to perform according to this model.

Recommendations

1. Every department and program should clarify in its personnel procedures the criteria and process for merit evaluation.
2. In the merit process, departments should count, in a tangible way, faculty work outside of the department: e.g., study abroad teaching/directing and involvement in interdisciplinary programs. In the latter case, this applies to faculty with or without an official JAMOU, or Joint Appointment, in the program and host department. How departments determine the merit value of contributions to programs can, and probably should, be flexible; however, the procedures a department adopts should become part of their approved personnel procedures. The committee recommends that the Dean require departments to show evidence of how their personnel policies take such contributions into account.
3. Program directors should provide host department chairs with an annual report on contributing faculty, including such information as summaries of student evaluations, information about the context of evaluations (e.g., is it a team taught course, or an especially challenging or unpopular required course?), service on program committees and the approximate time commitment of this service, and, if appropriate, scholarship in the area of the program. Program directors will work in consultation with faculty who participate in the program to determine the specific information that will be provided. As a normal rule, program directors and department chairs work together to arrive at the merit score of contributing faculty.
4. According to the 2009 Faculty Survey, the evaluation of teaching is broadly considered by faculty to be too restrictively tied to student evaluations. Departments and programs should be required to evaluate teaching by at least two methods, as per the Faculty Handbook.
5. Every department and program should require faculty to provide the individual or committee that does merit evaluations with an updated CV, in addition to the activity report that is required by the Faculty Handbook, for the period under evaluation.

6. Every chair, and, if appropriate, every program director, should provide the Dean with an updated CV, in addition to the brief (100 word) narrative, which is required by the Faculty Handbook, for each of the faculty members under review.
7. Upon request, every department and/or program should provide faculty with adequate feedback to make it possible for them to understand their merit evaluation scores and the steps they might take to improve these scores in the future.
8. Every department and program should have a policy in its personnel procedures that provides faculty with an opportunity to appeal their merit evaluations before scores are transmitted to the Dean.
9. Departments should keep full merit review dossiers for six years, in an electronic form to the extent possible.
10. The 6-6-3 division of merit responsibilities that has been the norm in Arts and Sciences should remain the norm, although there may be specific justified exceptions. *Pre-tenure faculty* may be evaluated by different ratios only if this is fully justified and stipulated at the time of hire, and in no case should either teaching or research fall below 5 or rise above 7. *Tenured faculty* should be allowed a ratio other than 6-6-3 in years that make this distribution unfair: for example, chairing a department or participating in study abroad. However, tenured faculty wishing to alter the 6-6-3 ratio will normally need to make the request in advance of the year pertaining, and may only do so when there is agreement between the faculty member in question, the chair—in consultation with the department—and the Dean. Normally the number of points allotted to either teaching or research will not fall below 4 nor rise above 8. Similarly, points allotted to governance should vary between the norm of 3 to a maximum of 5. In cases where teaching, research and service points are moved from the 6-6-3 norm, new expectations in these areas should be clarified in writing.
11. Departments should have a policy in their personnel policies for determining merit in years when faculty are on SSRL or on leave for another reason.
12. We are in accord with the NTE Working Group report, which states:

"In years in which a salary pool is available for merit raises for TE faculty, a pool of funds will be set aside specifically for merit raises for non-tenure-eligible faculty designated as Senior Lecturers. There should be three raise categories for these faculty, with raises distributed as constant dollars: faculty who have received evaluations of "Does Not Meet Expectations" should receive no raise; faculty who receive evaluations of "Meets Expectations" or "Exceeds Expectations" should all receive the same dollar raises as the other faculty in their evaluation category; faculty receiving evaluations of "Exceeds" should receive higher raises than faculty with "Meets."

In addition, chairs should provide, as for TE faculty, a 100-word narrative for each Senior Lecturer under review.

13. At present, departments evaluate faculty on a fifteen point scale and report to the Dean the actual number of total points for each faculty member. Some faculty propose that departments might adopt a system that places faculty into just three categories: Falls Below Expectations, Meets Expectations, Exceeds Expectations. Whereas the first method distributes faculty, as appropriate, over the 15-point scale and awards them raises according to their specific position in the distribution, the second method involves a rounding methodology that groups faculty into just three categories, and awards every faculty in each of the three categories the same dollar or percentage raise. (See *Appendix A* for an example of how this three-category system might be implemented.)

In the committee's judgment, both of these approaches are acceptable and departments should have the discretion to adopt the approach that best fits their cultures and circumstances.

14. Traditionally, there have been three possible components of raises for faculty performing satisfactorily: 1) those recognizing cost of living (e.g., a state or college-wide decision for a percentage increase for all employees performing satisfactorily in order to compensate for inflation), 2) a further merit raise recognizing higher levels of performance, and 3) equity adjustments negotiated with the Dean by chairs or program directors. The committee believes that all three can be legitimate considerations for determining raises under certain circumstances. The Committee recommends that departments and the Dean adopt the following rigorous distinction between these considerations.

- Base merit raises as a percentage of salary are intended to recognize all faculty rated satisfactory in performance by the Dean and department chairs. It is important to recognize that, especially in years when there are no or low raises, the "negative raises" arising from inflation are damaging to morale for faculty who meet expectations for satisfactory performance. Base merit raises should adjust for inflation for those faculty performing at a satisfactory level.
- Secondary merit raises refer to those dollars awarded to faculty at or above satisfactory performance as indicated by their merit scores. Unlike base merit, secondary merit raises should reward equal productivity with equal dollar (not percentage) raises within a department. Faculty *in the same department, not between departments*, with the same merit scores should receive the same dollar raises in the secondary merit component of raises.
- An "*equity adjustment*" is appropriate if a faculty member's salary is not explained by his or her merit over a career, relative to other faculty in his or her department. Thus annual merit reviews and scores are a necessary input into determinations of equity.

15. When the percentage raise pool is at or below the rate of inflation, the committee believes that raises should be base merit and/or equity exclusively. The "negative raise" issue arising from inflation is a serious concern that can undermine our intention of rewarding faculty who meet all professional expectations. In years of low raises, base merit for satisfactory performance should be addressed first. Secondary merit should begin playing a role only when the pool is above this threshold.

16. Equity raises are appropriate in several circumstances. For example, if a faculty member receives high merit scores in a year without raises and loses the opportunity for increase in base pay, that individual's salary may not be advancing fairly in comparison to the salaries of department colleagues. Over a period of several years without raises, this effect can become compounded. Several departments have developed methodologies for evaluating whether the salary of a faculty member has fallen below where it should be based on merit alone. In such circumstances an "*equity adjustment*" would be the appropriate remedy.

Because the mere *appearance* of compression or inversion can be misleading, the committee recommends that the Dean adopt a method for systematically studying whether faculty members in a department are at an appropriate salary level *relative to colleagues in their department*. One such method can be found in **Appendix B**. A 5 year average (2008-2013) of faculty's merit scores could be used with this formula to determine who is and is not at an appropriate salary level in their department. It is crucial to note that equity and merit are intertwined here, since the determination of adjustments to salary are based on actual merit scores from the past five years.

We recommend that this method be implemented this year (2013) by the Dean's office in order to determine how individual faculty have been affected by five years without merit raises. (An example of its implementation by a department follows Appendix B). Contact deans would then meet with department chairs and, when appropriate, program directors, to discuss the results. This method is meant as an aid in identifying possible salary inequities; it is not meant to replace the judgment of chairs and directors with respect to salaries.

The Dean will have to decide year-by-year the percentage of the salary pool that will be allocated to alleviating inequities that are identified in this process, but the Dean should allocate a significant amount on a regular basis. If the Dean does so, it will no longer be necessary to cloud the distinction between equity and merit because "equity" raises will be based on multiple year averages of merit scores.

17. For the future: if the Dean accepts our recommendation that 1) base merit increases be a percentage raise based on the faculty member's salary and that 2) the secondary merit component of raises should be fixed dollar amounts (where faculty in the same department with the same merit scores would receive the same dollar raise), then secondary merit raises will be determined by a simple equation based on the departments' actual scores (not the normalized scores created by the Dean's office). The equation is as follows: the secondary merit raise pool for the department is divided by the sum of the entire department's merit scores, translating each merit point into a dollar value. For example, and hypothetically, in a department with 3 members with merit scores of 9, 10, and 11 and a merit raise pool of \$10,000, the \$10,000 would be divided by 30 (the sum of the merit scores) and each merit point would be worth \$333. Thus a merit score of 9 would receive a raise of \$2,999, a score of 10 would receive \$3,333 raise, and 11 would receive a raise of \$3,666. Any faculty member's total raise would thus be a combination of their base merit raise (percentage) plus any secondary merit raise (fixed dollar amount), plus any possible equity adjustment.

If the Dean does not accept our recommendation, then the Dean will want to make sure that department means are normalized and distributions are preserved when merit scores are submitted to the Dean's office. If means are normalized (as has been the practice), distributions can be distorted if the Dean does not preserve the intended distributions. For instance, if a faculty member is a quarter standard deviation below the department mean in the department's judgment, this "preservation" procedure would preserve this gap when the Dean standardizes means and converts department numbers into raises. Of course, if the Dean requires all departments to turn in merit scores with a pre-arranged mean (say, 11.5) than this concern does not arise.

Appendix A Three Category (or Threshold) System of Merit Evaluation

Each tenure-eligible and tenured faculty member is evaluated in the areas of teaching, research and service according to the following scale:

- (FB) Falls below expectation
- (M) Meets expectation
- (E) Exceeds expectation (reserved for extraordinary achievement)

In addition to this, an overall evaluation is made—again using the scale listed above. The overall evaluation is arrived at by assigning numbers to the above scale (FB = 1, M = 2, E = 3) and using the following weighted formula.

$$(.4 \times \text{Teaching} + .4 \times \text{Research} + .2 \times \text{Service}) = \text{Overall Evaluation (as yet unrounded)}$$

(The weights given here mirror the current weighting system of 6-6-3 but other weightings are also possible. One could, for example, mirror the current 5-5-5 weighting reserved for those with extensive service obligations by finding the simple average of teaching, research and service.)

When the resultant number in the above equation has a decimal place from .1 to .4, that number is rounded downward to the nearest whole number. From .5 to .9 the number is rounded upward to the nearest whole number. That whole number is then converted to one of the three categories in the scale above (1 = FB, 2 = M, 3 = E). Departments and programs should be able to determine how the score in each domain impacts the overall score. For example, receiving an evaluation of FB in either teaching or research could result in an automatic evaluation of FB overall.

There would be several possible ways to convert overall scores to specific raises. One method would be for the dean to assign absolute dollars according to the following table.

Overall Evaluation	Merit Increase
FB	No merit increase
M	base amount in absolute dollars
E	base amount plus a percentage of base amount (33% recommended for additional amount but this can remain open for discussion)

Threshold System of Merit Evaluation Sample Conversion Chart

Key

- FB (1) = Falls Below Expectation
- M (2) = Meets Expectation
- E (3) = Exceeds Expectation

T = Teaching
 R = Research
 S = Service

Weighting: .4 + .4 + .2

T / R / S		Overall Evaluation (unrounded)	(rounded)	Overall Evaluation
1 / 1 / 3	=	1.4	1	FB
1 / 2 / 2	=	1.6	2	FB (automatic FB overall if FB in either teaching or research)
1 / 2 / 3	=	1.8	2	FB (automatic FB overall if FB in either teaching or research)
1 / 3 / 3	=	2.2	2	FB (automatic FB overall if FB in either teaching or research)
2 / 2 / 1	=	1.8	2	M
2 / 2 / 2	=	2	2	M
3 / 2 / 2	=	2.4	2	M
2 / 3 / 3	=	2.6	3	E
3 / 3 / 2	=	2.8	3	E

Appendix B

One Approach to Systematically Evaluating The Need For Equity Adjustments

Ideally merit increases should occur every year. In reality, they have not. Since individual merit scores can fluctuate year-to-year, inequities can build up over a career if the years in which there are merit increases are also those where an individual's scores are lower. There have not been merit increases over the last five years. If these years were the most productive for some faculty, then there is a risk that they will not be properly rewarded. To account for non-regular merit increases, the Merit Review Steering Committee recommends that chairs and program directors apply the following career merit equity analysis used by the Physics Department.

The formula shown below assumes that regular merit increase will result in an exponential growth in salary. The exact growth for an individual depends on the number of years of service (n), their average merit score (\overline{M}) as reported by the department or program, and a factor that converts merit scores into salary (c). The available merit data determines how this formula is applied.

$$S = S_0 e^{cn\overline{M}}$$

Case 1: Career merit scores are known for all faculty. The formula is converted to

$$c = \ln(S/S_0) / n\overline{M}$$

The current salary (S), years of service and career average merit score are all known. The conversion factor c ideally should be the same for all faculty in the department or program. Using a spreadsheet, an initial baseline salary S_0 is guessed. The variation in c is quantified by the standard deviation. The baseline salary is manually adjusted to minimize the standard deviation in c . Faculty with low values of c are candidates for a salary correction. The corrections are then calculated so as to minimize the standard deviation of the distribution of c values. Chairs and program directors would have to use their judgment for determining n for cases where faculty arrived at W&M with significant TE service at other institutions. The 'years of service in the profession' reported to the dean each year might be a suitable alternative.

Case 2. Career merit scores are known only for a few years.

The last merit increase was applied in late 2007, and there were several years of regular merit increases that preceded it. This analysis assumes that career salaries were relatively equitable in 2008. The first formula is rearranged to an expression where a linear regression can be applied for the entire department or program:

$$\ln S = \ln S_0 + nc\overline{M}$$

In the linear regression the y-values are $\ln S$ and the x-values are n . The intercept gives the best value for S_0 , and the slope determines the best value for c using the average department merit score over the last five years for \overline{M} ($c = \text{slope}/\overline{M}$). The predicted individual salary for 2013 (S_{2013}) is calculated based on the 2008 salary where n' is the years of service since 2008 and \overline{M}' is the average merit score reported by the department or program for the individual faculty member since 2008.

$$S_{2013} = S_{2008} e^{cn'\overline{M}'}$$

The differences between the predicted salary and actual salary can be expressed in absolute dollars or as a percentage of base pay.

These career merit equity formulae are just tools for chairs and program directors to use to help them think systematically about equity.