

Faculty Excellence Committee Annual Report (2017-2018)

As of April 30, 2018, the Committee for Faculty Excellence (CFE) had approved over 110 Teaching and Productive Scholarships (TAPS) grant requests. The CFE also reviewed six sabbatical proposals, five portfolios from candidates for the Annual Award for Excellence in Service, and six portfolios for the Annual Award for Faculty Excellence Scholarly and/or Creative Pursuits.

1. TAPS AWARDS. Starting with a TAPS (Teaching and Productive Scholarship) budget of \$157,000, the committee made 110 TAPS grant awards through April 30 of FY 2017-18, totaling \$146, 635. This is an average award of approximately \$1,333. These awards supported domestic projects, international projects, research equipment, service, and teaching-related projects. Based on the pending applications and applications we are expecting between now and the end of this financial year (June 30, 2018), our committee expects to expend its entire 2017-18 TAPS budget.

The SharePoint-based electronic application process adopted by the committee in 2014-2015 allowed the committee to process TAPS applications typically within 7-10 days during the regular semester and within two weeks over breaks.

As noted in previous CFE reports, the rising demand for TAPS awards – reflecting a trend that has developed over the last several years – demonstrates the critical importance of TAPS support for faculty. In view of tighter travel budgets that have mainly affected departmental travel funds, TAPS has emerged as the single most important source of faculty development funding on campus and we are very pleased to note the SVCAA's highly proactive role in supporting the committee by ensuring that we have funds to support the important work of scholarship that goes on at this university. We are hoping that the same spirit will continue during the 2018-19 financial year.

In the past, our committee would set grant limits at the beginning of the fiscal year and then revise the limits downwards towards the end of fall in order to stretch the funds throughout the fiscal year. However, in consideration of increasing cost of research travel and high cost of attending conferences, the CFE decided, at the beginning of this fiscal year, to set the eligible amounts to at \$2,250 and \$2,750 for domestic and international projects, respectively, and to keep the same amounts throughout the financial year. This has turned out to be a more realistic practice and has greatly helped to fund more projects.

2. SABBATICAL PROPOSALS. In fall 2017, the CFE received and reviewed six Sabbatical Proposals. We are glad to report that all of these were approved and funded by the office of the Provost and SVCAA.

3. SERVICE AWARD. In fall 2017 the committee reviewed five portfolios from candidates for the third Annual Award for Excellence in Service. The committee selected Dr. Araceli Hernandez-Laroche as this year's award recipient. This award will be presented at the May commencement.

4. SCHOLARSHIP/CREATIVE ACTIVITIES AWARD. Around the middle of the spring semester, the committee reviewed six portfolios for the Annual Award for Faculty Excellence Scholarly and/or Creative Pursuits. The committee selected Dr. Joshua Ruppel as the award

winner. This award will be presented at the May commencement.

Committee members in 2017-2018 included Calvin Odhiambo (the CFE Chair), Lynn McMillan, Matthew Donaldson, Jack Cheng, Andrew Kearns, Steve Hyun, Susan Richardson, Gary Bradley, Allison Pingley, Kimberly Shorter, Debbie Charnley, and Brock Adams. Since this committee involvement requires working 12-months in a year, this committee has worked tirelessly throughout the year to enable this committee to meet its very demanding yearlong obligations.

Service on this committee ensures that significant faculty development activities and faculty accomplishments are rewarded and supported. The twelve-month work of this year's unit representatives demonstrates commendable service to supporting faculty development and faculty excellence in teaching, research, and service at USC Upstate. New members begin work immediately after the last Faculty meeting of the year and out-going members are frequently asked to train their replacements. The committee is a significant service obligation for faculty members. It should also be noted that the work of this committee depends heavily on the professionalism and efficiency of the SVCAA's office, in particular, the Executive Assistant to the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and the many administrative assistants in different units across the university.