May 26, 2017

TO: Susan Cochran, Chair, Academic Senate

FROM: Benjamin Williams,
Chair, HSSEAS Faculty Executive Committee

RE: Systemwide review of proposal to modify LSOE series to Teaching Professor series

The Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) of the Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science (HSSEAS) has discussed the package of proposals to modify the Lecturer with Security of Employment (LSOE) series, including renaming to a “Teaching Professor” series. Discussion took place in FEC meetings on April 14 and May 12 2017. In the past, the HSSEAS FEC has written memos opposing similar proposals (memos dated February 18 2015, and February 20 2015) originating within UCLA. In the recent discussion, opinion within our FEC has evolved somewhat, and while some concerns remain, and opinion is mixed, we can offer cautious support for the proposal, provided that the concerns are addressed.

Points of support include:

- The LSOE series already exists with a variety of rights (academic senate membership, voting rights, etc.), and this proposal appears primarily to be a renaming.
- This proposal will elevate and distinguish LSOE with the title of “Teaching Professor”, which will be more widely understood outside the university, will give additional prestige to the involved faculty, and may allow recruitment of a higher level of candidate. It will help to distinguish between ad hoc Lecturers and the much qualitatively different series of LSOE/Teaching Professor. Indeed, our own discussion was initially muddied by extreme confusion between the difference between the Lecturer title and the LSOE series, and this proposal would help to distinguish this.

Specific concerns discussed include:

- One of the unique advantages of a research university is that the professors who teach the curriculum are also experts in their respective research fields. This benefits both the students by connecting them to the state-of-the-art, as well as the professors themselves. Establishing a new series of “Teaching Professors” wrongly gives the impression that our regular ladder faculty are not “teachers”. This is the wrong message to send – both internally to our own faculty who must balance research and teaching responsibilities – as well as to the outside world where we must fight the perceptions of public university faculty who do not perform enough teaching.
- The risk exists that “Teaching Professors” might be used as a lower cost alternative to hiring traditional Professor series, and thus displacing FTEs
from faculty engaged in research. We therefore support the use of a cap on
the number/fraction of Teaching Professor titles to prevent this from
occurring.

- Our own discussion was muddied by the extreme confusion between the
difference between the conventional Lecturer” and LSOE. This included
concerns that ordinary Lecturers perhaps hired on an ad hoc basis would
“automatically” transition into “Teaching Professors” after some minimum
number of quarters. While the eventual reading of the proposal document by
the FEC appears to rule out this possibility, we wish to re-emphasize that
should there be no “back-door” path to a Teaching Professor title
automatically from the Lecturer series.