The “Becoming Emeritus/a” Process

For Academic Leadership Discussion

April 25, 2017

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The Transition to Emeritus Committee

An ad hoc committee charged by the provost to look into all aspects associated with a faculty member becoming an emeritus faculty member.

On our [website](#) you will find these three documents:

1. Perquisites and Opportunities for Retired and Emeritus/a Faculty
2. The Faculty Retirement Checklist
3. Process for Becoming Emeritus/a

Goal: Make life easier for both chairs and candidates.
What’s At Stake

$90 - $82.50 = $7.50
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C2C Bus Fare For the Ordinary Public and Emeritus/a

C2C Bus Fare For Active Faculty, Students, Staff
What’s At Stake

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C2C Bus Fare For the Ordinary Public and C2C Bus Fare For Active Faculty, Students, Staff And Emeritus/a

Effective April 24, 2017
Let’s Look at a Proposed Process For Becoming Emeritus/a
Any member of the professional staff who retires after ten years in the tenured rank of university professor, professor, or associate professor and who has rendered distinguished and meritorious service to the university, may be appointed professor emeritus by the provost after recommendation by the members of the particular department and the dean of the college or school faculty to which the retiring member belonged.
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The department chair provides the dean with a letter summarizing the retiree’s career and the department’s vote and recommendation.

If the dean approves the recommendation, the dean so indicates when forwarding the departmental materials.

The dean sends the materials to the provost via the Academic Personnel Policy Office.

See pages 96-97 in the Cornell University Academic Titles and Appointments Policy.
The Proposed New Policy

What’s New?

1. A clarification of “meritorious service to the university.”
2. A recommendation that a retiring associate professor becomes an “associate professor emeritus/a.”
3. A recommendation that it is the full professors who vote on an emeritus case.
4. A very light appeal process that can be invoked if either the department or the dean are negative.

Let’s step through the proposed policy justifying these changes...
Proposed Policy for Becoming Emeritus

Upon retirement, a university professor, professor, or associate professor who has been a tenured member of the University Faculty for ten or more years may be considered for emeritus/a status.

No Change

Side note. There are currently no University Professors.
Proposed Policy for Becoming Emeritus

Awarding the title of university professor emeritus/a, professor emeritus/a, or associate professor emeritus/a shall be based upon the career contributions of the candidate through a combination of teaching, research, advising, administration, and outreach. An overall record of meritorious service to the university is expected.

Change:

Propose using “emeritus/a” as a modifier, like “adjunct”, “visiting”, etc. This would require new titles, e.g., associate professor emeritus/a.

Reasons:

The pool of retiring associate professors is large. There are currently 150+ associate professors age 50 or above. A relatively small fraction of retiring associate professors seek emeritus status which is disheartening since so many in this group render meritorious service to the university. Creating a new title “associate processor emeritus” communicates a sentiment of appreciation. And it will make it unnecessary for departments to burn up time trying to decide if there are special criteria for associate professors seeking to become professor emeritus/a.
Awarding the title of university professor emeritus/a, professor emeritus/a, or associate professor emeritus/a shall be based upon the career contributions of the candidate through a combination of teaching, research, advising, administration, and outreach. An overall record of meritorious service to the university is expected.

Change:

Be more explicit about the venues for meritorious service.

Reasons:

More faculty will “go emeritus/a” if they anticipate appreciation for the full scope of their life’s work.

The “combination” is for the unit to decide. However, one would hope that it is not be a “tenure review combination.”
Proposed Policy for Becoming Emeritus

The candidate supplies a curriculum vita to the department chair together with a cover letter that includes the date of retirement and a request to be considered for either emeritus or emerita status.
Proposed Policy for Becoming Emeritus

The request is reviewed and voted upon by the full professors in the candidate’s department.

The result of the vote and the chair’s recommendation to either approve or deny emeritus/a status is communicated to the dean of the candidate’s college.

The dean reviews the dossier and makes a recommendation to the provost.

Change:

Instead of just saying “the department votes” we are identifying the full professors as the group that should decide upon the merits of an emeritus/a case.

Reasons:

There are about six different who-votes schemes across the ten colleges. This is not the way to celebrate “decentralized Cornell.”

For some retiring faculty, the idea of being evaluated by colleagues with lesser rank generates an unnecessary level of retirement angst.
If either the dean or chair recommendation is negative, then the candidate is so informed by the provost and given the opportunity to respond in writing within sixty days.

The final decision to approve emeritus/a status is made by the provost, perhaps in consultation with the dean of faculty and others.

Change:

Create a “light” appeal process.

Reasons:

Provides assurance that the process is fair and systematically executed. The current system is ad hoc and sends a negative message to the community.

The provost office will now know about all emeritus/a cases, not just the ones with a happy ending.
What’s Up With Peers?

We have looked at how “Ivy Plus” institutions handle the emeritus process and beyond.

Some facts*:

1. All but Columbia and MIT grant emeritus status to associate professors

2. U Penn and U Chicago have the title “associate professor emeritus/a”.

3. Brown, Harvard, Chicago and Stanford automatically grant emeritus status to all retiring faculty.

* This information was deduced from websites and is not guaranteed to be accurate. Title/promotion things are sometimes buried in obscure off-line documents.
Conclusion: We Need Some Guidance!

Here are some questions that get at what we just presented:

1. Do you support having a definition of “meritorious service to the university” that transcends teaching and research?

2. Do you support the “associate professor emeritus” idea?

3. Do you support having a uniform policy across the colleges that only full professors vote on emeritus cases?

4. Do you support having a “light” appeal process that involves just the Dean of Faculty and the Provost?