



SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

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Department Chairs and Equivalent Unit Directors Policy

Source Committee: Faculty Affairs Committee

Unit(s) Responsible for Implementation: Division of Faculty Affairs and Professional Development, AVP for Faculty Affairs, Office of the Provost

Consultations: AVP for Faculty Affairs

History

Version	Approved	Revisions(s)
4	05/14/2020	S20-145 Clarifies that equivalent units under this policy are ones in which degrees are granted and that units that do not have their own faculty are not covered by the policy.
3	12/6/2011	
2	2000	
1	1987	Original

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Policy

Rationale: According to the AAUP Statement Government of Colleges and Universities, “[t]he chair or head of a department serves as the chief representative of the department within an institution. Board, administration, and faculty should all bear in mind that the department chair or head has a special obligation to build a department strong in scholarship and teaching capacity.”

Department chairs and equivalent unit directors (hereafter department chairs or chairs) are faculty members of a department and have all the rights and responsibilities of a faculty member. Department chairs serve as liaisons between the faculty and the administration, communicating the department’s needs to the administration and keeping the faculty and staff informed of university policies, procedures, and initiatives. Of primary importance is their ability to provide effective leadership and direction for academic programs, foster productive communication within the department, and facilitate the department’s goals in all areas of responsibility. Managing the department’s resources - human, fiscal, and physical - is central to this endeavor. In addition, chairs represent the department to outside constituencies in an effort to build relationships that strengthen program offerings and benefit the community. For these reasons, and because of the role of the department chair in the tenure and promotion process, it is in the best interest of both the chair and the department that the chair be a tenured full professor, whenever possible.

This policy seeks to clarify the way chairs are selected, trained, evaluated, and, if necessary, removed, in order to best support chairs in fulfilling their complex roles. The recommendation of chairs, the responsibilities and duties of chairs, and the service of chairs at the will of the President are governed by the Collective Bargaining Agreement. It is expected that the process between the administration and the department faculty be transparent, collaborative and consultative. Solicitation of input from department faculty is strongly encouraged. It is in the best interests of the department and the academic programs that department chairs operate within the principles of shared governance. Maintaining positive working relationships with the faculty and staff is of the utmost importance. Communication should be open, honest, principled, and operate on a two-way exchange in which faculty and department chair input is sought and respected.

I. Principle and Definition. Administration and leadership of each academic department or degree-granting equivalent unit, and the library (hereafter "department") are provided by a department chair or equivalent unit/program director (hereafter "chair") who is a tenured/tenure-track faculty member of the department or who may be appointed through an external selection process. Academic units that do have their own faculty are not intended to be covered by this policy. The chair also serves as representative and advocate for the department and its faculty within the college, University, community and profession. The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) describes the normal selection of department chairs as being from the list of tenured or probationary faculty employees recommended by the department, through the election process described below, to so serve. The Collective Bargaining Agreement stipulates that department chairs shall be appointed by and shall serve at the pleasure of the President

For purposes of selection, appointment, and review of chairs, the term "faculty" includes tenured and tenure-track faculty, and instructors of record on contract excluding temporary faculty who are also graduate students in the department. Departments shall tabulate votes of temporary faculty on a pro-rated basis in proportion to the faculty member’s time-base appointment in the semester in which the selection or evaluation process is initiated.

II. Term of Office. Department chairs will be appointed for a three-year term beginning in the fall semester. Department chairs may be re-appointed to additional terms subsequent to the normal nomination and faculty ballot process every three years, but not exceeding three consecutive terms unless by mutual agreement of the majority of the department faculty and the Dean prior to the normal election process.

III. Duties and Responsibilities. The department chair is the person most fully responsible for leading, administering, and representing the department. The department chair's duties and responsibilities include but are not limited to the following four categories:

A. Academic Programs

1. To assume the leadership in the development and direction of quality academic programs.
2. To work with the department faculty in academic program planning and review, and curriculum development and revision.
3. To prepare the class schedule in consultation with the department faculty or appropriate department committee.

B. Students

1. To supervise advising, provide information, sign documents and petitions, and otherwise facilitate resolution of administrative difficulties students may encounter.
2. To promote department activities (programs, competitions, awards, professional organizations, clubs) and recruit potential majors/minors.
3. To be available to receive students' comments and suggestions about courses, instructors, and programs.
4. To attempt resolution of complaints, differences, or grievances between students and faculty.

C. Faculty

1. To encourage collegial and full participation of all members of the department in recognition that governance of departments is a joint and cooperative endeavor.
2. To participate in the faculty personnel processes for hiring, retention, tenure, and promotion with the tenured members of the department, and other faculty matters within existing trustee policy, the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and University and college policies.
3. To make an independent recommendation regarding hiring, retention, tenure and promotion after reviewing recommendations from the department's elected HRT/P committee.
4. To perform the evaluation and recommend the appointment or reappointment of temporary faculty either after receiving department peer review committee recommendation or upon delegation by the voting members of the department in accordance with Academic Senate policy and the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
5. To provide leadership at the department level in the implementation of the University's affirmative action policy.

6. To promote and support the professional development of the faculty.
7. To establish, after consultation with the faculty, appropriate departmental committees.
8. To distribute faculty teaching and service activities.

D. Administrative Responsibilities

1. To convey pertinent information to, from and within the department. To present issues which have potential impact on the department. To invite and respond to comments and suggestions of faculty and staff.
2. To represent the department within the college, University, community, and profession.
3. To work with the college dean on management of resources, including the establishment of enrollment targets, allocation of faculty positions, and all budget matters; to organize and supervise department expenditures and resources; to monitor departmental compliance with university regulations and deadlines.
4. To hire and supervise department staff.

A department may establish additional charges to the chair's duties and responsibilities specific to departmental needs.

IV. Selection of Chairs. The chair is appointed by the University President or the presidential designee in Academic Affairs upon the recommendation of the department and the appropriate dean. The nomination and selection process shall be as follows:

Nomination & Ballot => Dean's Report => Presidential Appointment

A. Nomination and Ballot. No later than the third week in the spring semester of the third year, the Office of Faculty Affairs shall inform, via the office of the college dean, the current department chair of the expiration of that chair's term. The department shall elect by secret ballot an ad hoc faculty committee of at least three full-time faculty for the election of chair (hereafter "Committee") to take charge of the chair's selection and balloting process. All department faculty shall be notified of this election. Upon recommendation of the department and in consultation with the college dean, faculty from a related discipline may serve on the Committee if there are insufficient faculty members within the department. The Committee shall conduct a secret ballot election to determine the department recommendation of the chair. Faculty who are in the early retirement program, and tenure-track (probationary) faculty in their terminal year are not eligible for nomination to serve as chair. All tenured and probationary faculty can be nominated or make self-nomination for consideration to become the chair. A department or equivalent unit shall consider probationary faculty to serve as chair only in extraordinary circumstances. Nominees for chair are encouraged to submit a personal statement.

Department faculty shall determine an electoral body comprised of all faculty. This electoral body shall vote by secret ballot. The results of this ballot, in a form determined by the department faculty, including a record of those who voted, will be forwarded to the dean as part of the report. The results

may include numerical counts, and because the vote is pro-rated, rounded to the nearest whole number to protect the confidentiality of part-time faculty votes.

The Committee shall report the result of the selection process to the department, and the department shall recommend their candidate to the Dean by the sixth week of the spring semester.

B. Dean's Report and President's Decision. When the dean supports the department recommendation, the dean shall meet with the recommended candidate prior to making a recommendation for appointment to the University President via the Office of Faculty Affairs by the ninth week of the semester. If the President or presidential designee agrees with the recommendation of the department and the Dean, the President will appoint the recommended candidate as the new department chair and the candidate will be considered the in-coming chair. The University President or designee notifies the Office of Faculty Affairs by the twelfth week of the semester.

If the dean does not support the departmental recommendation, the dean shall convene a meeting of the department faculty with at least a majority of the department faculty present to discuss its recommendation and the dean's objection. All department faculty must be notified of this meeting at least one week prior to the meeting. During this meeting, the department faculty members present and the college dean shall reach a mutual agreement either 1) to forward the original departmental recommendation, or 2) to repeat the departmental nomination process. If the disagreement persists, the dean and the department faculty shall seek mediation from the Office of Faculty Affairs. If no resolution is achieved through this process, the dean shall forward the department's recommendation and his/her statement of non-support to the University President or presidential designee via the Office of Faculty Affairs. It will then be the responsibility of the University President or the presidential designee to work with the dean and the department faculty to obtain a mutually acceptable solution.

If the University President or designee disagrees with the recommendation of both the department and the dean, he/she shall meet with the department faculty and the dean to discuss his/her objection. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, the department will provide alternative recommendations until a mutually acceptable candidate is identified.

C. Chair Transition. When a new chair is approved, the out-going chair shall facilitate the in-coming chair's transition into departmental management. The Committee shall schedule a meeting between the in-coming chair and the department faculty and staff on the duties and responsibilities of the chair in departmental management. Additional training for the in-coming chair shall be determined by the department as needed.

V. Chair's Midterm Feedback. The purpose of this feedback is to provide department faculty, staff and students the opportunity to offer constructive feedback to the chair in the third semester of service. The Department's Chair Election Committee is responsible for conducting the mid-term chair feedback process. By no later than the third week of the spring semester in the second year of the chair's term, the Chair Election Committee will initiate the feedback process by distributing a questionnaire to the department faculty and staff. A downloadable skeleton questionnaire would be available on Faculty Affairs website for departments to use if they so choose. A Department may alternatively choose to design its own questionnaire as long as the content of the questionnaire is

based on the four categories of duties and responsibilities outlined in the policy. Data will remain anonymous. The Chair Election Committee will collect all responses, develop a summary of the data and forward both data and summary to the chair. The process should be completed by the seventh week of the spring semester of the second year.

VI. Removal of a department chair.

A. Removal initiated by the Department: The faculty of the department may request that the chair be removed by an affirmative vote of at least three-fourths of the entire department faculty. The faculty in a program or equivalent unit of fewer than four faculty may request the chair be removed by an affirmative vote by a majority of the entire unit faculty. After taking such a vote, the faculty must meet with the appropriate dean and the department chair to discuss their concerns about the chair's performance of duties.

If as a result of this discussion it is determined that a remedy short of termination is possible and has a high likelihood of success, a specific plan to address the concerns will be prepared by the dean and presented to the department.

When sufficient progress is made on the plan, and after consultation with the department faculty and the dean, the President or designee may determine that the department chair can administer his/her assigned program in a satisfactory manner and the departmental chair appointment will continue. If the plan does not achieve the specified results, the department may recommend to the dean that the department chair appointment be terminated immediately. The termination of the departmental chair appointment for any reason does not affect the chair's underlying faculty status.

B. Removal by the President: Removal of a department chair before the conclusion of a term of service may be necessary. As indicated by the CBA, department chairs serve at the pleasure of the President, and the chair assignment may be terminated at will.

VII. Acting Chairs. In the event that it is necessary to appoint an acting chair, he/she shall be appointed by the University President or designee upon recommendation by a secret ballot vote of the faculty of the department and in consultation with the college dean. The acting chair can be appointed internally (from within the department) or externally (from outside the department or university). (In this situation, follow the process for the "External Selection of Chair.")

The position of acting chair has all the duties and responsibilities of a department chair. Acting chairs are temporary appointments. Acting chairs will not serve more than two consecutive semesters, except in very unusual circumstances in which the appointment as acting chair could be extended for a maximum of two additional semesters, by the agreement of the department in consultation with the dean. The normal selection process for a department chair shall begin as soon as possible after the appointment of an acting chair. (See section "Selection of Chairs.")

Time served as an acting chair does not count as part of the three-year term of a department chair.

VIII. External Selection of a Chair. A department may request an external search for a chair's appointment if there are available resources and when there is agreement between the department faculty and the college dean concerning department management and governance.

Subject to approval of the University President or designee, a department may conduct a formal search process, as part of the tenure-track faculty recruitment, for an external candidate for a department chair. The process must be in compliance with the university policy on tenure-track

faculty hiring. The hiring of an external chair needs to include a full vote of all eligible faculty similar to that of the election of a chair from within the department.

During the third semester of appointment, there shall be a Feedback process for the externally recruited department chair. (See section "Midterm Feedback") At the end of the third year of appointment, there shall be the normal chair's selection process as stipulated in the aforementioned section on "Selection of Chairs." The conclusion of the department chair's term shall not affect the chair's underlying faculty status.

IX. Timeline. The normal process for the selection and appointment of a department chair and Midterm Feedback shall be conducted as follows:

A. Selection of Chair: Spring Semester in the third year of the current chair's term.

1. Office of Faculty Affairs to notify department on Chair selection. (3rd week of semester)
2. Department meeting to establish ad hoc committee.
 - a. To nominate faculty for chair
 - b. To conduct faculty secret ballot
 - c. To call a meeting between faculty and chair-elect
 - d. To prepare departmental recommendation to college dean
3. Departmental recommendation to college dean. (6th week of semester)
4. College dean's report to University President (or) resolution of disagreement, if applicable. (9th week of semester)
5. Presidential decision if departmental recommendation is accepted by dean and University President, (or) resolution of disagreement, if applicable. (12th week of semester)

B. Midterm Feedback: Spring semester of the second year

1. Chair Election Committee to notify all faculty, staff, and students of upcoming chair feedback questionnaire. (by 1st week of semester)
2. Chair Election Committee to post an online questionnaire either of the department's making or using the template provided on the Faculty Affairs website. (by 3rd week of semester)
3. Chair Election Committee to collect and organize data and develop a summary of feedback. (by 5th week of semester)
4. Chair Election Committee to provide data and to the department chair, signed by all members of the Chair Election Committee (by 7th week of semester)