

Academic Assembly Council President's Report: May 2023

University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources

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Rules & Elections Committee Co-Chairs*

*Michelle Leinfelder-Miles
Personnel Committee Chair*

May 30th, 2023

Dear UC ANR Academic Assembly:

This quarter's report consists of the short committee reports and the summary of findings from the AAC survey of all academics and priority issues defined at the Academic Assembly meeting during the UC ANR Statewide Conference. AAC will take every opportunity to discuss these priority concerns with the ANR administration and will work on feasible resolutions.

It was wonderful that we could hold the academic assembly meeting in-person after the pandemic. Many thanks to the academics who participated and provided inputs in the meeting on April 24.

AAC approved the Welfare & Benefits Committee's proposal to establish a new Ad-Hoc working group to assist the committee on conducting exit interviews with academics who separate from their positions in ANR.

Thanks for reading!

Sincerely,

Ali Montazar

Ali Montazar
President
Academic Assembly Council

For more information about the UC ANR Academic Assembly Council, including travel awards, committees, and publications, visit our website at:

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/UCAAC/>

Rules and Elections Committee

A special election was held in March 2023. Four vacant committee seats were filled, one on Program Committee, one on the Advisor Representative Committee and two on the Rules and Election committee. An election will be held in June to fill upcoming vacancies on multiple committees, including the position of President-Elect. For more information or to nominate yourself or a colleague to serve on a committee, please contact the Rules and Elections co-chairs Whitney Brim-DeForest wbrimdeforest@ucanr.edu and Julie Finzel jafinzel@ucanr.edu.

~ Whitney Brim-DeForest & Julie Finzel

Advisor Representative Committee

This quarter, we received 17 comments through the ARC survey. Two comments were related to AVP overriding decision of PRC; 2 comments were related to advisor pay; 7 comments were related to 100% administrative county directors; 5 comments were on various other topics. Other topics included status of flexible work agreements, challenges with HR getting work done in a timely manner, car insurance requirements, cost recovery funds, and access to vehicles for advisors who are based at RECs. ARC Chair sent a detailed list of comments and responses to advisors.

~ Devii Rao

Welfare & Benefits Committee

The key update from Welfare and Benefits is that we proposed a new ad hoc committee to take on the important task of conducting exit interviews with academics who separate from their position in ANR. The ad hoc committee was approved and will take on exit interviews for the next year at which point committee impacts will be evaluated. The Exit Interview Ad Hoc Committee assigned co-chairs (Amanda Linares and Ben Faber) and are looking to recruit 1-2 additional academics prior to our official kickoff meeting to be scheduled for the week of June 19th.

~ Rebecca Ozeran & Ben Faber

Program Committee

The Program Committee continues to administer the quarterly professional society travel fund requests. The most recent call went out the first week of May for meetings between July 1st and September 30th. The next call for meetings between October 1st and December 31st will go out the first week of August.

Cooperative Extension advisors, academic coordinators and specialists are eligible for one meeting approval per fiscal year (July 1 – June 30), contingent on funding.

~ Susie Kocher

Personnel Committee

One of the responsibilities of the Personnel Committee is to review negative and mixed case letters of evaluation generated by ad-hoc review committees and the peer review committee. The purpose of reviewing letters is to ensure that feedback conforms to the Ebook guidelines and mentors the candidates for future success. Within the Personnel Committee, there is a small subcommittee that executes this responsibility, which they have completed for the 2023 review cycle. Additionally, the committee chair provided feedback to administration on how a change in the merit and promotion and Project Board due dates would impact academics' workload. Academics should note that the deadline has changed from February 1, 2024, to December 8, 2023. Please see the email from administration for more information.

~ Michelle Leinfelder-Miles

Summary of AAC Survey of all Academics and Priority Issues Defined at the Academic Assembly Meeting

23 ANR academics (5 Specialists, 12 Advisors, and 6 academic coordinators) responded to the recent AAC Survey of all Academics. During the academic assembly meeting at the ANR statewide conference in April 24, the AAC academic needs assessment ad-hoc committee solicited input from 50 academics who participated in the meeting. Here is a summary of the findings:

Response Categories

- Leadership/Governance
- Payscale
- Program Support
- Performance Review/Job Expectations
- Support and Miscellaneous

Specialists Concerns and Suggestions

- CE Salary no longer matched across appointment titles.
- Onboarding process unclear.
- Loss of ANR grant funding.
- Challenges of establishing relationship with Academic Senate on campus where no specialist was based before.
- Make resources available that address unique concerns of onboarding specialists.
- Formal mentorship program for specialists.

Advisors Concerns and Suggestions

- Advisors express concerns and sometimes do not receive a response/explanation.

- Payscale increase to Advisor salaries to address inflation.
- Onboarding/orientation confusing.
- Indefinite status is not equivalent to tenure.
- Promotion process is tedious.
- Poor admin support at state level (BOC, staff HR, etc.).
- Survey recent hires to address resource gaps.
- Implement geo-region pay.
- Additional administrative support in Davis (IT and Grants/Financial Assistance).
- Clear expectations for research collaboration between Advisors and Specialists.

Academic Coordinators Concerns and Suggestions

- No PDSL funds for Academic Coordinators.
- Payscale increase to address inflation.
- Time commitment to prepare program review.
- Difficulty hiring staff.
- Hire from within and make the career pathways clear - offer mentoring to ANR outstanding mid-level leaders and be open to having leaders spread across the state - we are a division that is spread across the state so why do all of our leaders need to be in Davis? Also consider the need to hire leaders that represent the community health pieces of ANR not just agriculture.
- Give Academic Coordinators equitable access to program support funds.
- Better onboarding/orientation/mentoring.

Priority Concerns of Academics from the Academic Assembly Meeting

1. Concerns with burden created with administrative procedures (paperwork) and support; website outages; and IT policies.
2. Low compensation and retaining employees.
3. Concerns with the academic advancement system (merit and promotion process), including time burden, job expectations, and misalignment between decision making and peer review process.
4. Time limit on salary savings.
5. Inconsistent mentoring of new academics.
6. Clarifying the role of academic coordinators.
7. Supporting the Advisor-Specialist network.
8. Concerns with ANR senior leadership and county directors.

~ Julie Finzel and Steven Worker (on behalf of the Ad-Hoc Working Group)