

June 27, 2008

VICE PROVOST BRUCE WHITE

Academic Personnel

Dear Vice Provost White:

At the annual meeting of the Agricultural Experiment Station several weeks ago, Jim MacDonald, Executive Associate Dean in the College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, presented what he characterized as minor changes to the Academic Personnel Manual regarding AES appointments, section UCD-320. I understand he has forwarded those to you. I thought it would be better to start the comment process sooner rather than later, especially if the changes were indeed minor. The CA&ES Executive Committee, during its meeting on June 20, 2008, reviewed the proposed changes to the APM.

We on the EC do not find the changes to be minor. We think they need to be reviewed much more carefully, by us and other faculty committees. We perceive that several of the changes are misconceived, and will have the opposite effect from the intention of making faculty more accountable for their AES appointments.

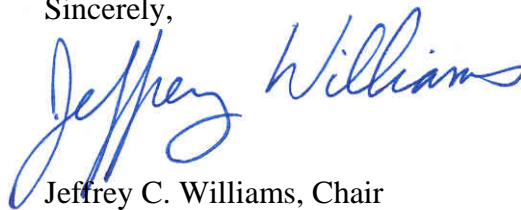
The proposed changes are primarily in two sentences. The first would read (with the proposed changes in italics): "Appointees in this series *must* have one or more AES projects *for which they are lead investigator*." No one on the EC objects to the inclusion of the word *must*. Nor do we think it onerous to be a lead investigator. Rather, we question the requirement that everyone must be a lead investigator on some project. This requirement encourages several faculty who might work together on one project to split the project apart so that each can be a lead investigator. Such splits increase the paperwork for all, yet decrease the prospect of the dissemination of such research, one of the major goals of the AES appointment series. There is general agreement that AES researchers are too isolated as it is. We understand that this proposed requirement is aimed at shirkers, but we imagine that problem is better cured by the reluctance of other faculty to cover for lazy colleagues. We might ask for the empirical evidence that those who are thought to be shirking their AES duties are disproportionately co-investigators, but not lead investigators, on their AES projects.

The second sentence would read: "AES appointees are expected to disseminate the results of their research, sometimes but not always mediated by Cooperative Extension, to other scientists and to *external stakeholders* who can use and benefit directly from the results." The phrase *external stakeholders* replaces the pronoun "those". This substitution is not an improvement in clarity. We do not understand why there should be the restriction to those outside UC Davis. At least one member of the EC has had an operating department at UC Davis, specifically the fire department, take advantage of her research. We do not understand why the gaming industry should receive such attention, no matter its recent growth in California. After all, "stakeholder" refers to "a person entrusted with the stakes of two or more persons betting against one another and charged with the duty of delivering the stakes to the winner." We believe the original wording should be kept in this case.

Regarding this second sentence, we on the EC are more concerned with an improvement in clarity that was not proposed. Many with AES appointments have specialties that have no counterparts within Cooperative Extension. These AES appointees can never disseminate the results of their research with the help of Cooperative Extension. No doubt the word "sometimes" is meant to refer to these situations, but the sentence is poorly constructed. We suggest replacing the phrase "sometimes but not always" with "in some cases".

Another concern is brought into focus by these proposed changes: Evaluation of faculty who do not have the same percentage AES appointment. The range goes from 20% to 80%, both within and between departments. In some departments the differences are nominal, in others substantive. If someone with a 20% AES appointment must be a lead investigator on a project, must someone with an 80% appointment be a lead investigator on four projects? If not, the accountability differs. And if the person with the 20% AES appointment is judged to have accomplished not quite enough "mission-oriented outreach" while having won awards for undergraduate teaching at UC Davis and for research from a professional association, will that person be denied a merit, in contrast to the person with an 80% AES appointment who is judged just adequate in mission-oriented outreach but whose single course under the remaining 20% I&R appointment consistently receives terrible ratings? We on the EC suspect the proposed changes will make these difficult cases even more controversial.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey C. Williams, Chair
CA&ES Executive Committee

JCW: sb

cc: Neal Van Alfen
Jim MacDonald
Linda Bisson