

October 28, 2022

Dear Dean Abecassis.

At the General Faculty meeting yesterday, it occurred to me that you may not know the logic behind or the history of the College of Medicine Promotion and Tenure Guidelines which created the different scholar tracks. This logic is important because, if you want to argue in favor of the keeping a clinical scholar track, eliminating the research scholar track could undermine those efforts.

By way of background, we spent several years discussing and modifying the tracks and titles so that the diverse contributions of our faculty could be recognized and rewarded. This involved creating four scholarly tracks and three other tracks and carefully articulating the different criteria for promotion for each.

The primary impetus for the new title series came from clinicians who were employed by the University, contributed to our research, education and clinical missions but whose titles were the same as those of a full-time clinician in the community who did no research and rarely supervised trainees. Our clinicians wanted to be recognized with an unmodified title, the same as tenure track faculty. Similarly, those of us who were funded entirely by grants but still managed to contribute to the education and service missions of the college and had national/international recognition wanted to be distinguished from research faculty who were not independent investigators. And finally, there were educators who created and evaluated curricula and published in education journals that should be distinguished from lecturers with no scholarly publications or contributions beyond the classroom. None of us qualified for the tenure track at the University level, which distinguishes tenure track faculty from everyone else, by definition creating a hierarchy that diminishes the contributions of the non-tenure eligible.

Changing titles and expectations for promotion was a year-long process that entailed obtaining extensive input from faculty who developed the expectations for promotion on each track that were then clarified and standardized by the COM Promotion and Tenure committee. This effort was originally led by Phil Malan, the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs and, after Phil left the University, by me, as Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs. After extensive discussion in multiple meetings with faculty, the new guidelines were overwhelmingly approved by faculty vote in 2010.

This approach has served the college well, even in the face of huge changes such as the affiliation with Banner. There is a consistent message that we value and reward excellence of different types with expectations for each title series laid out in the workload assignment when a faculty member is hired and articulated in the guidelines for promotion. To attract and retain faculty, colleges of medicine need to recognize and reward the varied contributions of outstanding clinicians, researchers and educators and not diminish their efforts by assigning modified titles based on a rigid university formula that is not applicable to the work we do.

I urge you to remove the changes to the Research Scholar track from the Bylaws modifications being put to faculty vote next week. The implications of eliminating this track need to be extensively discussed with faculty.

Sincerely,

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