

POLICY ON VACATED FACULTY POSITIONS Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Background

In order to fulfill the objectives and meet the goals outlined in the Rensselaer Plan, it is both prudent and desirable to have in place a mechanism by which faculty salary resources can be redistributed in an on-going basis, both to meet the changing needs of the Institute and to grasp new opportunities as they arise. This is especially important in times of overall changing enrollments of the Institute and the shifting of enrollment trends towards or away from new and/or traditional disciplines.

In the recent past, only limited reallocation of resources has occurred. This reallocation has been primarily within the different schools and, has been based on a combination of performance, both Institute and school priorities, and changing needs. These modest attempts at reallocation, usually in amounts smaller than the typical faculty position requirements, have often been overshadowed by larger scale commitments of resources as a result of the past incentive based allocation process or, commitments made to incoming faculty through start-up packages. The policy described herein is designed to help ensure that both new and existing resources can be used to promote and help accomplish the overall objectives outlined in the Rensselaer Plan and steer the Institute towards the goals and objectives determined through the performance planning process. An additional factor supporting the development of this policy is the desire and, in fact, the necessity of diversifying the faculty.

General Policy Statement

The basic tenet of this policy is that funds from all vacated tenure and tenure-track positions will not automatically remain with the department or school in which the faculty member was employed, but will revert to the Office of the Provost for redistribution according to the changing needs and institutional priorities. Conversely, permanent loss of these position monies is not automatic. The department or school in which the vacancy occurs can retain these funds given sufficient justification is provided. This justification will be balanced against and compared with the needs and priorities of the other units within the Institute. Given that schools and/or departments experiencing unexpected vacancies need time to make a case for retaining the associated resources, care will be taken to maintain a proper balance between the needs of the various units and the overall directions of the Institute.

Effective Date and Affected Positions

This policy applies to all tenured and tenure-track faculty positions vacated on or after July 1, 2000, whether by retirement, voluntary, or involuntary separation. Guidelines for handling each of these types of vacated positions are given in more detail below. However, regardless of the type of position, the exact timing of the transfer of full or partial funds to the reallocation pool will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Retirements

The Institute does not wish to provide disincentives, directly or indirectly, for departments and faculty members to consider retirement. Therefore, if the retirement is coupled to part-time employment of the individual, and, if the Provost and President approve this modified retirement agreement, movement of the funds to the reallocation pool will be appropriately adjusted.

Voluntary Separation

For this type of vacancy, the full amount of the faculty salary will be placed in the reallocation pool. Although consideration will be given to needs of the department to carry out the past teaching duties of the exiting faculty member, the decision on whether those needs outweigh the needs of other departments and/or schools will be based primarily on quantitative measures of faculty load, and on Institute priorities.

Involuntary Separation

Again, the Institute does not wish to provide disincentives for departments and/or schools to work towards involuntary separation, for faculty members who fail to perform at a level consistent with the expectations of the faculty at Rensselaer. This particularly relates to tenure decisions. Therefore, when a vacancy is generated by a department or school's decision not to renew the appointment of a tenure-track faculty member (prior to mandatory consideration for tenure) or to not recommend tenure for an individual, special consideration will be given to justification from the school to retain all, or at least a significant fraction of the funds.

Procedure

Within 30 days of being notified of a proposed vacancy, the Department Chair will submit a completed *Employment Transaction Form* (see attached) and forward it to the Dean of the appropriate School. The completed form will then be forwarded to the Provost, with copies to the Vice President for Finance and Vice President for Human Resources. A multi-year history of "institutional funds" utilized by a given exiting faculty member will normally be used to determine the level of funding assigned to a specific vacancy.

Once all salary commitments relative to the transitioning out of the faculty member have been fulfilled, all remaining funds will revert to the Office of the Provost. The Dean may then prepare a formal request for submission to the Provost to:

- 1) request that all or a portion of the funds to be returned to the administrative unit for the remainder of the fiscal year, to cover the teaching responsibilities associated with the vacated position. This request should include a detailed plan of how these funds will be utilized,

or

- 2) request that the funds associated with the position remain as part of the baseline budget for the coming year. In this case, the request must be accompanied by a justification of how the position will be used; how the request comports with the goals and objectives outlined in the most recent Performance Plan, and how it will support the goals and objectives proposed in the Performance Plan for the coming year.

While the Dean may choose to include Department Chairs in the formulation of the plans for these funds, the Provost, after approval by the President, will reallocate the funds to the Dean of the School, and not to a particular department.

If the request to allow the funds associated with the position to remain as part of the baseline budget for the coming year is approved, and permission to initiate a search granted, the Dean will submit a completed *Position Requisition Form* (attached) to the Provost. Copies of this form will also be sent to the Vice President for Finance and the Vice President for Human Resources for budget and position verification. The remainder of the hiring process will follow the steps outlined on the attached flow chart (attached).

Closure

In closing, the purpose of this policy is to formalize the process by which vacancies are reported, resources allocated and new searches undertaken. The process outlined herein will allow the Institute to move forward in high priority areas while simultaneously meeting the changing teaching needs among the various schools and departments. An additional benefit of this policy will be an increase in the opportunity and incentives for diversifying the faculty.

Approved: _____ approved on 2/20/01 _____
Shirley Ann Jackson, President Date