

Moreno Valley Academic Resolution #2:
Revision of Board Policy 3092: Academic Rank

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Whereas academic rank matters professionally, and

Whereas the rank of professor has been administratively suspended, and

Whereas it makes little sense to have an academic rank policy that excludes the rank of professor while maintaining such ranking as assistant and associate professor, and

Whereas there is little standardization in the community college system about academic rank (with some leaning towards new hires being assistant professors and achieving tenured status means becoming an associate professor), and

Whereas academic rank is largely a faculty-driven issue with administration and Board of Trustees' concerns being primarily about the fiscal impact and whether the ranking system is unprecedented, and

Whereas community colleges are teaching institutions and teaching expertise is presumed to be about education (as in degree status) and years of teaching experience, and

Be it Resolved that Academic Rank, Policy 3092 be based on the following criteria:

Tenure-track:

With less than an M.A. or a B.A. + 30 = Instructor.

With a minimum M.A. or a B.A. + 30 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) = Assistant Professor.

Tenured:

With less than an M.A. or a B.A. + 30 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) = Assistant Professor

With a minimum M.A. or a B.A. + 30 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) = Associate Professor

Rank of Professor (experience, education, and satisfactory service):

Tenured with 10-years minimum full-time teaching experience (or the equivalent as calculated by the formula used by RCCD's Human Resources Department), satisfactory improvement of instruction, certification of having met the committee assignments and flex obligations per the contract, and a doctorate or an M.A + 45 or a B.A. + 75 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) = Professor.

Tenured with 13-years minimum full-time teaching experience (or the equivalent as calculated by the formula used by RCCD's Human Resources Department), satisfactory improvement of instruction, certification of having met the committee assignments and flex hours per the contract, and a minimum M.A. or B.A. + 30 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) = Professor.

Temporary, Non-tenured Grant, or Part-Time Faculty:

Temporary one-year hire, or non-tenure track grant hire, with less than an M.A. or a B.A. + 30 = Visiting Instructor

Temporary one-year hire, or non-tenure track grant hire, with a minimum of an M.A. or a B.A. + 30 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) = Visiting Assistant Professor.

Temporary one-year hire, or non-tenure track grant hire, with a doctorate or an M.A + 45 or a B.A. + 75 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity), a minimum of 6 years of full-time teaching experience at an accredited institution (or the equivalent as calculated by the formula used by RCCD's Human Resources Department), and proof of satisfactory improvements of instruction (or the equivalent) = Visiting Associate Professor.

Part-Time Faculty with less than a minimum M.A. or a B.A. + 30 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) = Part-Time Instructor.

Part-Time Faculty with a minimum of an M.A. or a B.A. + 30 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) = Part-Time Assistant Professor.

Part-Time Faculty with a doctorate or an M.A + 45 or a B.A. + 75 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity), the equivalent of 6 years of full-time teaching experience at an accredited institution (or the equivalent as calculated by the formula used by RCCD's Human Resources Department), and proof of satisfactory improvements of instruction (or the equivalent) = Part-Time Associate Professor.

Professor Emeritus

The policy governing Professor Emeritus shall stand as presently written (Appendix B, Part F), with the addition of what constitutes "special achievement" (see italics below).

The Board of Trustees may award the rank of Professor Emeritus to any faculty member who has earned retirement or professorial status or who has been recommended by the Professional Growth and Sabbatical Leave Committee on the basis of special achievement (*e.g. publications, individual research, fellowships and grants, community service, college and/or community leadership, etc.*). The rank of Professor Emeritus may be awarded posthumously to one who has achieved associate professorial standing and dies in service.

Application of the Plan (Appendix B of Policy 3092)

Section II, items A through H, including the policy of transferring academic rank shall stand as presently written.

Rationale for revising Board Policy 3092—Academic Rank:

Professional Titles Matter

Titles are an accepted part of being honored for professional accomplishment and academic rank is such a title.

Deciding the Policy for Academic Rank

Though policy governing academic rank ultimately rests with the Board of Trustees, in the absence of stipends, unprecedented titles, or unprecedented procedures for gaining rank, the policy's primary impact is upon faculty. As such, the policy should be a faculty-driven issue.

Academic Rank and Stipends

The proposed modifications to Section I of Policy 3092 continue the existing statement in the present Regulations for Policy 3092—"This plan involves no additional expense to the Riverside Community College District. It is not attached to salary, nor is it a merit plan for salary increases" (page 75 of the 2000-2001 Faculty Handbook). Since there is no stipend attached to academic rank, the fiscal impact of the proposed system of rank, including professor and non-tenure track faculty, is nil, except for new business cards and the work in updating faculty information. Attempting to attach a stipend to rank will raise fiscal, contractual, and merit salary increase issues, which will unnecessarily complicate any implementation of the policy—besides, faculty at RCC already have row and column salary increases based on education and experience.

System of Ranking

Research indicates that there is little standardization in the community college system regarding academic rank

though there is some leaning towards new tenure-track hires being assistant professors and achieving tenured status means becoming an associate professor (re: past committees researching rank, simple Google searches, and Fred Brose's recent findings). Thus it is up to RCCD faculty to make cogent recommendations.

Academic Rank: Education, Experience, and Service

Community colleges are teaching institutions and teaching expertise is presumed to be about education (as in degree status) and years of satisfactory teaching experience. The present proposal of ranking is based on that premise

Academic Rank: Temporary, Non-Tenured-Grant, and Part-Time Faculty

A majority of faculty at RCCD presently fall outside of tenure-track or tenured status, yet in many cases those faculty have achieved educational degrees and teaching experience commensurate with their full-time colleagues. Therefore, from a professional point of view, it seems reasonable that one-year temporary, non-tenure track grant, and part-time faculty be awarded academic rank commensurate with their position and experience (as in Part-time Assistant Professor, or Visiting Assistant Professor, etc.).

Earning Academic Rank: Is it Automatic?

The proposed system of academic rank is not automatic. There is nothing automatic about being hired (even part-time faculty hires must undergo some degree of review and have some area of acknowledged expertise) and there is nothing automatic about becoming tenured. Even obtaining the rank of professor is dependent upon higher than the minimum standards of education, teaching experience, and satisfactory improvements of instruction, than are required for the rank of instructor, assistant, or associate professor.

Defining Experience and Education

Experience and degree status plus extra semester units are based on the District's column and row placement per the Faculty Salary Schedule, where salary advancement does not stall out solely because of degree achievement and/or years of teaching experience (see Appendix A1, page 68, Faculty Salary Schedule, Column F, row 10-13 versus Column E or below, row 10-13 of the current contract). Since the Faculty Salary Schedule is a contractual issue, both the Union (and the faculty by way of voting) and the Administration have agreed that those levels of education and experience warrant uninterrupted salary advancement.

Transferring Rank

Existing Board Policy 3092 governing academic rank allows the transferring of rank for new faculty hires at RCC who were faculty at another educational institution and had previously achieved a higher rank than they would otherwise be assigned when starting employment at RCC. The proposed policy continues that avenue. It makes little professional sense to base rank at RCC on educational achievement, teaching experience, and fulfilling contractual obligations, yet deny granting the appropriate rank to a new hire (e.g., why would we hire a retired professor who becomes a part-time faculty member at RCC and give them the rank of instructor, much less hire a tenured professor at another institution and give them the same rank of instructor?). Rank is about professional attainment, continued employment (as in receiving tenure) is about goodness of fit with our institution—thus allowing a policy of transferring rank is not the same as policies governing continued employment.

Granting the Rank of Professor

While the present Board Policy governing academic rank includes professor status, the granting of professor has, by administrative action, long been suspended. There seems little justification for having the rank of assistant or associate professor status—terms that indicate less than a terminal rank status—without granting the rank of professor.

Earning the Rank of Professor: Is Distinguished Service Appropriate Criterion?

The basis for our present policy is that going through the requirements for being hired and staying hired qualify for the ranking of Instructor, Assistant, or Associate Professor, while advancement to professor—whether that

advancement has been administratively suspended or not—is quite a different animal. Shifting the underlying principle of the ranking system when it comes to professor is designed to make the rank of professor something “special” beyond “ordinary rank” advancement. However, we might consider what we mean by the term “distinguished.” Setting and fulfilling criteria will mean that anyone meeting the criteria will, “by default,” be advanced. In other words, a ladder is a ladder. If what we mean when we use the term “distinguished” are those individual faculty who go beyond a set of requirements (as in a college degree with an honor such as cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude), we are making a clearer and more salient distinction between efforts to obtain a specific and/or terminal title and efforts that go beyond those requirements. In light of this, while the principle of distinguished service is a valid concept, it is suggested that such an honor might be more meaningful by separating it from the policies governing academic rank and creating other venues for recognizing faculty who go above and beyond the considerable degree of achievement required to be hired, obtain tenure, and earn rank (e.g., creating an additional part of RCCD’s Hall of Fame to include more than Distinguished Faculty Lecturer, Alumni of the Year, and exceptional athletes—such as Distinguished Faculty of the Year, etc.).

Criteria for the Rank of Professor (experience, education, and satisfactory service):

The proposed policy to obtain the rank of Professor requires a minimum total of 6 improvements of instruction (at least two beyond the requirements for tenure). A faculty member with a doctorate or an M.A. + 45 or a B.A. + 75 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity), would undergo one improvement of instruction for each of the first 4 years during the tenure process and 2 additional improvements of instruction following tenure—one at the 7th year of college service and one at the 10th year. A faculty member with a minimum M.A. or B.A. + 30 (or the equivalency as certified by the appropriate college entity) would undergo one improvement of instruction for each of the first 4 years during the tenure process and 3 additional improvements of instruction following tenure—one at the 7th year of college service, one at the 10th year, and an additional one at the 13th year.