## Academic Professional: Issues and Recommendations

### Rank Overview

Academic Professionals are faculty teaching rank positions that require an appropriate terminal degree. The university’s Academic Affairs Policy Manual section 1.02-6 stipulates that the position not be assigned “where the teaching and research responsibilities total 50% or more of the total assignment.” In addition to teaching, Academic Professionals’ responsibilities include the support and management of academic programs, i.e., instructional support, training, supervision, and administration.

Academic Professional Associates are eligible for promotion after five years in rank and Academic Professionals are eligible for promotion after four years in rank. In both cases, promotion is contingent upon performance, peer recognition, and, in the case of promotion to Academic Professional, potential for further development. Academic Professionals are not eligible for tenure.

### Issues

The following issues have been identified as concerns facing faculty at the rank of Academic Professional:

**Hiring**

The entry-level rank for Academic Professionals is Academic Professional Associate, but faculty tend to be appointed at the mid-level rank of Academic Professional. This is because Academic Professionals are often hired for their “significant related experience,” a criteria for this rank in the university’s *Guidelines for the Appointment and Promotion of Academic Professionals*. This leaves only one opportunity for promotion, to Senior Academic Professional, which requires four years at the level of Academic Professional and evidence of superior performance. The fact that many Academic Professionals only have a single opportunity for promotion at UGA suggests one potential career issue that may need to be addressed at the level of hiring. It would be beneficial to assess the use of the rank of Academic Professional Associate university-wide to determine the frequency of appointment at this rank and its purpose and value for this career track.

**Promotion**

As stated above, there is a related hiring issue that affects promotion opportunities for Academic Professionals. If APs are hired at the middle rank, then there is only a single opportunity for further career advancement and this raises some salary compression concerns. Over time, as entry-level salaries for APs (whether at the APA or AP rank) rise naturally with market values, there is increasing chance that Senior Academic Professionals who have been at that rank for a number of years may find their salaries less than those of entry-level Academic Professionals and with no opportunity for any further significant raise opportunities. While this is also an issue for tenure track faculty, Academic Professionals are not eligible for teaching and research awards (e.g., University Professorships, Meigs Professorships, etc.) that come with permanent salary increases.

An additional promotion concern for Academic Professionals is also a financial concern: Academic Professionals are not guaranteed, university-wide, any salary increase upon promotion. A promotion raise is at the discretion of the AP’s home department/unit and there is inconsistency and a lack of transparency about whether an Academic Professional will receive any salary increase upon promotion.

The promotion process and guidelines for Academic Professionals are likewise opaque. This is partially due to the wide range of responsibilities assigned to Academic Professionals, but there is a real need for more specific and clear guidelines and templates for the promotion dossier/materials and for the procedure to be followed. Many Academic Professionals have no guidance (aside from reaching out to other Academic Professionals who have gone through promotion) about the promotion process or the contents of the dossier.

**Career Advancement**

As non tenure track faculty, Academic Professionals are not eligible for many opportunities such as major teaching awards, some faculty development opportunities, and participation in special programs like the First-Year Odyssey, or research awards, even when they are budgeted for research in their appointments.

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### Recommendations

To address some of the issues above, we recommend the following best practices for the appointment, promotion, and career development of Academic Professionals:

**Hiring**

Appointment letters at the time of hiring should be specific and detailed about the duties/responsibilities, requirements for promotion, opportunities for career development, and additional funding for research and/or professional travel.

**Promotion**

Each unit/department should develop clear guidelines for both the procedure and the materials required for promotion for Academic Professionals.

Each unit/department should ensure that there is an annual review process in which progress toward promotion is evaluated and recommendations are made for what the faculty member should do in order to be ready for promotion at the appropriate time. Ideally, a full third-year review should be conducted for every Academic Professional as part of the process of providing feedback on progress toward promotion.

The university should review recent promotion dossiers from Academic Professionals in order to develop some templates for the promotion dossier that could be made available to Academic Professionals who wish to go up for promotion. The Center for Teaching and Learning maintains such templates for tenure track faculty (as do many departments), so this could be a resource that the CTL assists in developing.

The university must review the promotion salary increase policy for Academic Professionals and ensure that there is clarity and consistency in salary increases upon promotion. Promotion of Academic Professionals should always be accompanied by a guaranteed permanent increase in salary.

**Career Advancement**

Academic Professionals are permanent and vital members of the faculty at the University of Georgia and are eager to participate as fully as possible in career development initiatives and programs. The university should review its policies about the kinds of awards and programs that are available for non tenure track faculty to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for career development and advancement for Academic Professionals.