Guidelines for Advancement Under the Step Plus System for the Specialist in Cooperative Extension

These are interim guidelines for the 2015-2016 merit cycle, assuming that they are supported by AF voters.

Principles for Advancement

In formulating criteria for recommending larger-than-normal advancements, a balance has been sought between concreteness and flexibility. The criteria for accelerations are clarified without specific quantitative assessments that understate or overstate the total contributions of candidates. The four areas of review are: research (especially applied) and creative work, extending knowledge and information, university and public service, and professional competency. Service duties are expected to increase as faculty advance in rank and step.

One-Step Advancement

All Specialists in Cooperative Extension are eligible for regular merit advancement at scheduled intervals determined by system-wide policy. A balanced record, appropriate for rank and step, with evidence of good accomplishments in all areas of review is rewarded with normal advancement.

One-and-One-Half-Step Advancement

A larger-than-normal, 1.5-step advancement requires not only a strong record in all of the areas of review, consistent with the candidate’s position description, but also outstanding achievement in at least one area. However, outstanding achievement in one area may not qualify the candidate for 1.5-step advancement if balanced performance is not achieved. Based on the candidates’ stated achievements, Chairs and Deans should articulate in the departmental and Dean’s letters the grounds for acceleration beyond simple numerical tabulations by describing the special impact or quality of the work or the scale and scope of the undertaking.

Two-Step Advancement

A two-step advancement will require a strong record in all of the areas of review, with outstanding performance in extending knowledge and information and in one additional area. The two-step advancement should be considered for individuals who would have accelerated every year under the previous system to avoid disadvantage over progress under the Step-Plus system. Based on the candidates’ stated achievements, Chairs and Deans should articulate in the departmental and Dean’s letters the grounds for acceleration beyond simple numerical tabulations by describing the special impact or quality of the work or the scale and scope of the undertaking.
**Advancements Beyond Two-Steps**

An advancement beyond 2.0 steps is expected to be extremely rare. These advancements will require an exceptionally strong and balanced record, highlighted by extraordinary levels of achievement in extending knowledge and information, as well as research and creative activity, and outstanding contributions in either university and public service or professional competency. Based on the candidates’ stated achievements, Chairs and Deans should articulate in the departmental and Dean’s letters the grounds for acceleration beyond simple numerical tabulations by describing the special impact or quality of the work or the scale and scope of the undertaking.

**Larger-than-normal Above Scale Increments**

The criteria for merit increases are steep at this high rank. Advancements of more than one above-scale increment will require an exceptionally strong record of excellence in three areas of review, with exceptional achievement in research and creative work and extending knowledge and information, plus outstanding performance in university and public service and professional competency. Based on the candidates’ stated achievements, Chairs and Deans should articulate in the departmental and Dean’s letters the grounds for Larger-than-normal Above Scale Increments beyond simple numerical tabulations by describing the special impact or quality of the work or the scale and scope of the undertaking.