

**Department of Astronomy Plan of Organization  
Appendix 1B**

**Merit Pay Distribution Plan for  
Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty**

**Approved 2018 February 5**

**I. Preamble**

In compliance with the University of Maryland Policy on Faculty Merit Pay Distribution as revised in May 2010, this document provides a merit pay distribution plan for tenured and tenure-track faculty in the Department of Astronomy.

This plan was circulated and then discussed in a meeting of the tenured and tenure-track faculty of the Department of Astronomy on 2017 May 15, with 11 of 15 members present. Following minor revisions, an amended draft was circulated a week before a meeting on 2018 February 5. Following University Senate procedure, votes were called for each amendment to the plan. 11 of 15 members were present, with all agreeing to the amendments. This vote is a positive vote as defined by the Department's Plan of Organization.

**II. Merit Review Committee activities**

A Merit Review Committee consisting of three faculty members will serve to advise the Department Chair on merit pay distribution. The Committee will be directly elected annually via secret ballot by the tenure-track and tenured faculty for staggered three-year terms. Insofar as possible, the Merit Review Committee's composition over a period of years will reflect the distribution of tenure-track and tenured faculty, scholarly interests, gender, and racial/ethnic distribution of the Department. To this end, as part of the election process the Department Chair will provide a list of faculty who have served on the Committee during the past seven years, identify areas in which the distribution has been poorly represented over the prior five years, and encourage a distribution that reflects the composition of the faculty. Election to consecutive terms is not allowed. The rotation in membership of the Committee helps ensure that the priorities of the Department are fully reflected over time.

Each year the Department will provide the Committee with written documentation of faculty achievements for the previous three years with emphasis on the immediately preceding year. All activities that show the faculty member's accomplishments should be included in written materials submitted to the committee. Such material shall include standard campus annual reports or a substitute specified by the Department, and submission of the faculty member's current CV. Other material may be requested by the Committee or provided by a faculty

member for consideration. These documents will be retained by the Department for at least three years, or until they are no longer to be used during faculty evaluations.

The Merit Review Committee will use this written material to evaluate faculty contributions in all of the following areas:

1. Research, scholarship, and creative activities. Measures to be used in this evaluation will include the quantity and quality of publications in refereed journals, citations to refereed publications, and success in acquisition of research funding. First- or corresponding- author papers carry more weight than others, although publications with the faculty member's student or postdoc as first author carry nearly as much weight, and should be clearly indicated in the CV. Releases of computer codes, construction of scientific instruments, and other work that advances the field also fall in this category.
2. Educational activities in teaching, advising, and mentoring. Measures to be used in this evaluation will include teaching contributions as revealed by student and peer teaching evaluations, innovations in teaching methods, course development, and evidence of active student and/or postdoctoral mentoring.
3. Service to the University, community, and the profession. Measures to be used in this evaluation will include the level and amount of service on departmental, campus, community, and external professional committees.

Each Committee member shall provide an independent ranked list, based on evaluation of research, teaching, and service, of all other faculty members to the Department Chair. A brief note shall provide information on the relative weighting between the three areas. The list shall also be accompanied by brief comments noting strengths and weaknesses that played a part in each ranking. These comments are especially important information for the Chair to consider, and must be fair and clear. The Department Chair may use this information in the salary letter and in discussions with the faculty member without attribution.

For each year when merit pay is not available, the achievements of faculty members for that year will be taken into consideration during the next year in which merit pay is available.

The Department Chair shall convene a meeting of the entire Merit Review Committee to discuss the aggregate scores only and general evaluations for all faculty members. Committee members shall leave the meeting room during discussion of their own evaluations. The result of this meeting will be an advisory ranked list, with ties allowed but not encouraged, of all faculty members' professional performance over the evaluation period.

The Merit Committee shall also separately review progress toward advancement for all faculty members it reviews, and call the Department Chair's attention to faculty who should be considered for promotion or other advancement. The Committee and Chair shall discuss faculty advancement as part of the Merit Committee meeting.

The Committee shall hold evaluations and any related material in strict confidence. Committee members will certify that they have followed the Department's Merit Pay Distribution Plan, or will provide a rationale in any situations where it has deviated from the Plan.

### **III. Department Chair's Responsibilities**

The Department Chair has the responsibility to determine merit increases and merit dollar distribution, subject to the revision by the Dean, and will be advised in this endeavor by the information and discussion provided by the Merit Review Committee. The Department Chair will also make his or her own independent assessment of the Merit Review Committee results in order to ensure that individual accomplishments in research, education, and service that might be unknown to Committee members will be properly reflected in the new salary recommendations.

Merit pay will be assigned in dollar increments rather than as a percentage of salary. The Department Chair will evaluate the salary structure of the Department annually and consult with the Dean to address salary compression or inequities that have developed in the Department. A portion of the money from the merit pool may be reserved for the Department Chair's discretionary use to address special salary considerations. The portion reserved will be determined by the Department Chair in consultation with the Committee, and should be between 0 and 33% of the merit pool.

Each faculty member will receive a letter from the Department Chair containing his or her new salary and the salary increase. The letter will identify in general terms the Merit Review Committee's evaluation of the faculty member and how this was used to assign the merit increase. The letter will inform the faculty member that she or he may request a meeting with the Department Chair to receive an explanation of the merit pay decision.

The Department Chair shall certify that she or he has followed the Department's Merit Pay Distribution Plan, or will provide a rationale to the Merit Review Committee in any situations where he or she has deviated from the Plan.

### **IV. Appeals process**

Faculty members have the right to appeal the merit pay decision via a formal letter to the Department Chair. The appellant may meet with the Department Chair, who will then relay the Committee's discussions on that particular faculty member's case. The appellant may request a meeting with the Committee. If the faculty member is still not satisfied, he or she may write a letter to the Department Chair that will be included in the materials provided to the Committee the following year.

### **V. Modifications and Amendments**

The Merit Pay Review Plan may be modified and amended as specified in the Department of Astronomy's Plan of Organization.