LAUNCH Committee Guidelines

Revised May 29, 2025

Overview

The UC Davis LAUNCH program is a validated practice for improving promotion rates and retention of new faculty, and is modeled after successful efforts at Case Western Reserve University and The University of Michigan. The program was piloted under the UC Davis ADVANCE program (2012 – 2019) and is now being run through the UC Davis Office of Academic Affairs.

LAUNCH committees provide support and guidance to new faculty members as they begin their careers at UC Davis as well as provide support to associate professors working toward promotion to full professor. Ideally, LAUNCH committees are formed and commence meeting within a faculty member's first year on campus in order to facilitate early professional integration and development with an eye to achieving tenure for assistant professors. In practice, new faculty members may opt to initiate a LAUNCH committee at any point during their careers.

Areas that may be addressed by the LAUNCH Committee

LAUNCH committees focus on areas that are essential for faculty success, including:

- Integration into the university
- Teaching
- Service
- Mentoring plan for the pre-tenure period
- Funding
- Lab space and equipment, including computational resources *(if applicable)*
- Lab personnel, including students *(if applicable)*

Committee Makeup

Each LAUNCH committee has the following members:

- Department chair (or their designee) as committee chair

- A faculty member in the new faculty member's department (take on advocacy roles – usually have related research or teaching interests)

- A faculty member from outside the department, but in a field related to that of the new faculty member

- A faculty member affiliate from CAMPOS or CAMPSSAH

Expectations

- Committee members are typically identified by Academic Affairs in consultation with the Department chair and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and invited by Academic Affairs. Feedback from the new faculty member may also be helpful in identifying committee members.

- Committees should aim to meet formally at least once per quarter (in person preferred, by Zoom as needed). For incoming Assistant Professors with no prior academic job experience, committee meetings would ideally start before the new faculty member's arrival on campus and continue thereafter.

- New faculty members may request more than one meeting per quarter, and are encouraged to contact mentors between meetings if questions arise.

- Each LAUNCH committee will need to have a chair. The department chair will serve as the chair of the LAUNCH committee unless they assign that duty to another member of the committee. The committee chair is responsible for meeting logistics which includes:

  - Finding available times for the committee to meet
  - Arranging meeting space
  - Sending reminder emails to the LAUNCH committee in advance of each meeting.
  - Determining, in consultation with the new faculty member, where to guide the mentoring discussion.
  - Follow up on any action items and summarizing in writing key points of the discussion for distribution to the committee after each meeting (e.g. meeting minutes). The summaries will be used at subsequent meetings to gauge academic progress.

- Committee members are expected to introduce the new faculty member to potential collaborators and colleagues, and to provide feedback on grant applications prior to submission.

- During the course of the LAUNCH committee meetings, long-range plans for mentoring throughout the probationary (pre-tenure) period should be discussed for LAUNCHEES at the Assistant Professor level. LAUNCHEES at the Associate Professor rank should discuss long-range plans for promoting to Professor.

TOPICS TO UPDATE AT EACH LAUNCH COMMITTEE MEETING

The committee, in focusing on the areas below, should use the following questions as a guide. Other questions and resources will be identified by the committee, as necessary.

Work Space

Has suitable office and/or lab space been identified? Is renovation of work spaces necessary and, if so, what is the process for renovation and how is it proceeding? Has the new faculty member moved into assigned spaces?

Equipment and Supplies

Is the procedure for purchasing equipment and supplies clear? Have equipment and supplies been ordered? Are there joint departmental resources or equipment to which the new faculty member needs access?

Funding

Have appropriate funding agencies and submission deadlines been identified? Are there internal UC Davis programs that may be appropriate for application? Has the committee internally reviewed the new faculty member's proposals? Are there opportunities for him/her to be included in larger interdisciplinary or team-based grants?

Research Personnel

Are the processes for finding graduate students and affiliating with graduate programs of interest clear? Is the new faculty member having success in recruiting undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs, and/or technicians into his/her research group? Are the research group members productive? Are policies applying to graduate student or postdoc supervision clear (e.g. mentoring plans, course loads, lab rotations, qualifying exams)?

Integration into the University

Is the new faculty member meeting researchers across the university with similar interests? Is s/he beginning to form collaborations?

Teaching

Are the expectations for teaching clear? Does the new faculty member need additional resources (e.g. material from a previous course instructor, interpretation of mid---term evaluations)? Are there questions regarding policies and procedures or any difficulties to resolve? If the new faculty member has been hired as a Professor of Teaching, is the proposed departmental balance between teaching and pedagogical research fair and achievable?

Scholarly Work/Publications

What are the typical expectations for scholarly output given the new faculty member's incoming status/rank for the first year or two? If the faculty member is pre-tenure, what level of scholarly output will be expected to achieve tenure? If the new faculty member is a Professor of Teaching, what level of pedagogical research publication will be expected in order to achieve tenure and is this reasonable, given teaching load?

Service

Are the expectations for campus service clear? How should faculty members prioritize service obligations/opportunities? When should external professional or public service be undertaken (e.g., journal editor, professional society officer) given disciplinary norms?

Mentoring

In addition to LAUNCH, are there other departmental mentoring norms/activities ongoing? Are these coordinated with LAUNCH? Does the new faculty member need information on mentoring best practices for students, post-docs and other members of the research personnel?

Scheduling the Next Committee Meeting

When possible, it is easiest to schedule the next LAUNCH meeting at the close of the current meeting, while all committee members are in the room. If not then, the committee chair will follow up with the new faculty member to identify dates for an electronic calendar poll to plan the subsequent meeting.