

## Memorandum

**To:** MCS Dean R. McCullough

**From:** Irene Fonseca, Chair of the MCS Faculty Organization

**Date:** March 15, 2002

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This report has the endorsement of the MCS Titles Committee formed by WILLIAM BROWN, GREGG FRANKLIN, MORTON KAPLAN and IRENE FONSECA as chair.

### 1. The Charge:

The charge of the Committee was to

- document the advantages, impact, and disadvantages of a change in titles in the Research Track in the Mellon College of Science from Research Scientist to **Research Assistant Professor** from Senior Research Scientist to **Research Associate Professor** from Principal Research Scientist to **Research Professor**;
- benchmark the practice in peer institutions.

### 2. Procedure:

The Committee proceeded as follows:

- using as a starting point a database provided by the Faculty Senate Office, several institutions were benchmarked (see Attachment 1). The Committee concluded that the titles of Research Assistant Professor, Research Associate Professor, and Research Professor are often adopted in universities with large block grants with government funding and/or where there is a considerable group in Health Sciences (e.g. School of Medicine, etc.) with researchers more likely to request funding from the NIH.
- on January 22, 2002, the MCS Associate Dean for Faculty and Graduate Affairs, Gregg Franklin, sent an email memo to all MCS Faculty inviting faculty members to give their input concerning a possible change in titles. Only two Tenure Track faculty members expressed their written opinion (see Section 4), which suggests that this is **not** a “hot” topic.
- individual interviews were conducted with MCS Research Track Faculty by paired members of the Committee (see Section 4).
- Jim Morris, Dean of SCS, and John Anderson, Dean of CIT, were informally interviewed about their experience with this issue. SCS and CIT have periodically raised the issue of titles due to the considerable numbers of Research Track faculty members in these colleges (20 in CIT and > 50

in SCS). According to Anderson, the CIT Department Heads are in favor of changing the titles and Dean Anderson has suggested the use of the names Assistant Research Professor, Associate Research Professor, and Research Professor. Morris indicated SCS would also favor such a change, however, having unsuccessfully fought the issue with the Senate for 10 years, it is not a high priority item on his agenda at this time. We understand that SCS already uses alternative titles when deemed advantageous for some purposes.

### **3. Research Track Faculty in MCS**

In the Mellon College of Science there are currently 6 Research Track faculty members:

Research Scientist:

Christina Lee, Biological Sciences

Senior Research Scientists:

Mark Bier, Chemistry

Emile Bominaar, Chemistry

Colin Horwitz, Chemistry

Kavan Ranatunga, Physics

Principal Research Scientist:

Victor Weedn, STC

From University Handbook, page 74:

*The similarity of the required involvement of the research faculty and the regular faculty in providing the basis for the university's quality and legitimate reputation carries with it: (1) the obligation to scrutinize the appointments and reappointments to research faculty positions with the same care and with the same fundamental principles and procedures as those pertaining to the regular faculty (the eligibility for tenure excepted), including evaluation at the university-wide level; (2) the requirement that all research faculty positions be established in academic departments or the Robotics Institute; and (3) the conferring on the research faculty of the same benefits as on the regular faculty, as specified herein.*

The College and University Committees which decide on reappointment or promotion in the Research Faculty, as well as for initial appointments to the rank of senior research scientist/engineer or principal research scientist/engineer, are the same committees which decide on tenure and tenure-track appointments, reappointments and promotions. In the rank of Research Scientist/Engineer no reappointment without promotion (other than a terminal reappointment) may be made after 6 years of holding this rank.

Research Track faculty conduct research, write proposals, direct centers, and supervise their research groups consisting of graduate students, post-docs, and staff. Research track faculty are not required to teach, but they may accept teaching assignments, in which case the teaching performance is evaluated in reappointment or promotion actions.

Appointments and reappointments of Research Track faculty are strongly hinged on funding from sources external to the university. In MCS Research Track faculty do not generally obtain all of their own funding (covering their salary, hiring of graduate students and postdocs, etc.).

For more details concerning Appointments and Evaluation in the Research Track, see Appendix 2.

#### **4. Arguments in Favor and Against**

##### In Favor:

The interviews with the 6 MCS Research Track faculty suggest that a change in title may have a favorable impact in competing for funding, primarily from NIH. Grant proposals submitted to the NIH by Research Track Faculty often must be followed by a letter from the department head explaining what the title means and its implications.

Some MCS Research Track members are of the opinion that a change in titles will convey a more favorable perception in the minds of external proposal reviewers, agency program directors and cross-discipline researchers. Research track faculty will be perceived as more permanent and capable of directing independent research projects. Also, a change in titles may help in the recruitment and retention of research track faculty.

A detailed report endorsed by 3 MCS Research Track faculty members and 3 MCS Special Faculty track faculty members documenting the reasons in favor of a change in title was addressed to the MCS Titles Committee.

##### Against:

There were concerns that

- the title “Research Professor” may be misinterpreted as a title attributed to those professors who do research as opposed to the tenured (full) professors who do primarily teaching;
- the name change could enhance the status of the non-tenure ranks which would lead to its enlargement and its relative influence compared to tenured faculty;
- since non-tenure class of faculty are more subject to control by the administration than tenured faculty, this would give more institutional power

to the administration and could lead to undesirable changes in the governance and the culture of the university.

### **5. Recommendations:**

(a) The Committee recommends the use of the alternative titles listed under Section 1 for the Research Track Faculty.

(b) The Committee recommends that if MCS is in favor of a change in titles, then a procedure internal to the Mellon College of Science be attempted rather than raising the issue at the University (Senate) level. A somewhat vague paragraph in support of such action may be found in the Faculty Handbook, page 74:

*“It is recognized that the titles, “scientist” and “engineer”, may not be appropriate to all disciplines. Similar title sequences in which the word “scientist” or “engineer” is replaced by “scholar” or other designation as determined by the individual colleges and approved by the president shall be accepted under this policy, ...[sic]”*

**Appendix 1:** Benchmarking Database

**Appendix 2:** Faculty Handbook– Policy on Research Faculty Appointments