

Proposed Emeritus Policy Changes

Key Items

- The UCFA discussed last spring in 2021 looking at potential changes in the areas of awarding and revoking emeritus status. The UCFA receives requests to provide advice to the Provost on cases for revocation, and wanted to explore if there were ways to create more of a preventative process.
- Following that discussion, the Faculty Affairs Office (formerly Academic Human Resources) did some benchmarking with other Big Ten institutions to see what their awarding processes looked like and how MSU compared to those. Some of the takeaways they shared with us were:

First, nine out of fourteen Big Ten schools require an affirmative review and university approval prior to the granting of emeritus status.

Second, about half of the universities had Emeritus/Emerita as their policy title which recognized masculine and feminine titles. MSU's Emeritus policy title held the masculine suffix of Emeritus.

One thing important to note is that MSU's emeritus policy hadn't had a comprehensive review in three decades.

After some discussion of the information above, the committee was supportive of an active awarding process as a preventative measure, which would have the effect of reducing the potential for revocation as well as causing harm to survivors. At the time, there was general consensus and support around these changes, and the UCFA empaneled a subcommittee to look at the issues.

- The subcommittee proposed changes to the Emeritus policy within two overarching areas:

The first is within the award and revocation processes. The intent behind the proposed changes is for the University to infuse trauma-informed practices in its policies by structurally acknowledging and creating pathways to recognize institutional harm to survivors within the emeritus context.

The second change is with the policy title. The subcommittee proposed the title be renamed to Emeritum. Emeritus is a remnant of the past. The intent here is to replace the "emeritus" title with a non-gendered title. We propose Emeritum. This would be more than a change in nomenclature – it would be a step toward increasing equity, inclusion, and belonging through MSU's policies. MSU is comprised of a community of all different identities. Policies are foundational structures for an institution and reflect an institution's values and culture. "Equity is achieved in an environment built on civility, dignity, and mutual respect." (MSU DEI Report and Plan, 2021). To achieve these aspirations, we must first start with our policies by acknowledging all identities on campus.

You should have three documents before you for your consideration– the proposed revised policy, a statement of rationale, and the crosswalk of changes between the old policy and the proposed revised policy.

The subcommittee cleaned the policy up a bit with headers and codified existing practice into policy.

In terms of next steps, we seek endorsement and support from the Faculty Senate. If endorsed, the policy will be sent to the Board of Trustees at their June Board meeting.

Awarding process.

- When the subcommittee met, the thought was that the awarding process should not be burdensome to the faculty member. The idea is that the Chair and Dean would receive a list of faculty who have submitted their retirement application and the Chair and Dean would provide a yes/no recommendation for awarding of emeritus status. The last check of approval would be conducted by the Faculty Affairs Office to see if there had been egregious misconduct. It is expected 99% of faculty will receive the emeritus title.

Other Information:

- The subcommittee consulted with Dr. Anna Kirkwood, College of Arts & Letters on the title. Dr. Kirkwood explained that the problem with Latin is that it's quite thoroughly gendered: the masculine plural would be Emeriti, the feminine plural Emeritae, and the neuter plural, Emerita, which just looks like the feminine singular. Emeritum is indeed the neuter singular. There was discussion amongst the subcommittee about the use of Emerit (no gender attachment). The subcommittee felt "Emeritum" would fit better and proposed this terminology in the documents.

Consultations

- The subcommittee also consulted with the following individuals for feedback/concerns on the proposed revisions; they were supportive of the changes.
 - Rebecca Campbell, Professor of Psychology (trauma-informed perspective)
 - Andrea Munford, Deputy Chief of the MSUPD (trauma-informed perspective)
 - Jabbar Bennett, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer (equity and inclusion perspective)