USC Viterbi School of Engineering
Policy on Evaluation and Appointment of Department Chairs

This policy on evaluation and appointment of department Chairs revises a previous version of the School's policy on faculty evaluation of department chairs reconciled with recommendations made by the Engineering Faculty Council (EFC) on appointment of department Chairs in a May 2012 document. This policy, which applies to all departments[1], adopts most of the recommendations proposed by the EFC in April 2015 and consists of the following:

- Chair evaluation is conducted during the Spring semester of the final academic year of the chair's term. Such evaluation is conducted regardless of whether or not the Chair intends to seek another term.
- The evaluation is coordinated by a four-member Evaluation Committee consisting of three faculty members elected by the department faculty, and the Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs of the School, who participates as an ex-officio member. At least one of the faculty must be a department EFC representative. The charge of the committee is to coordinate the evaluation process, as described in more detail below. The committee will be constituted no later than January 31 of the Chair's final academic year of appointment.
- The evaluation process calls for the department faculty to respond to a set of standard questions eliciting numerical scores of 1 to 5, based on the scale 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = fair/acceptable, 2 = poor/marginal, and 1 = unacceptable. A sample list of the standard questions is attached below. Department faculties and chairs can suggest the addition or deletion of questions, but it is ultimately the Evaluation Committee's responsibility to generate a list of questions. Open-ended reports of the chair's performance, either signed or anonymous, are also allowed as part of the evaluation.
- At his/her discretion, prior to the evaluation, the Chair may provide to the faculty a report summarizing his/her accomplishments as they relate to the questions to be asked in the evaluation.
- All responses are sent to the Dean's office confidentially, following similar procedures to those for the election of EFC members, and forwarded unopened to the evaluation committee. Opening and counting of responses will be done at an announced time to allow department faculty to attend and observe. The open-ended responses are confidentially conveyed to the Dean and at his/her discretion to the department faculty and/or Chair. Numerical summaries and response histograms are constructed by the evaluation committee. These results are communicated to the Dean, the Chair, and the department faculty and may also be made available to the EFC Chair (or Vice-Chair in case of intra-departmental conflict).
- The Chair is given the opportunity to respond formally to the faculty, at his/her discretion.
- By no later than Spring Break of the Chair's final year, decisions regarding whether or not the Chair is reappointed and whether or not to recommend that outside candidates be considered should the Chair not be reappointed will be made by (1) departmental vote or (2) thorough consultation with the full-time faculty of the department and of related departments.
- Should the Dean approve a search for a new Chair and in the absence of a standing departmental committee (e.g., Executive Committee) normally charged with coordinating the search process, an ad hoc committee will be constituted consisting of three faculty members elected by the department. For external searches, a faculty member from outside the department who is appointed by the Dean will be added to the committee. The role of the outside member is to act as a representative of the Dean. Ideally, the outside member is a current or former department chair and/or has ties to the department. The department may also hold an election to recommend an interim Chair to the Dean.
- Upon conducting a thorough search which may include the nomination and consideration of internal candidates, the committee will recommend highly qualified candidates to the faculty.

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[1] A similar procedure is followed for evaluating Directors of academic program units in the School.

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- As specified in the Faculty Handbook, the Chair is appointed by the Dean, following selection by (1) departmental election or (2) thorough consultation with the full-time faculty of the department and of related departments. Appointments would normally be in conformity with department members' judgments. If, in extraordinary circumstances, agreement is not reached after such consultation and consideration – including an explanation by the Dean as to why s/he would not go along with the department members' judgments – the Dean shall consult with the Provost, who shall have the full and separate reports and recommendations of the departmental faculty, prior to decision.

Appendix: Sample List of Questions for Chair Evaluation

A sample list of standard questions for Chair evaluation is shown below. The essential aspects of this list were recommended by the EFC, based on a review of existing Chair evaluation procedures and the Provost's mandate. This list can be extended by departments in ways that account for their individual circumstances. The Chair's performance should be evaluated with respect to:

1. Leadership in the creation, refinement and advancement of a vision for the department.
2. The respect and ensuring of academic freedom.
3. Providing an environment that encourages and supports scholarly activity.
4. Providing an environment which is constructive, collegial and positive.
5. Promoting the development and maintenance of outstanding educational programs and curricular innovations at the undergraduate level.
6. Promoting the development and maintenance of outstanding educational programs and curricular innovations at the graduate level.
7. Promoting the development and maintenance of outstanding research programs.
8. Promoting the recruitment and the retention of outstanding undergraduate students.
9. Promoting the recruitment and the retention of outstanding graduate students.
10. Recruiting and retaining outstanding tenured and tenure-track faculty.
11. Successful mentoring of junior faculty.
12. Successful mentoring of faculty with performance problems.
13. Fairly and objectively allocating faculty load profiles.
14. Fairly and objectively evaluating faculty performance in merit reviews.
15. Keeping the faculty updated on and actively engaging them on School initiatives.
16. Seeking regular input and advice from the department's faculty.
17. Accessibility to department faculty members.
18. Articulating and advocating the department interests to the School and the University.
19. Effectively managing the department's working relationship with students.
20. Effectively managing the department's working relationship with alumni.
21. Effectively managing the department's working relationship with the industry.
22. Effectively managing the department's working relationship with the Advisory Board.
23. Effectively managing the department's working relationship with the Dean's office.
24. Effectively managing the department's working relationship with other constituencies.
25. Increasing the department's visibility with respect to the professional community outside of the University.
26. Increasing positive visibility of the department with respect to the academic community outside of the University.
27. Organizing the department effectively with respect to its business functions.
28. Prudently, fairly and effectively managing the income and expenditures of the department.
29. Operating the department in a transparent manner.
30. Operating the department fairly.
31. Operating the department effectively with respect to its relationship with the School as a whole.
32. Operating the department effectively with respect to its relationship with the University as a whole.
33. Operating the department overall.
34. Do you recommend the Chair be appointed for another three-year term?