TO: Interested Faculty
FROM: Todd T. Gleeson, Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs
SUBJECT: Descriptions of a Meritorious Service Record
DATE: 5 July 2000

How much service is too much service is a frequently asked question among junior faculty. Faculty service contributions to a department, college or school, and to the campus are essential to the successful management and governance of the Boulder campus, and all faculty members are expected to participate in such service activities at some level. The Boulder campus generally follows a tradition of placing the heaviest burden of service on the more senior members of the faculty in order to allow the junior faculty the time to establish excellence in their teaching and research/creative work areas. In smaller units, however, it is sometimes difficult to shield the junior faculty from service assignments to the same extent that larger units can. Regardless of unit size, however, some record of commitment to service, particularly at the departmental or program level, is expected from faculty members seeking reappointment or tenure.

At the time of a successful tenure decision, it is necessary to be judged “meritorious” in the number and range of service assignments completed, and in the quality of the service provided as part of those assignments. Striving to be judged “excellent” in service is desirable but not required, and does not substitute for achieving excellence in either or both teaching and research/creative work. In an effort to provide some guidance to junior faculty in answering the question “How much service is too much service?”, I asked members of the 1999-2000 Vice Chancellor’s Advisory Committee to list 3 to 5 examples of what they consider a meritorious service record for an individual at the time of his or her tenure review. A composite list of responses is listed below. There is no single formula or consensus for what constitutes a meritorious service record. Nonetheless these responses hopefully will give you some guidance in formulating your own answer to the above question, or perhaps provide a point from which to discuss this issue with your chair or director, mentor, or colleague.

1. After the first year, participation in at least one primary unit committee annually is expected, with some evidence of increasing responsibilities over time. Written endorsement of the quality and amount of unit-level service in the reappointment or promotion dossier is essential. In many units, the normal unit level service load may exceed one committee assignment per faculty member per year. There seems to be a common expectation that a candidate for tenure should be pulling his/her own weight, relative to the norms of their unit, by the 5th or 6th year.
Major service assignments at the primary unit level are often assignments to the departmental graduate committee, executive committee, a search committee, or the curriculum committee.

2. One or a few college/school level service activities are desirable over a seven year probationary period, but not essential. There is no absolute expectation for campus or University level service for faculty during the probationary period, as lack of service in this area can be compensated for by service contributions in areas listed below. It is often service at this level that is most interesting to junior faculty members, but it is also the type of service which can detract from other important obligations of a junior faculty member. Your chair or director should be consulted before such assignments are accepted, as they often have a better idea of how time consuming such committee work might be.

3. Moderate service to one’s professional society or organization is expected of a scholar with a developing national reputation. This might take the role of chairing a few sessions at national meetings, a record of reviewing for journals, publishers, or funding agencies. Organizing or jurying a show or conference would be another example of this type of service that demonstrates a national level of engagement. Some activity at this level may also help senior members of your profession, who may later be asked to serve as an external referee in your case, to learn of your work. This type of service can also demand excessive time from a junior faculty member, however, and a chair, director, or senior colleague might be consulted before taking on such service duties. Membership on major society committees or elected positions in societies is more an expectation of faculty contemplating promotion to full professor.

4. One significant outreach activity or project during the probationary period is often mentioned as a component of a meritorious service record. This might involve activities at the K12 level, applying your scholarly expertise in the community or State without expectation of remuneration, or other types of activity which shares the intellectual and creative resources of the University with the communities that we serve.

This list should not be interpreted as definitive or prescriptive of a meritorious service record for a faculty member approaching a tenure decision. It should, however, give you some idea of campus-level expectations of what a meritorious record might include. It should also provide junior faculty members a template from which to discuss this issue in more detail with colleagues within their own primary unit.