



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, DC

**American University Procedures for  
Senior Administrator Reviews in Academic Affairs**

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The appointment and sustenance of a strong and diverse cadre of senior academic administrators is critical to the management and future direction of American University. Senior administrators set strategic goals for their unit, balance competing priorities and concerns (including budgetary), and are responsible for ensuring that the culture of their unit or office is both collegial and forward-thinking.

Periodic comprehensive review of a senior administrator's work not only allows constituents to feel a greater stake in their leader's success, it also provides for a fruitful course correction in any areas of significant concern that may arise. Accordingly, periodic comprehensive review complements the regular annual review and mentorship that senior administrators routinely receive and exemplifies the university's commitment, as expressed in the *Faculty Manual*, to "promote shared governance that is transparent and accountable at every level of operation." No less important, it complements the established ways in which a unit's faculty and staff can provide valuable feedback to their leader, such as through executive or advisory committees, staff councils, deans' forums, and deans' office hours.

The following procedures apply to the periodic comprehensive review of the Provost, all academic unit deans, the University Librarian, the Deputy Provost and Dean of Faculty, the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies, the Dean of Undergraduate Education and Academic Student Services, the Vice Provost for Research and Innovation, and the Vice Provost for Global and Immersive Studies.

**Procedures for Senior Academic Administrator Review**

American University's bylaws state that "the Provost is appointed by the President with the approval of the Board" and "continues at the pleasure of the President" (IX,iii) and that "the Provost appoints school and college deans with the advice and consent of the appropriate college or school faculty and with the approval of the President" (X,ii). Accordingly, responsibility for the conduct of all senior academic administrator reviews—including the type and scope of the review instrument(s) and the makeup of the constituency to be polled—rests with the President in the case of the Provost and the Provost in the case of the deans, vice provosts, and University Librarian.

In recent years, senior administrator reviews have generally adhered to the following model:

- All faculty and staff in the relevant school or administrative unit receive an extensive survey using a 5-level Likert scale that assesses the administrator's leadership, management style, contributions to the academic life of the unit, ability to promote and advance the unit, ability to foster a climate of respect and inclusion, internal and external communication, and overall performance. Faculty and staff are also invited to submit narrative assessments of the administrator's work in each of these areas.
- In addition, all members of the President's Council and senior leaders in Academic Affairs are invited to submit narrative assessments in each of the seven areas above.
- Once the reviews are tabulated and collated, the supervising official (in most instances, the Provost) communicates the results of the quantitative survey to the senior administrator, together with a synopsis of the main themes to emerge from the narrative comments and an overall assessment of the administrator's performance as reflected in the review.

These reviews have generally taken place after five years of service.

Going forward, the following principles will typically apply:

- All senior academic administrators as listed above—including the Provost—will undergo a comprehensive review every four years, beginning at the end of their first four years of service. Because administrators working in an interim or acting capacity are typically less empowered than their permanent counterparts, time spent in such a capacity shall not count toward this review cycle.
- Reviews of academic unit deans and the University Librarian will continue to follow the historic model as described above and thus include feedback from all full-time and part-time faculty and staff in the relevant academic unit, as well as members of the President's Council and senior leaders in Academic Affairs.
- In the case of senior administrators with university-wide responsibilities—the Deputy Provost and Dean of Faculty, the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies, the Dean of Undergraduate Education and Academic Student Services, the Vice Provost for Research and Innovation, and the Vice Provost for Global and Immersive Studies—the Provost shall, in consultation with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, Staff Council, and other stakeholders, construct the pool of colleagues receiving the full survey so as to include key faculty and staff colleagues across the university familiar with the senior administrator's work.
- The pool of colleagues polled in the case of Provost reviews shall include all full- and part-time faculty and staff in the Academic Affairs division, plus members of the University Cabinet.
- At the conclusion of the review, the Provost (or President, as applicable) will communicate the overall result of the review to surveyed faculty and staff. Only the administrator under review, the Provost, the President, and (if requested) the Board of Trustees shall be privy to the details of the final evaluation.

As noted above, ultimate responsibility for the process and outcome of senior academic administrator reviews rests with the President in the case of the Provost and the Provost in the case of all other senior academic administrators. To further the university's commitment to the principles of transparency and accountability, however, the Provost (and President, as applicable) shall periodically meet with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the leadership of the university's Staff Council to receive feedback on the process of senior academic administrator review.