

Academic Personnel Office Strategic Plan 2026-2031

September 2026

This strategic plan is organized around two complementary goals that together strengthen both the *practice* and the *operations* of Academic Personnel.

Goal 1: Building Excellence in Academic Policy Practice, focuses on creating a comprehensive and sustainable learning and development infrastructure that supports faculty, Academic Personnel staff, and campus partners in navigating complex academic policies with confidence and consistency. Through coordinated training programs, certification pathways, shared reference materials, and targeted skill (including leadership) development, this goal looks to deepen policy ability, improve communication and collaboration, and enhance the overall user experience of academic personnel processes. By investing in clear guidance, accessible tools, and strong campus partnerships, the APO aims to promote correct policy implementation, reduce confusion and inefficiencies, and foster a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities across the institution. By doing so, we help prepare and equip current and emerging practitioners, experts, and Leaders in Academic Personnel.

Goal 2: Improving APO Efficiency and Effectiveness, centers on modernizing internal operations to ensure the APO can sustainably meet campus needs in a dynamic academic environment. This goal emphasizes continuous improvement, process evaluation, system modernization, data automation, and improved information management to reduce manual effort, increase transparency, and support prompt decision-making. Through initiatives such as system rebuilds, process mapping, workflow automation, and improved reporting and tracking tools, the APO will align its operational practices with institutional priorities and best practices across the UC system. In parallel, the plan recognizes the importance of aligning resources with workload by assessing staffing demands, benchmarking peer campuses, and exploring strategic investment options that strengthen capacity while supporting long-term organizational resilience.

Goal #1: Building Excellence in Academic Policy Practice. Establish a comprehensive learning and development infrastructure that empowers Faculty, the APO Team, and AP Partners to achieve high-level competency in navigating academic policies and systems.

Objective 1: Infrastructure for Communication and Collaboration Establish a robust training and development framework that provides feedback, service improvement, and growth in the areas of academic personnel policy and procedures and leadership.

- **Initiative a. AP Policy Training Program**

- **Planning and Discovery:** To Develop a comprehensive roadmap including training priorities, content priorities, timeline, and resource needs with the goal of increasing policy knowledge and excellence in practice. Deploy a campus survey to evaluate current training effectiveness and identify needs.
- **Content Development:** Develop training materials, tools, resources, and documentation Research and make decisions on content delivery modalities and training platforms Plan and execute kickoff summit (Target Fall (early November) 2026
- **Implementation and Evaluation:** Phased Rollout, over a two-year period of training modules, tools, and resources Establish and deliver a yearly evaluation and assessment process focused on continuous strategic alignment, effectiveness, and improvement.

- **Initiative b. AP Certificate Program**

- **Project Plan:** The purpose of this initiative is to provide training and on-going instruction in Academic Personnel Policy and Procedures that establishes and builds upon competencies that are essential to effective and fair implementation and supports academic excellence. The plan will define the curriculum structure and assessment criteria needed for successful program completion.
- **Training Material and Modalities:** A collaborative effort including systemwide and campus partners will contribute to the creation of specialized modules and case studies tailored to the responsibilities of Academic Personnel Professionals at all levels.
- **Recognition Plan:** A formal system to acknowledge and reward participants who achieve certification milestones will be established.

- **Identify Initial Participants for College Level SME Program:** Select key personnel within various colleges who demonstrate the potential to serve as local policy experts.
- **Initiative c. Faculty Development Program**
 - **Project Scope:** To Develop a comprehensive repository for known faculty development offerings on campus, systemwide, and within academia and to create and implement programming found and funded for APO to deliver and support. The goal is to increase the visibility and use of these opportunities among UCR Faculty that strategically align and provide preparation for Academic Leadership positions.
 - **Feedback and Updates:** Feedback will be collected on a yearly basis to refine, refresh and improve offerings.
- **Initiative d. Comprehensive Faculty Handbook**
 - **Planned Scope:** Include sections on UCR Values and Shared Governance, Appointment Types and Series, Salary Structure and Compensation, Teaching/Research/Service Responsibilities, Advancement and Review Actions, Professional Development Opportunities, Professional Conduct and Ethics, Grievances and Discipline, Leaves and Benefits
 - **Form:** The vision is to have a web-based handbook that is easy to access and easy to evolve. It shall exist on the APO website and be embedded with links to other documents/websites where additional layers of details can be found.
 - **Identify Editors/Authors:** While the VPAP will take the lead on the first draft of the handbook, the entire team will be asked to review the draft for corrections, deletions, and additions. The VPAP will need initial assistance from the APO website builders to get the feel for how to create the web-based format.
- **Initiative e. APO Communication Plan**
 - **Draft a Communication Plan Strategy:** Ensure campus stakeholders are informed, aligned and engaged. Creates a coordinated, transparent way to deliver messaging about strategic goals, policies and opportunities.

- **Finalize Communication Plan:** Review with APO Team and APO Leadership and gather feedback and edits on the draft strategy. Secure formal approval from APO Leaders.
- **Communication Plan Implementation:** Assess existing tools and templates and create new templates (targeted audience approach). Identify a project tool for the Communication Calendar-test and demo with APO Leaders (e.g. Planner or JIRA). Create a method to capture feedback and metrics
- **Stakeholder Information Maintenance:** Automate the Faculty Administrator Directory listing and other identified listings to ensure contact information remains current.
- **Initiative f. APO Team Knowledge and Skills Development**
 - **Identify Skill learning opportunities:** The purpose of this initiative is to create a culture of on-going learning and development for the central APO team. An analysis will be conducted to pinpoint specific areas where the team could benefit from further training. Learning and development.
 - **Integration of AI:** Provide learning opportunities to develop competency in AI tools to be utilized in APO processes, procedures, and resources.
 - **Collaborate Across Team:** Cultivate an environment of internal knowledge-sharing to ensure collective growth and consistency.
 - **APO Team Cross-Training:** Phased Approach. Create cross-training pods for the prioritized portfolio areas. Utilize the Pods to identify potential overlap and alignment and to provide backup support. Select staff participants based on their current roles, interests, and potential for growth in new functional areas.

Objective 2: Enhanced User Experience and Policy Implementation Improve the accessibility of academic policies by providing user-friendly tools and clarifying individual roles and responsibilities.

- **Initiative a. APO Website Rebuild**
 - **Review Current State:** Audit the existing website to identify pain points, outdated information, and technical limitations.

- **Get Team Feedback:** Gather input from the APO team regarding the desired features and scope of the new digital platform.
- **Implement:** Execute technical rebuilding and content migration to launch the updated website.
- **Initiative b. Policy Guidance Infographics**
 - **Gather Feedback:** Consult with campus stakeholders to identify which policies are currently the most difficult to implement. The goal of the infographics will be to visually communicate processes and procedures for better understanding and consistent application.
 - **Prioritize Opportunities:** Rank policy areas based on their impact and the urgency of the need for clearer guidance.
 - **Form:** Research tools and alternative layouts for policy infographics.
 - **Plan and Implement:** Draft and distribute policy infographics and "how-to" guides based on the prioritized list.
- **Initiative c. Web-based Implementation of The CALL**
 - **Project Plan:** The problem to be solved is that the PDF version of The CALL is cumbersome to read with only a small portion of it ever applying to a faculty member's context at a given time. Develop an approach where AI can be used in conjunction with an online CALL that mirrors exactly the PDF CALL to guide a user to the sections that are relevant to their context, including guided navigation based on the user's role/rank and type of review action. The web-based CALL will also be designed with accessibility in mind so that it is easy to navigate to support a broad range of users.
 - **Assess Technology Options:** Determine if a Bot can be constructed that can search the PDF version of the CALL based on a contextual question, such as "I am an Associate Professor III and would like to know what is involved with assembling a file for merit advance to Associate Professor IV." Can the Bot provide links to the relevant sections of the CALL that the faculty member should read? Also look at options that would allow users to select their role and easily search for the CALL information that applies to them.
 - **First Prototype:** Build the first contextual question, such as the example above, to root out the challenges with technology and interface the solution with the APO website. Create an initial web-based prototype that allows

users to select their role (e.g., Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor, Department Chair, Reviewer, or AP Staff) and then select the review action for which they need help with.

- **Portfolio of Contexts:** Evolve the portfolio of contexts to include as many scenarios as possible, including different faculty ranks, steps, review actions, and user roles.
- **FAQ Section:** Expand the output of the Bot for each contextual scenario by building a relevant FAQ that expands the information provided by the Bot or elaborates upon it. Use recurring questions and common areas of concern identified by APO (from previous yrs) to help develop the FAQ content.
- **Initiative d. Web-based Implementation Non-Senate Call**
 - **Project Plan:** Building upon the web-based implementation of The CALL, extend the initiative to the non-Senate CALL, using the same guided navigation and CALL Bot approach.
 - **First Step:** Review and update as necessary the current Non-Senate CALL to make sure the information is up-to-date before developing the web-based version.
 - **First Prototype:** Build the first contextual question, such as the examples given above for The CALL to root out the challenges with technology and interfacing the solution with the APO website. The prototype will focus on Non-Senate titles and review actions, such as Associate Researcher going through a merit advancement.
 - **Portfolio of Contexts:** Evolve the portfolio of contexts to include as many scenarios as possible across the different Non-Senate title series and review actions (e.g., Adjunct Professor, Professional Researcher, Project Scientist, Specialist, Academic Coordinator, and Academic Administrator).

Goal #2: Improving APO Efficiency and Effectiveness. Transform APO operations and advance the capabilities to enhance institutional effectiveness and ensure a sustainable, strategic future.

Objective 1: Evaluate Core APO Processes Modernize essential office functions by mapping them to institutional goals and eliminating manual redundancies.

- **Initiative a. ACAPER Rebuild and eFilePlus Integration**

- **Project Discovery:** This project will modernize the current ACAPER system by replacing the legacy application with a single modern cloud-based application. The current system, a PL/SQL web application, was launched between 2006 and 2007 and has been enhanced over time. While it has served as a comprehensive academic information system supporting faculty reviews, salary data, and reporting, this upgrade is part of a broader Digital Transformation initiative aimed at modernizing our IT solutions to improve efficiency, enhance data security, and support future growth.
- **Project Plan:** The project will be completed in several phases using an Agile development approach that is iterative and incremental in scope.
- **Project Outcomes:** The goal is Implementation of modern security standards and a brand-new, user-friendly interface. Key deliverables will be connecting systems (such as UCPATH and eFilePlus) to eliminate duplicate data entry and increasing data integrity. Functional upgrades will include seamless migration of historical Senate Faculty data, retention/improvement of all existing production functionalities, and enhanced eFilePlus routing to natively record proposals and votes.

- **Initiative b. Delegations of Authority (DOA) tables**

- **Review and Update External DOA:** The purpose of this effort is to refine and ensure it maps to responsibilities for both external colleges or schools' and APO's role and responsibilities. Eliminate "rubber stamping" where possible and reduce unnecessary layers of review and approval.
- **Create an Internal DOA:** The purpose of this effort is providing transparency to and documenting the decision level support provided by the APO Team to the VPAP. Where possible, the VPAP will delegate his approval to team members with a clearly defined process and oversight by the VPAP.

- **Initiative c. Improve M/P File Handling**

- **Review File Checklist Optimization:** The purpose of this initiative is to eliminate redundancy and clarify roles and responsibilities in the review of files. Action items include the review of mandatory verification steps, identifying items suitable for delegation to Dean's offices, and aligning checklist requirements with ACAPER rebuild functionality.
- **Delegation of Authority (DOA):** Ascertain the feasibility of establishing Dean's Final delegation to reduce file handling workload.
- **AI-Assisted File Review (eFilePlus Integration):** Partner with Data Team and ACAPER/eFilePlus developers to assess system integration capabilities. Identify which checklist items can be structured into rule-based vs AI-assisted validation. Conduct pilot testing on a subset of M&P files. Evaluate Accuracy
- **Eligibility List Current State Assessment:** Review current process and identify areas for improvement and reduction in manual effort. Historically, colleges submitted eligibility lists which APO then verified against ACAPER, creating duplicate work and inconsistencies.
- **Eligibility List 2025–26 Pilot Process:** APO generated eligibility lists directly from ACAPER and shared them with colleges via Teams. College responsibilities: verify faculty eligibility, add missing faculty and confirm stop-the-clock adjustments. Review administrative appointments and confirm review type (merit vs promotion).
- **Eligibility List Alignment with ACAPER Rebuild:** The eligibility list process will ultimately integrate directly with ACAPER rebuild functionality. Colleges will enter faculty eligibility directly into the system, improving data accuracy and reducing manual list maintenance.

- **Initiative d. Develop Retention, Retirement, Separation, and Appointment Tracking Tool:**

- **Create specifications:** Consult with VPAP, APO staff, and college/school AP staff
- **Evaluate software tools:** Discussion with ITS and APO staff

- **Develop:** Create real-time tracking tools to monitor changes in status across these designations, enabling more efficient creation of ad hoc reports and improved decision-making.
- **Deploy:** Message to college/school about the use of the tool and the vision that it be near real-time up to date.
- **Initiative e. Develop Faculty Exit Interview Tool**
 - **Design local tool:** The primary goal is to establish a systematic method for gathering actionable feedback from separating employees. By capturing honest insights regarding their experiences, reasons for leaving, and perceptions of the university climate, the project aims to help the Academic Personnel Office identify trends, address systemic workplace issues, and ultimately improve faculty retention and institutional culture.
 - **Deploy:** Launch use of the Qualtrics survey following end of AY25-26
- **Initiative f. Organize Office Information (SharePoint and Teams)**
 - **Develop Folder Schematic:** Design a logical folder structure in SharePoint to ensure intuitive and high-speed data retrieval. The goal is to create a “one-stop” shop and repository for information needed by all team members and create an electronic filing system for faculty personnel documents for which APO is the office of record for.
 - **Organize Faculty Data:** Systematically gather and categorize relevant data for individual faculty folders to centralize vital records.
 - **Create Teams Channels:** Establish dedicated Microsoft Teams channels to foster real-time collaboration and project-specific communication.
- **Initiative g. Data Set and Data Analysis Automation tools**
 - **Salary Equity Study Data Set:** Develop scripts to create the basic data set needed for the biannual salary equity analysis. The vision is that the scripts will reduce the manual curating tasks in the office by 90%, leaving only validation as a necessary intervention. The modeling and data analyses that underly decision-making on salary equity program options will be subsequently carried out with statistical software packages on the prepared data set.
 - **Merit and Promotion Equity Data Set:** Create a focused ACAPER data grid that lends itself more easily to the annual merit and promotion equity

analyses. The streamlined data grid will have only the essential data fields and be properly formatted for spreadsheet analyses that are underlying the reports. Having this more focused version of the data grid available will reduce the manual curating tasks of the more generic data grid by at least 50%.

- **Online Administrator Directory:** Automate updates to the Faculty Administrator Directory to ensure contact information remains current. Currently, the directory exists as a static PDF on the APO website. The goal is to connect the website to real-time data maintained in an APO Share channel, eliminating the need for manual updates to the PDF.

- **Initiative h. Campus APO Ticketing Systems (Replace DMS)**

- **Project Scope:** The main objective of this project is to replace the Academic Personnel Office's (APO) aging Document Management System (DMS) with a modern, scalable solution. The replacement will streamline and support high-frequency academic personnel tasks including system support and troubleshooting, custom reporting, compensation management, "stop the clock" requests, active service modified duties requests, and other central office administrative requests. Future enhancement may include academic leave processing.
- **Proposed Outcomes:** Implementation of a standardized ticketing system to improve overall efficiency and provide a more responsive APO service delivery model. A modernized, user-friendly interface that increases transparency for users and allows for a more engaged experience. Advanced reporting capabilities and metrics that will empower APO to make data-driven decisions regarding strategic planning and resource management.
- **Develop Project Plan:** The project's main objective is to replace the Academic Personnel Office's (APO) aging Document Management System (DMS) with ServiceNow, a modern and scalable ticketing system.
- **Evaluate Options.** Weigh the benefits of SNOW versus HRMS to make a convincing case to go the way of SNOW. Negotiate with ITS for them to fund the development of SNOW for APO.
- **Phase 1:** Develop forms for administrative tasks such as FTE transfer, PGD Appointments, Retention Offers, STC, Sabbatical Threshold Exceptions , etc. Also develop forms for Data Requests, such as coming from the UCR Legal Office, the VPAP, the Provost, etc.

- **Phase 2:** Develop forms for Troubleshooting notices, such as suspected errors or bugs in our Academic Systems.
- **Initiative i. Academic Leave Processing Modernization**
 - **Project Scope:** The academic leave process currently relies on DMS (Document Management System) and is in need of modernization and standardization. Originally scoped as part of the SNOW initiative, this effort has been separated into a standalone project due to confidentiality and privacy considerations specific to academic leave data.
 - **Proposed Outcomes:** Identify and implement a modern, scalable system that fully supports academic leave processing from start to finish. Improve APO efficiency and enable a more responsive service delivery model. Deliver a user-friendly interface that increases transparency and engagement for end users.
 - **Develop Project Plan:** APO is partnering with ITS to identify a system that aligns with the workflow and complexity of processing academic leaves. Options Under Evaluation (with ITS) include 1) HRSD - Broader ServiceNow module/full suite (including case management) currently used by the HR Avanti project for staff leaves, and 2) AODocs - Document management application that integrates with ServiceNow.
 - **Next Steps:** 1) Continue discussions with ITS to evaluate system options, 2) Determine an appropriate timeline for the work.

Objective 2: Grow Resources Align APO resource investment to the office workload.

- **Initiative a. Characterize office workload**
 - **Quantify Current State:** Survey the work items and time required in the work portfolios of each team member. The vision is a spreadsheet for each team member that has a column for the category of work, a column for activities within that category, a column for when during the year that activity occurs, and finally a column for the number of hours spent on that activity. The estimated hours would be recorded as a lower bound and an upper bound.
 - **Identify Stress Points:** Analyze the data collected to identify the heavy-hitter categories of work and the times during the year that team members are overloaded.

- **Initiative b. Develop a staff hiring plan**

- **Address Immediate Capacity Needs:** Use workload data to identify current stress points and prioritize FTE requests that provide near-term relief, focusing on roles that can quickly stabilize operations, reduce bottlenecks, and ensure timely handling of core responsibilities.
- **Plan Strategic Growth:** In addition to addressing immediate needs, the hiring plan should position the office for long-term growth and expanded impact. This could include: (1) an Associate VPAP to develop proposals in faculty development, advance strategies to improve faculty diversity, and expand support for faculty honors and awards; (2) a Policy Director to develop and clarify policy, adjudicate complex cases, and align policies with institutional priorities, equity goals, and risk management; (3) a Junior Analyst who can grow into a versatile team member, capable of backfilling multiple roles on short notice while also managing frontline triage and new work entering the office; and (4) an ITS specialist who can bring software development expertise to the office in alignment with UCR ITS, and that has a forward-looking focus on leveraging AI opportunities