The question behind my initial inquiry concerns the qualifications and process for hiring academic professionals such as directors, assistant deans, deans, etc. As a “townie” and daughter of an administrator, I have often wondered why such positions do not require some sort of management/leadership background in order to help these people in their new appointments as academic administrators. To begin my inquiry, then, I decided to look at a document provided by the Office of the Provost concerning Appointments of Faculty and Academic Professionals, which is labelled “Communication No. 3” and can be found at [http://www.provost.uiuc.edu/communication/appointments.html](http://www.provost.uiuc.edu/communication/appointments.html).

Upon reviewing this document, it is clear that these “communications” are not necessarily supposed to be easily deciphered by someone unfamiliar with our University’s inner workings since it does not explain in definite terms what the exact difference is between each position available. In fact, it doesn’t really even explain what the difference between an academic and an academic professional is. Furthermore, “communication” seems an odd choice for a title as the tone of the document is more of a mandate than an open dialogue, so perhaps an analysis of that word and its use within this particular document is needed. Finally, there are numerous jargon terms used that are not explicitly explained which can make the document difficult to understand at times.

Returning to the explanations of positions, it is clear that the document expects the reader to understand what is meant by the term academic professional and how that position differs from an academic. This is obvious to those of us within the University setting but may not be to those outside. The Communication begins with an explanation of how the Provost is allowed to oversee appointments “The President has delegated administrative authority over academic appointments on this campus to the Chancellor, who has in turn delegated it to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs” (1). It then immediately turns to explaining the types of appointments requiring prior approval by the provost (1) in which is mentions “An academic professional appointment with an annual salary over $90,000” but it never explains the description of that position. In similar circumstances, the Communication mentions procedures for untenured professors – which are labelled “Q appointees” – and special situations involving the waiving of tenur – which are “W appointments”. Additionally, the list of the appointments requiring prior approval includes “any other appointments, as needed, to preserve the principle of two-level review” but it never explains what two-level review entails. In fact, I think that will be one of my next steps because I don’t know what two-level review means, although I think I have an idea.

This Communication, while it seems like it would be helpful to those who understand what it says because it lays out the necessary procedures very clearly, is sort of confusing to someone like myself since I don’t understand what two-level review is, or why they felt the need to label untenured academics as “Q appointees”. What seems odd to me regarding the title of this document is that it is more of a mandated policy rather than a dialogue and it has since made me wonder about the understanding of the word itself both for me personally and for the university. I understand that a monologue or a mandate can be a form communication but at the same time I have generally seen such things given different labels, such as a “policy” or a “plan” or “procedure”. So, it is
interesting to me that the Office of the Provost considers such a document to be a good way to communicate with the rest of the University – and perhaps it is, since the Provost can’t very well meet with all of the different departments to outline in detail the procedures for appointing new faculty members.

In an attempt to better understand this document, I feel it is necessary for me to find explanations of several jargon terms that it assumes the reader understands – which I don’t. The most important of these terms is the 0% faculty position. This position is mentioned over twenty times in this 18 page document and I have no idea what is mean by it. It also mentions Academic professional positions that include a 0% faculty position. Outside of that particular term, the Communication also assumes that the reader is familiar with the other communications and attachments provided by the Office of the Provost and continually refers to them for further detail and explanation, so perhaps I will begin with those.

In the end, this Communication did not really help me understand the qualifications for academic professionals but it did help me to understand the hiring process a little more. I do think that it has given me a better idea of where to go next. However, if the others are as jargon filled as this one, then they may not be any help.