

Provost's Announcements to the Faculty Senate
February 9, 2021

- 1. Faculty Development Center:** The establishment of a Faculty Development Center/Center of Excellence (name TBD) has been a goal for me as Provost and is also identified as an important objective in our Strategic Plan (Objective 1.4). The need for a FDC is more acute with the impacts of the pandemic on faculty, particularly their access to professional development experiences, time for scholarly and creative activities, and preparation for tenure and promotion. This summer, I would like to initiate a needs assessment and prioritization of services for an FDC under the direction of an Interim Assistant Provost for Faculty Success. We would also work with the FS and deans on identifying immediate needs (perhaps to be addressed in Summer 2021). My hope is that the FDC, when fully developed, would support faculty across their careers and scope of responsibilities as well as serving as a hub of information and training for innovation for teaching and learning, including culturally responsive teaching. Funding for this project would come from a number of different sources, including an open position in the Provost's Office. **Action requested of the FS: Initial reaction would be appreciated. More detailed plan to be presented to the FS on 2/23.**

- 2. Faculty Diversification and Success Planning:** As you all know and are committed to, creating a more inclusive community is a critical goal for our campus. We have been working on plans to achieve Objective 2.2 of our Strategic Plan: Enhance our faculty and staff recruitment that includes the following strategies:
 - *Create a university-wide, multi-year initiative to hire and retain diverse faculty based on documented best practices, including the institutional oversight of diversity within searches, while respecting the autonomy of individual departments.*
 - *Enhance the search process based on documented best practices to more effectively diversify our applicant pools and ensure departmental policies adhere to these and professional development opportunities exist to provide training.*
 - *Create an inclusive and comprehensive onboarding process for new faculty and staff, including specific resources to assist with the acclimation and retention of our diverse faculty and staff.*
 - *Implement a dual-career partner assistance hiring program, cluster hiring program and/or other hiring programs with a demonstrated record of increasing faculty and staff diversity.*

Attached is a current (rough!) draft of action items and resources to support the diversification and success of our faculty. Tara Smith and I have been working with people associated with an NSF-funded project related to this (e.g., Mike Scott and Jessica Clark, (Henson School), Damani White-Lewis (UMCP), and Robin Cresiski (UMBC)) and in consultation with Kevin Vedder (AVBP HR), Joan Williams (CDO), the Promise Faculty Learning Community, and others. My office has also conducted a review of tenure and promotion guidelines by program which we would like to share with an appropriate FS

committee for consideration of how our University mission and values could be better communicated and rewarded in our University T&P criteria through those at the unit level.

Action requested of the FS: Recommendation on which FS Committee to provide guidance on different aspects of this project.

3. **May 2021 Commencement Planning:** We are currently planning virtual events by school and college with a separate event for graduate students. We are concurrently planning an in-person component to be held in Sea Gull Stadium that would allow graduates to be individually recognized as they walk across a stage. Attendance at the in-person event would be very limited; it would be live-streamed for families, friends, and the University community to cheer on the degree recipients. As noted in a [recent article](#) in University Business, most campuses have not solidified plans regarding spring commencement given the uncertainties of the pandemic. Action requested of the FS: Any further discussion is welcome.
4. **Fall 2021 Sabbatical Requests:** Typically requests for sabbatical leave are made approximately a year prior to the time when they are proposed to be taken. Given the budget uncertainty when we started this academic year, we did not encourage the submission of sabbatical applications for Fall, 2021 in the normal cycle (last fall). Because our budget and enrollment demand may allow for some sabbatical leaves, we issued a call last month for Fall 2021 sabbaticals in order to provide professional development opportunities and to reduce the backlog of sabbatical requests. Fifteen requests for Fall 2021 are currently in the review. Action requested of the FS: None, informational.
5. **COVID 19-related considerations for the Spring 2021 semester:** As described in my Feb. 1 First Monday email, in addition to our well-honed testing and other public-health protocols, we are working to provide the campus with information on appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations. In Academic Affairs, we are currently prioritizing faculty, graduate assistants, and staff who are teaching or working in a F2F or hybrid environment (more broadly, the campus is prioritizing healthcare, public safety, dining services, and residence life workers). We recognize that it's frustrating to be eligible for a vaccine and to not be able to get an appointment or to not be on the priority list at this point. Thank you for your patience as we work through this challenging and vaccine-limited process. Action requested of the FS: In order to leave as much time as possible for regular FS business, we recommend that we use the 2/11 Academic Affairs Town Hall for COVID-related questions and comments. That said, we are happy to address questions at FS meeting as well.