

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2010, 3:00-4:30 P.M.
36 GERBERDING HALL

Co-Chair Anand Yang called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. Bruce Balick, chair of the Faculty Senate, introduced himself and thanked the co-chairs and members of the Council for their commitment in re-activating the Council.

Meeting synopsis:

1. Approval of minutes from November 16, 2010
2. Recruitment and retention of faculty (and students) of color in these challenging times
3. Discussion of ideas for agendas of future meetings.
4. Adjournment

1. Approval of minutes from November 16, 2009, meeting.

The minutes were approved as drafted.

2. Recruitment and retention of faculty (and students) of color in these challenging times.

Co-Chair Yang clarified that the recruitment and retention of students and staff are handled by other faculty and administrative committees – and that today’s discussion would focus on faculty. He introduced Presidential Designee Luis Fraga who agreed to brief the Council on the state of minority faculty on campus – and how they have been impacted by the current budgetary crisis.

Fraga began by saying he would talk about recruitment and retention and how the budget has effected both and then follow-up with questions and answers. He distributed a report on the first year of the operation of his office, not including this past year. This has been circulated across campus, and was written at a time when current budget constraints were not anticipated. The office was new and in its first year of operation. There was a lot of energy and excitement about plans and possibilities for the future, so the report may be more useful as an historical record rather than as a plan for what is now possible in the foreseeable future. Although much of the work outlined in the report will continue, it may not be on the same scale or timeline as had been hoped. In describing the general state for faculty of color at the UW, he referred to a newly coined phrase “flat is the new up.” If things are not declining than things are going pretty well. That could be applied to faculty of color too. Numbers of minority faculty have remained fairly stable.

Recent budget discussions had led to a question about the existence of Fraga’s office (for recruitment of minority faculty) at a time when there was a moratorium on hiring. Even given the moratorium on hiring in general, some hiring still occurred. Exemptions to the hiring freeze existed that required several levels of review. When the freeze was removed, the Provost was again authorized to hire new faculty on the advice of the Deans with the expectation that central administration would not intervene in most cases.

Rather than providing direct funding from its own budget, Fraga’s office serves to coordinate efforts to provide funding from a variety of sources outside of his office to support the hiring of minority faculty. That has been an advantage for two reasons: 1) it means that Fraga has a fair amount of flexibility in proposing recruitment packages for minority faculty, and 2) it puts the responsibility of determining the ultimate amount of the offer on the Provost, which sends a very important message to the rest of the University. It shows the campus that the Provost is continually working on minority faculty recruitment and keeps the issue on her radar screen.

If all power is in the hands of the Deans, what part does the Provost play in recruitment of multicultural faculty? She does provide bridge funding, supplementary research funding and entertains proposals for funding from central administration – but the primary financial responsibility for the new hire rests with the Deans. And all requests are handled on a case-by-case basis. The Provost's funding for this comes from private endowments she has access to that are not linked specifically to general operating funds. Various re-captured funds from across the Provost's budgets are also available. This does not come from (currently non-existent) money that is set aside for recruitment and retention. Every request is handled on an individual basis. Fraga's sense is that this is the way this was handled in times past as well. Clearly there are many fewer faculty now being hired, but the number of requests Fraga has received for help with recruitment packages has remained fairly constant over the past three years.

What has changed is the priority and importance of retention. Retention of faculty is critical in this environment. The number of requests received by Fraga to assist with retention offers has not necessarily increased, but the intensity and importance expressed in those request are greatly heightened. Fraga feels that the Provost has been very open in considering these requests. The requests come to Fraga as memoranda which report the importance of the research being done and the mentoring of students being done. These are powerful documents that illustrate the high caliber of work being done at the UW, even without any consideration to the multicultural issues involved. These memoranda are then forwarded to the Provost for her review. In several cases, the support provided by the Provost has been absolutely critical in the retention of key faculty members. Fraga admitted, however, that given the current budget situation, he is not at all certain how much longer the funding will hold out for even this sort of support.

Discussion ensued about the uniformity of retention policies across schools and colleges and about the possibility of arbitrary practices at the unit level with regard to retention. Fraga's office receives only requests for assistance with retention proposals, but is not engaged at the unit level, working actively to retain faculty. But those requests for assistance might come from the Dean, Chair, or the faculty member, him or herself. Fraga is able to facilitate information flow regarding the process and thereby makes the process much more transparent for those involved. Fraga emphasized that he has consciously worked against the notion that his is a "compliance" office. The Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action office serves that purpose. Fraga's serves to help deans, departments and individual faculty members move forward using resources that may be available through the Provost's office. The clear limit that exists now is the finite number of dollars available, and Fraga's office is facing tough times with regard to retention offers. There are a number of Universities that even in these difficult times are able to offer recruitment packages to our faculty that we will not be able to match with a retention offer. As a result, his office needs to become increasingly strategic in devising retention offers to maximize the resources he has to work with. Current additional challenges include the deferment of the 2% salary increase. How can any retention offers be justified when faculty members are not given a yearly increase that even equals a real cost of living increase? Extreme care needs to be taken in considering retention packages.

Fraga then took time to dispel a rumor that had been spread this past fall – that central administration had advised deans to increase their standards for tenure as a way of reducing future funding required for salaries. Fraga heard this rumor from a number of concerned faculty of color and took that concern to administration for clarification. He was assured in every way possible that that was not the case, and he relayed that assurance to the faculty members who had contacted him with their concern. Subsequently, based on cases he has reviewed, there is no indication that standards for tenure have either increased or decreased.

He reported that this year as many as six faculty members whose research focuses on diversity, broadly-defined, will be tenured, and most of those faculty members are those from diverse background. He considers this a major achievement for the University during these difficult economic times. The challenge is that, once these faculty members achieve tenure here, they will be even more sought-after by other Universities around the country.

He then cautioned the Council to be aware of the implications there may be for efforts like this if the University is to enter into activity-based budgeting. Among the concerns, in addition to the departmental concerns that would impact all faculty, is how central administrative functions that serve the common good will fare when they are not directly tied to student enrollment credits. Fraga's understanding of this is that activity-based budgeting will grant even more decision-making authority to the Deans than they currently have and the funding distribution formula used for the schools and colleges will determine the amount available for those functions that serve the common good. Neither the Provost's office, nor Student Services, nor the office of Minority Affairs enroll students. Decisions about how funds are distributed for those kinds of activities in an ABB model become extremely critical

In answer to a question about how many faculty of color are being hired as opposed to the number of those leaving, Fraga responded that although there are no formal statistics, his assessment of the past few years is that it's about even.

In answer to a question about any indication that the climate at the UW is a continuing problem, Fraga reported that he has not heard any negative comments recently. He said he tries to do exit interviews especially with faculty with diverse research interests, and that has not come up. He added that there are a number of recruitments currently in the works that would increase diversity on the faculty significantly.

Data on new hires suggest the following trends – that using gender, race and ethnicity as categories (he doesn't have information on sexual orientation or disabilities) a higher percentage of women and Asians are hired than the overall trend would show in a typical time period. But the percentage of Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans is roughly equivalent to the patterns already established. Discussion ensued about the value of the data under consideration, given the very small sampling of individuals involved.

Fraga described a series of four meetings held to mentor untenured faculty members, primarily, though not exclusively, from historically under-represented backgrounds. The meetings were well-received with sessions on a variety of topics from relationships with department chairs to the merit review process. Fraga saw this as an opportunity to ensure that everyone involved understood how things work in the UW academic community. These meetings revealed a number of concerns: 1) That there's a great deal of misunderstanding and misinformation among the ranks of untenured faculty. They simply don't have the information they need to ensure success in the system. 2) That there's a lot of variation across departments and colleges. Procedures and requirements for promotion differ significantly from department to department. 3) That there's a need for opportunities for untenured faculty to get together on their own, away from department chairs and senior faculty, in order to share stories with one another.

Another outcome from this mentoring effort was the establishment of a group called WIRED – Women Investigating Race, Ethnicity and Difference -- consisting of approximately fifteen untenured women faculty members and two senior faculty. The group requested support from Fraga's office to convene a writing retreat to review each others' papers and grant proposals. In Fraga's opinion the support of this retreat was money well-spent. In addition, funding has been designated for the group to continue its meetings and retreats over the next three years.

What's much less clear to Fraga is whether a formal mentoring program should be established. He sees both opportunity for the success of such a program and opportunity for possible litigation when it doesn't work. Sometimes this works more successfully when organized informally within departments.

In response to a question about next steps, given the data Fraga had been reviewing, he referred to the section of his handout entitled Objectives and Strategies. He hopes to get feedback on that section of the paper in order to ensure that those next steps will make a real difference in enhancing diversity at the UW.

Fraga then reported that his office had participated in a number of interventions in response to problems related to diversity that arise from time to time within departments. These have been successful for the

most part, and he has been grateful for the opportunity to be a part of a department rethinking some of its practices.

Fraga suggested that the Council might focus on holding Deans accountable. A group at this level in shared governance could think strategically on how one does that. At least part of that would be crafting an inquiry to the Deans – asking for their plans or strategies with regard to maintaining, if not increasing, the diversity of faculty in their schools or colleges given fiscal restraints over the next several years. The only way that will happen is if the Deans give that issue priority – and the Deans need to provide incentive to Department Chairs to make this a priority too.

Yang suggested that this proposal, and the drafting of such inquiries or other plans for influencing Deans, might be put on hold until the next meeting when more Council members are present.

3. Discussion of ideas for agendas of future meetings.

Chair Yang thanked Fraga for his report and assured the Council that discussions will continue on how best to encourage accountability in faculty hiring practices at the college level.

4. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Minutes by Susan Folk, Assistant to the Secretary of the Faculty, slfolk@u.washington.edu

Present:

Regular:	Yang, Flores, Roy, Barria
Ex Officio:	Martinez, Sanders
President's Designee:	Fraga

Absent:

Regular:	Gamboa, Ross, Schwartz, Spigner, Willgerodt
Ex Officio:	Murphy, Sipes