

Best Practices on Retaining a Diverse Faculty¹

Mentoring Junior Faculty – Mentoring programs significantly enhance the competency of junior faculty. Departments can organize formal mentoring programs and workshops that assist with issues pertinent to junior faculty. This is especially important for women and minority junior faculty who may not be included in informal campus support networks.

Transparency in Promotion and Tenure Guidelines – A common perception of the promotion and tenure processes is that it is not always objective. Departments can develop and maintain clearly established criteria for granting tenure promotion, and this information should be easily accessible by all junior faculty. The criteria for gauging excellence should be wide and flexible. Departments could schedule regular workshops in which expectations are communicated to junior faculty. Tenure and promotion committees should rotate membership and leadership to ensure that the processes are fair and systematic.

Faculty Development Programs – Departments can develop a variety of programs that assist junior faculty in their progress. Examples of programs include release time/workload relief to support research as well as workshops on grant-writing and publication strategies. These programs could include faculty who have just obtained tenure so that they can address the factors that contributed to successful faculty careers. Department chairs can promote external visibility of pre-tenure faculty by helping them to establish networks outside of the university or providing opportunities for them to present their research at national meetings.

Climate of Inclusiveness and Fairness – Professional isolation is often cited as a reason for leaving an institution. Informal social networks create a sense of community. Ideas for building these networks include: holding regular departmental social events, department-sponsored lunches with rotating subgroups of faculty members, or lunches between the department chair and junior faculty. Demonstrating active appreciation is also a method of engaging faculty and creating a sense of community.

Data Collection – Exit interviews provide the opportunity for understanding obstacles to retention and designing effective responses to the problems. Departments can conduct exit interviews with departing faculty, including women and minorities, to determine why they are leaving the institution and identify retention problems that have a negative impact on faculty diversity.

Self-Assessment – Through regular self-evaluation departments can avoid disparities in resources and salary that influence faculty retention. By regularly reviewing office and lab space allocation, department goals, workload, committee assignments, merit increases, leadership opportunities, and recognition, women and minorities in particular are afforded the same benefits and resources as their peers.

Flexible Policies and Practices – Flexible family leave, transitional support, work-life, and tenure clock policies play a key role in retaining faculty. University responsiveness to the employment situation of a faculty member's spouse/partner has a strong effect on faculty retention. Affordable and accessible childcare services as well as other benefits that assist faculty in their role as parents are also key elements to retaining faculty.

¹ References include the *University of Washington Faculty Retention Toolkit*, the ADVANCE program at the University of Rhode Island, and the *University of California Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty*.