

RESPONSE OF FACULTY SENATE TO REPORTS ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF WOMEN AND MINORITY FACULTY

Approved by the Faculty Senate on January 13, 2009

The University Committee on Women Faculty and Students and the Subcommittee on Faculty Recruitment and Retention of the University Committee on Cultural Diversity (collectively, the “University Committees”) recently have prepared reports on the recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty, respectively, at the University of Notre Dame. Both University Committees concluded that, despite dedicated efforts, the University has not achieved adequate results and that more work needs to be done to promote the recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty. Each report included recommendations to assist the University in achieving its goals.

The Faculty Senate believes that the recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty should be of paramount concern to the University. As we indicated last year in our response to the University’s initiative on Catholic hiring, “the unique aspiration of the University to enhance its Catholic character while moving into the first ranks of research institutions” requires it to “expand[] the diversity of the faculty, staff, and students.” We recognize and credit the University’s efforts in this regard. However, it is apparent that further efforts are necessary. We commend the efforts of the University Committees in conducting their studies and preparing their reports. These reports deserve serious consideration by the University.

Nevertheless, the Faculty Senate believes that additional study of the current situation is required. Based on the data that were made available to them, the University Committees often were unable to explain the causes of the patterns observed. However, preparing an adequate response requires a thorough understanding of the problem. For example, on the issue of retention, it is important to know why faculty members are leaving the University. Is it because they are being denied promotion, because they are receiving superior offers from competitor institutions, or because of personal reasons? The same may be said with respect to hiring. It is important to know the extent to which our pool of applicants may be too small, our rate of extension of offers of employment may be too low, or applicants may be accepting superior offers elsewhere. These types of information are indispensable to crafting effective and efficient responses to the problems of recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty.

Recommendation 1. The Faculty Senate recommends that the University make available to the Committee on Women Faculty and Students and the Committee on Cultural Diversity the additional information they request regarding the recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty, respectively. Given legitimate privacy concerns, such information should not include identifying data. The Faculty Senate further recommends that these University Committees continue their studies to determine problem areas and, if possible, to develop further solutions targeted to the specific problems identified. The Faculty Senate further recommends that the analyses of these University Committees be made available to the University community.

Both University Committees expressed serious concerns about the current status of women and minority faculty on campus. Their attention to these issues, while requiring follow up exploration and study, suggests the need for the University to establish goals for increasing the numbers of faculty hired. The University's emphases on Catholic character, mission, and diversity are compatible with these gender and minority hiring goals.

Recommendation 2. The Faculty Senate recommends that, after a proximate period of analysis (preferably within the next academic year), the University move to establish a hiring plan to target women and minorities at all ranks.

The Subcommittee on Faculty Recruitment and Retention of the University Committee on Cultural Diversity recommended the expansion of the Erskine A. Peters Fellowship Program. The Faculty Senate believes that dissertation fellowships and postdoctoral fellowships are an excellent means of increasing the presence of women and minority faculty and may provide additional opportunities for hiring tenure-track women and minority faculty members.

Recommendation 3. The Faculty Senate recommends that the University create additional dissertation and postdoctoral fellowships for women and minority candidates.

The Faculty Senate notes that both University Committees recommended that the University survey faculty satisfaction/wellness and establish a more formal system of exit interviews. Such practices clearly would increase the amount of information available to the University regarding the causes of deficiencies in recruitment and retention, not only with respect to women and minority faculty, but with respect to all faculty members. Consideration should be given to implementing these programs on the university level. Such surveys and interviews must be conducted in a manner calculated to produce candid responses. Among the precautions that may be necessary are credible promises of anonymity to participating faculty. An independent body, such as the Faculty Senate, may be helpful in this regard.

Recommendation 4. The Faculty Senate recommends that the University implement formal systems of surveying faculty professional satisfaction, of conducting exit interviews, and of monitoring the results over time. The Faculty Senate offers to assist the University in the development and regular implementation of such systems.

The Faculty Senate would like to draw attention to the recommendation for the establishment of professional mentoring and training programs. We believe that a strong mentoring program is essential for successful faculty development not only for women and minority faculty but for all faculty. In implementing such a program, the University ought to consider the experiences of other institutions and strive to implement best mentoring practices.

Recommendation 5. The Faculty Senate recommends that the University identify best practices for mentoring assistant and associate faculty and promote their implementation in all departments.

Finally, the Faculty Senate would like to endorse the recommendation that the University expand the services offered by the Dual Career Assistance Program and otherwise enhance its efforts with respect to spousal hiring. Such efforts are especially important if the University is to compete with other institutions in large metropolitan areas. We believe that such efforts would be universally beneficial, even as it would prove especially valuable for women faculty.

Recommendation 7. The Faculty Senate recommends that the University enhance its efforts with respect to spousal hiring and otherwise assisting current and prospective faculty members to locate employment for their spouses.

One important issue raised in the reports by the University Committee on Women Faculty and Students was increased funding for the Early Childhood Development Center (the “ECDC program”), the University’s on-campus daycare program. The Faculty Senate has chosen not to address this program in the current statement. A committee organized by John Affleck-Graves, Executive Vice President, has recently completed a detailed study of the ECDC program, and the Faculty Senate soon will be asked to study and comment on this report. A well-funded childcare program is likely to enhance the ability of the University to attract and retain highly qualified faculty and the Faculty Senate will address this issue in a subsequent statement.

[Note: A recommendation labeled Recommendation 6 was moved, seconded, and debated by the Faculty Senate. The recommendation endorsed the call for an Office of Diversity. This recommendation was defeated.]