

Investing in Faculty: A Multi-faceted approach to Faculty Development

Academic Senate White Paper Draft

Committee

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Academic Senate White Paper on Investing in Faculty

Purpose

The purpose of this draft document is to provide a starting point for a discussion regarding university investment in faculty at the 2011 Academic Senate retreat. The issues raised in this document should be considered discussion points, not conclusions. Similarly, they do not represent consensus findings from the ad-hoc committee, but rather areas for further inquiry and exploration. It is hoped that this draft document will prompt the development of new areas as well as a sense of priorities that can be pursued in the near future.

The paper is organized around five major sections. The first section is a general description of the challenges and opportunities. Sections two through four address key issues in more detail, and the final section incorporates recommendations that the Senate may wish to consider.

Section 1: The nature of the problem

There are more than 3,000 full-time faculty members at the University of Southern California who contribute critical components to the University's mission, including undergraduate and graduate teaching, research, community and clinical service. Faculty members constantly evolve in their personal career paths and goals, and this growth is a fundamental element of the University's progress in achieving its mission and goals. Current faculty will assist the organization in accomplishing the goal of reaching "undisputed elite" status among our peer institutions.

In order to support faculty in their roles within the academy, the University should consider additional investment in its faculty across several key areas that will be addressed in this paper:

- The identification of new resources for investment in the continued development of existing Tenured, Tenure Track, and Non-Tenure Track faculty
- The development of a system that encourages all faculty to achieve and maintain professional excellence, leading to greater career satisfaction, productivity and recognition
- Enhancement of broader opportunities for career trajectory evaluation
- Integration of high achievers in key mentoring functions

Section 2: Mentoring at all levels

The University has initiated a number of faculty mentoring programs during the last decade. The emphasis on this critical area improves the likelihood of tenure and promotion, expands the level of information available to faculty, fosters a multi- and cross-disciplinary environment, and creates a community of scholars that supports colleagues.

As faculty continuously evolve, mentoring may be beneficial throughout their careers. Mentoring is likely to be especially valuable when a faculty member is at a point of transition in their career or during a period of disequilibrium. Prime examples of transition periods include promotion to a new position, or upon achievement of tenure. For NTT faculty, key points could be promotion or during evaluation for multi-year contracts. Senior faculty may need to change research direction as federal and other resources shift as their careers progress. At each of these points, faculty may be interested in exploring new areas that may improve the impact of their teaching and research.

Several areas for improvement in mentoring should be considered:

- The dissemination of “Best Practices” for mentoring faculty at career transition points
- The development of a mentoring “calendar” for the specific faculty discipline so that all faculty have identified mentors and schedules for shared research and teaching opportunities
- Consideration of five year mentoring reviews for senior and NTT faculty that would include faculty from other schools within the University
- Aligning incentives for faculty to develop new areas for research, clinical service, and teaching. These incentives could include shared resources with senior faculty.

Section 3: Expanded intramural funding

Existing intramural research funding for faculty has been expanded in recent years (*e.g.*, Zumberge faculty development grants), but these seed grants generally focus on short-term investments intended to yield additional extramural funding. Funding for innovative teaching approaches still lags behind the intramural research grant support. It is particularly noteworthy that internal school funding of such initiatives is not uniform and is subject to resource constraints at the University level.

Areas for future consideration include:

- Expanded flexibility at the school level to develop and expand opportunities for innovation in research, clinical service, professional service, and teaching
- Opportunities to use naming gifts for seed funding allocated at the school level
- Development of intramural funding for the development and dissemination of new teaching technologies/models that enhance learning, research, and clinical care
- Development of a fund to encourage team teaching across disciplines
- Development of a fund to support competitions for interdisciplinary centers and research groups
- Development of funding for faculty externships in industry settings
- Development of support to place faculty in short-term (1-2 weeks) at visiting faculty positions worldwide, as well as greater support for short-term faculty visits to USC
- Development of thematic summer sessions with faculty from other universities for topics such as advanced methods that could attract doctoral students and faculty worldwide
- Development of a formal mechanism to provide bridge funding for mid-career and senior faculty
- Development of a mechanism that funds faculty training fellowships for mid-career faculty that encourage cross-disciplinary scholarship
- Additional support for postdoctoral positions
- Development of NTT fellowships that include teaching and clinical service relief for faculty to pursue scholarly activities that improve career trajectory and satisfaction
- Development of protected time for NTT clinical faculty to pursue research and clinical innovations

Section 4: Importance of enhanced general infrastructure

There have been a number of recent infrastructure expansion efforts at the University and school levels. In addition, several schools have partnered to develop new research centers that could not have otherwise been developed. These new centers have had an immediate impact on extramural funding and national visibility.

However, there are a number of areas for possible improvement:

- Statistical/graphical support for research and teaching
- Shared resources for the expansion of teaching technology
- Travel grants for graduate students
- Infrastructure development across schools (*e.g.*, during recruitment of senior faculty)
- Infrastructure for high-profile proposal development
- Development of mechanisms for enhanced within-discipline communication (*i.e.*, when faculty from a single discipline are located across schools)
- Exploration of pooled support systems for shared clerical staff, RAs, and work study systems
- Development of virtual portfolio systems to assist faculty in letters of recommendation and other common administrative functions

Section 5: Draft Recommendations

The Academic Senate retreat discussion should assist in developing new ideas for faculty investment, as well as a sense of the areas for priority consideration. However, there were several areas that appeared promising to the ad-hoc committee, including:

- The development of a five-year review mechanism for mid-career and senior faculty, including both TT and NTT. This review would have the sole objective of providing a supportive mentoring environment that would encourage senior faculty to pursue career growth opportunities.
- The development of an internal sabbatical mechanism to enhance cross-disciplinary activity within and among the Schools and campuses. Sabbaticals have been historically designed to permit faculty to expand and rejuvenate scholarship, usually through external collaborative opportunities. As USC has successfully expanded and enhanced existing programs, it should be recognized that internal sabbaticals may represent “best in world” collaborations.
- The development of a resource pool for NTT fellowships for scholarship and renewal. Some schools have provided resources of this nature in the past, but these processes should be standardized so that NTT faculty members can when appropriate engage in this opportunity.