

# Campus-Wide Initiatives for Increasing Faculty Retention and Success

---

*James Dietz, Academic Affairs*

*Scott Hewitt, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry*

*Lynda Randall, Department of Secondary Education*

At the campus level, CSU Fullerton has established a reasonable record of success in creating both a campus climate and an infrastructure for supporting and retaining new faculty. These efforts are supported by most recently available data for academic year 2007-2008, which indicate a total of 11 resignations and non-renewals among 284 probationary faculty and 3 resignations among 438 tenured faculty, or roughly 1.9% of full-time, tenured and tenure-track faculty. For a 5-year period (2003-2008), Fullerton averaged 2.5% total voluntary and involuntary separations in comparison to 2.0% for all CSU campuses, placing us at about the median for ten campuses reporting.

Despite these relatively high retention rates, the campus will need to focus continued efforts on recruiting and retaining high quality faculty in the face of diminishing economic resources and increased competition from other universities. Therefore, it is incumbent on campus-wide leadership to examine existing strategies to increase faculty retention and success and to explore new and innovative ways of supporting faculty. For the purposes of this paper, the discussion will focus primarily on the retention of new hires.

## Current Strategies and Campus-Wide Initiatives

### New Faculty Orientation

For many years, new tenure track faculty have been inducted to the campus through a two-day orientation, with presentations focusing on such topics as course and syllabus development; the use of Blackboard or other learning management systems; Retention, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) policies; and the nuts and bolts of assembling the RTP portfolio. In the coming academic year, the Faculty Development Center under the direction of Dr. Chris Renne will institute a year-long orientation program for new tenure track faculty that brings them together on Wednesday afternoons for monthly presentations and trainings. The change is designed to provide more continuous and just-in-time support for new faculty as the academic year unfolds. In addition, the ongoing meetings will be more interactive and will hopefully support a climate of collegiality and community for the incoming cohort group of new recruits.

## Mentoring

Departments vary in the extent to which a formal or informal faculty member is assigned to work with new faculty members. In general, mentors work with new faculty in the broad areas of teaching, research, and service, and also serve as resources in the development of the RTP portfolio. Just as mentoring approaches vary across the campus, the effectiveness and attentiveness of mentors also varies substantially from one experience to another. So, too, mentees differ greatly in the extent to which they will seek out and avail themselves to help from peers.

## Support for Research

Most new faculty members receive 6 units of release time per semester for two years to engage in research and to hone their courses. They also receive stipends of \$6500 from President Gordon. In some cases, especially in the sciences, new faculty receive lab and office start-up costs that range between \$2000 and \$90,000. In order to better meet the needs of a growing faculty, PRBC recommended a three-year plan to increase support for research. The first year focused on increasing the number of OGC intramural awards and has been funded by President Gordon. The second year focuses on increasing the maximum award from \$5K to \$10K. The third year focuses on baselining OGC staff salaries so that more overhead can go back to the college, departments, and faculty.

Severe budget constraints have forced colleges and departments to substantially reduce the amount of funding available for travel to conferences and professional meetings. It is certain that these measures will have a profound effect upon the ability of all faculty members to advance their research agendas and to retain prominence in professional circles.

Sabbaticals are one way the campus supports research for tenured faculty. Campus administrators have recently increased the number of annual sabbatical leaves so that in years with large numbers of applicants, about 80% can be funded. For example, there were 42 sabbatical awards made for this coming academic year (39 type A and 3 type B), whereas the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) only required that administration fund 29.

## Personal Needs

Faculty housing programs have provided affordable land-lease options for the purchase of homes priced well below market value. The program at University Gables has been very successful, while other ventures have been less so.

A specific provision of the CBA provides minimal requirements for the provision of professional leaves. As required in the contract, the campus provides six weeks of paid paternity/maternity leave to new parents. In the area of child-care, the Children's Center is currently able to accommodate only twenty children of faculty and staff, as priority is given

to children of students. The opening of a new and expanded center in January 2011 is expected to increase its capacity and to alleviate some of the need for a faculty waiting list.

### Development

The Faculty Development Center (FDC) has traditionally provided the bulk professional development support for new faculty. The FDC offers a variety of classes related to pedagogy and technology, in addition to support for research via a variety of intramural grants offered in fall and spring. Recently, the addition of OASIS (Online Academic Strategies and Instructional Support) has made it easier for faculty to get expert production assistance in the development of multimedia and online instruction. And despite severe budget cuts, campus Information Technology programs have continued to provide updated desktop and laptop computers and an array of software tools that support teaching and research.

Perhaps one of the most important areas of support for new faculty is that of social support and community. Each fall the President invites new faculty to an evening of dinner and conversation at his home, an event that exemplifies a value for collegiality and community. The Untenured Faculty and Lecturer's Organization has since 2001 provided a vehicle for collegial support among untenured faculty. This group functions independently of campus sponsorship and develops its agenda according to the perceived needs of the group. Unfortunately, a significant void in the campus community stems from the lack of a location or space for collegial activities such as a faculty club or lounge.

### Frameworks for Identifying Best Practices in Faculty Retention

In considering ways to improve our campus-wide strategies for retaining and supporting new faculty, one might rely on external models of excellence as identified through research and best practice. One such useful resource is the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* recent report on "the Academic Workplace: Best Colleges to Work For 2010." Based on a national survey of more than 43,000 faculty, administrators, and staff members on 275 2-year and 4-year college campuses, researchers identified a set of criteria for perceived faculty satisfaction and also identified 97 exemplary programs according to 12 categories. These categories included collaborative governance; compensation and benefits; confidence in senior leadership; diversity; facilities; workspaces; and security; job satisfaction; professional/career development programs; respect and appreciation; supervisor or department-chair relationships; teaching environment; tenure clarity and process; and work/life balance. CSU Channel Islands was listed among 97 "great colleges to work for," with special recognition for collaborative governance and a low voluntary resignation rate of 1.2%. Of course, they are a new campus with all their tenured and tenure track hires taking place over the past nine years.

Another useful framework for increasing faculty retention was produced by researchers at the University of Rochester, who looked at strategies to retain a diverse and inclusive

faculty. In their report, Davidson, Jefferson, & Shuherk (2009) linked increased retention to factors of *development* (mentoring and cross-disciplinary activities), *leadership* (welcome and orientation, contact with chairs, clear and transparent promotion and tenure process), *personal needs*, (e.g., dual careers, day care, and family-friendly policies) and *organizational culture* (openness, value for research, positive classroom climate, and a sense of belonging and community).

In fall of 2006, Cal State Fullerton provided leadership in the administration of Harvard's COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education Survey). In addition to Fullerton, the seven participating CSUs included Long Beach, San Luis Obispo, San Bernardino, San Marcos, Pomona, and Sonoma. Four questions related specifically to mentoring were examined in a report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Mentoring (Junn et al., 2008). The means for these four items indicated that untenured faculty respondents (n=114) held a high value for both formal and informal mentoring. In terms of best aspects of working at CSUF, the respondents rated their top four as 1) geographic location, 2) support of colleagues, 3) my sense of "fit" here, and 4) quality of colleagues. Rated among the worst aspects of working at CSUF were 1) cost of living, 2) teaching load, 3) compensation, and 4) lack of support for research/creative work.

## Recommended Campus-Wide Strategies for Increasing Faculty Retention and Success

The strategies outlined in this section are organized according to a framework synthesized from the two presented above. They represent a starting point for discussion and exploration into ways in which we might improve our already successful efforts to support and retain new faculty:

### Professional Development

#### Support for Teaching

- Provide support for new faculty who teach online.

#### Support for Research

- Increase levels of funding for travel to present research at conferences.
- Strive to reduce teaching loads so as to allow time for research for all faculty.
- Increase release time for funded research, grant writing, and other time-consuming activities that are not accounted for in a faculty member's workload such as chairing a university committee or being on the Senate Executive Committee.

### Leadership

- Explore new models for mentoring such as task-specific assistance, multiple mentors, virtual collaboration, cohort groups, and interest-based consortia.

- Train mentors and provide them with resources and release time.
- Develop a cadre of mentors who can provide support for various areas of expertise.

## Tenure Policies and Practices

- Advance the use of technology tools to streamline the process of portfolio creation, including electronic portfolios and digital forms.
- Work to ensure clarity and consistent communication of retention, tenure, and promotion policies.
- Expand and refine the faculty resource web site.

## Personal and Family Needs

- Increase the availability of child-care to faculty on campus.
- Expand options for affordable housing.
- Provide proactive support and advocacy for the employment of partners in dual careers.

## Organizational Culture

- Promote collegial activities that facilitate social networking and the development of community.
- Examine exit survey data to determine trends and address shortcomings that contribute to resignations.
- Identify and apply best practices for the recruitment and retention of a diverse and robust faculty.
- Consult with colleagues at CSU Channel Islands, one of 97 schools honored in the 2010 report, "Great Colleges to Work For"; recognized for collaborative governance, with a voluntary faculty turnover rate of 1.2%
- Ensure equity in rewards and opportunities.
- Encourage cross-disciplinary collaborations and lower the barriers to such activities.
- Investigate opening a scaled down faculty/staff club in the near future, rather than waiting many years to build the more expensive club that we had hoped for.

## Compensation

- Support negotiations for a fair contract and salary increases.

## References

The Academic workplace: 2010 great colleges to work for. (2010, July 30). *Chronicle of Higher Education*, B1-B56.

Davidson, L, Jefferson, F, & Shuherk, C. (2009). *Improving faculty recruitment and retention at the University of Rochester: A diversity and inclusion initiative..* Retrieved from [http://www.rochester.edu/president/memos/2009/faculty\\_diversity.html](http://www.rochester.edu/president/memos/2009/faculty_diversity.html)

Daily, C.J., & Dee, J.R. (2006). Greener pastures: Faculty turnover intent in urban public universities. *Journal of Higher Education*, 77(5), 776-802.

Dee, J. (2004). Turnover intent in an urban community college: Strategies for faculty retention. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 28(7), 593-607.

Junn, E. (2008). *Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Mentoring, Final Report and Recommendations*. Report No: ASD 08-108. Fullerton, CA: California State University, Fullerton.

Lorenzetti, JP. (2006). Getting by with a little help from one's friends: mentoring program boosts faculty retention. *Distance Education Report*, 10(15), 4-6.

Piercy, F., Giddings, V., Allen, Kl, Dixon, Bl, Meszaros, P, & Joest, K. (2005). Improving campus climate to support faculty diversity and retention: A pilot study for new faculty. *Innovative Higher Education*, 30(1), 53-65.