

## **Report of the College of Letters and Science Faculty/Staff Experience Working Group**

Spring 2014

The UW Oshkosh College of Letters and Science Strategic Plan of 2010 identified faculty and staff experience as one of six priority issues. The college committed itself to developing policies and practices that enable members of the COLS community to reach their highest potential in scholarship, creative endeavors, teaching, and service. The COLS Faculty/Staff Experience Working Group was tasked with developing a vision and recommendations to create a college community that supports our core mission to be leaders in liberal arts education while developing a productive, innovative, and engaged Faculty and Academic Staff.

During the spring semester of 2013, the Dean and the Faculty Committee charged the Faculty/Staff Experience Working Group to examine issues related to faculty and staff work experience, and to report back proposals or suggestions for moving the process forward. Members of the working group met with faculty at the spring College Meeting, and discussed the issues at several meetings throughout the Fall 2013 semester. Upon study and careful consideration the committee makes the following recommendations for consideration.

### **Clarify Expectations for Success:**

1. We recommend that the college examine and consider the adoption of an online platform for reporting faculty/staff activity. Such a platform would streamline the process of collecting and reporting on the teaching, scholarship, and service activities of faculty and instructional academic staff, greatly simplifying the creation and examination of merit, renewal, tenure, and promotion files. The College of Business, and the College of Education and Human Services have already adopted the Activity Insight platform from the Milwaukee based company Digital Measures. Activity Insight is also used by more than 60% of the five hundred largest institutions of higher learning across the country. We were impressed by the presentation of the product, and encourage the college to strongly consider adopting it.
2. We support the conclusion of the COLS Strategic Plan that the college should conduct a full and thorough audit of the specificity, clarity, and consistency of expectations for professional advancement for faculty and academic staff on the college level, and across all departments and programs. We recommend adoption of a policy to require all departments and programs to review their renewal, tenure, and promotion guidelines on a regular basis. This review could be incorporated as a part of Program Review.
3. We recommend that the college consider adoption of a new policy to place merit documentation, post-tenure reviews, and curriculum modifications on the same cycle for tenured faculty. The Faculty Committee has recently synched the merit and post-tenure review process, but curriculum modifications continue to run on a separate cycle.

### **Provide Diverse Models of Professional Success:**

1. We support the recommendation of the COLS Strategic Plan for the investigation and implementation of options for flexible post-tenure career plans that would allow development of projects of intense focus in specific areas of teaching, research, or service.
2. We recommend the investigation of alternative faculty positions and lines, such as the “Professors of Practice” model outlined in the AAUP report of 2004, and as now used at several universities including Lehigh University, Northwestern University, and Indiana University.
3. We recommend the creation of a special committee, or a charge be given to the Faculty Committee to further investigate the question of the College’s tenure policies in greater depth. The Faculty Committee recently completed a successful review and revision of post-tenure review policies. We believe that a similar, serious consideration of all issues related to tenure and defining faculty success will help to ensure that the tenure process continues to meet the needs of faculty and furthers the general mission of the College.

#### **Enhance Professional Development:**

1. We support the recommendation of the COLS Strategic Plan to enhance rewards for participation in professional development activities in advancement documents, and to use various platforms for promoting news about the College and faculty activities across campus and the wider community.
2. We recommend further action be taken to provide professional development opportunities and training for faculty and academic staff interested in critical service roles, serving as committee and department chairs, and filling important faculty governance positions at the college and university levels. These initiatives might include: on-campus leadership skills development workshops and Faculty Colleges, or mentoring programs (e.g. supervisors or mentors assigned to individuals new to directly managing or supervising the work of other staff and faculty), the creation of a leadership program for mid-level/tenured faculty on track to become high-level leaders, and development of a Faculty Fellow position in the Dean’s office for senior faculty desiring to gain administrative experience.
3. We recommend the enhancement of resources available to connect faculty and academic staff with professional development opportunities, perhaps through the development of a “Professional Development Opportunity” page on the COLS website, or the formation of a college level Professional Development committee.

#### **Strengthen Connections in the COLS Community:**

1. We support the recommendation of the COLS Strategic Plan to develop a pilot program of COLS convocations, weekly or monthly events designed to encourage interaction and conversation among all members of the college community.
2. We recommend the creation of collegial networks based on faculty and staff cohorts, e.g., new faculty, senior faculty, pre-tenure faculty, instructional academic staff, non-instructional academic staff. These networks would encourage supportive connections across the college, and promote informal sharing of research and teaching practices, and facilitate natural mentoring. As part of the collegial networks, the college could support the development of reading and

discussion groups, sponsor workshops, and other activities that increase opportunities for the discussion of issues relevant to faculty and staff experience.

3. We recommend the designation of specific spaces for these formal and informal activities, and consideration of setting aside specific times as is feasible to ensure that faculty and staff have the time and opportunity to participate as fully as possible. Participation in all of these activities should be voluntary, but the college should do all that it can to encourage participation and stress the value of increased interaction among all members of the COLS community.

The Faculty/Staff Experience Working Group submits these proposals and recommendations as conversation starters, to encourage a new round of dialogue within governance groups and across the college community to further develop policies and initiatives that better enable faculty and staff to reach their highest potential. The members of the Working Group are available to provide additional information and resources regarding our conversations and the process of creating these recommendations. We look forward to beginning the course of action that will move the college community forward into the next stage of this collaborative process.

Endorsed by the Faculty/Staff Experience Working Group:

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