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INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

How to Help Successful Women of Color Overcome Cultural and Institutional Barriers
10 Recommendations for University Leaders

Fabiola P. Ehlers-Zavala

Historically, women have been disenfranchised in many ways across societies around the globe. The US is no exception, especially when it comes to the role that women play as academic leaders in higher education. Women of color fare even more poorly across university campuses at a time when demographic changes pertaining to race, ethnicity, and gender are evolving. In this context, institutions of higher education (IHEs) committed to a more socially just agenda should do all that is possible to narrow the gap of who is securing academic leadership roles in higher education. Even when progress has been made to have more women in academic leadership positions, IHEs preparing to welcome a new student demographic need to be intentional about removing barriers that keep deserving women of color from advancing in academic roles.

Why is it that women, especially, women of color, continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in higher education?

At times, however, leaders may be missing the mark by not properly engaging in an in-depth internal scan of the human resources and capital already on their campuses. Leaders can provide opportunities to support faculty of color in their professional advancement, which can lead to increased faculty retention and employment satisfaction. Taking this action matters as students of diverse backgrounds want successful role models who look just like them. Stories of success intended to attract faculty, staff, and students of color need to be included and celebrated across the overall linguistic landscape of university campuses. Only then may the new student demographic start believing that academic and professional success can be, indeed, achieved.

In Praise of Pinball Machines: Why Deans Should Teach

Constance C. Relihan

For the first time in a long time, I am teaching a class taken only by first-semester, first-year students. A required general education course that includes a lot of writing. And grading. I last taught about three years ago. All in all, I have taught maybe five classes since 2010.

I moved from being a tenured full professor to a 12-month, full-time academic administrator (initially, an associate dean) in 2005, so at the end of this semester I will complete my 18th year as a full-time administrator. It is a career path I never imagined for myself as I pursued my PhD studies on early modern English literature or as I published my research on 16th-century prose fiction (especially the works of **Barnaby Riche**) and worked my way up through the tenure ranks. I took the administrative path because (1) I feared who would be asked to do the work if I didn't; (2) I needed a more flexible schedule than teaching permitted in order to accommodate pregnancy and early childhood care (that is, it is easier to reschedule a meeting than a class when your toddler has yet another ear infection); and (3) the systems thinking required for academic administration turned out to be something I am good at and enjoy. I did not become an administrator to avoid classroom teaching, but I did find that once I became an administrator, it was hard to give my students, especially graduate students, the attention they deserved. So I stopped graduate-level teaching first, then I restricted myself to low-stakes undergraduate courses: reading groups for honors students and first-year orientation courses.

Until now.

As I have written **elsewhere**, teaching has the potential to help remind us, especially while we are struggling with the pandemic that won't go away, of the value of what we do. In all honesty, I will admit that while I am teaching partly for restorative reasons, I am also doing so because our budget is tight and we were scrambling to find faculty to staff some courses sections this summer.

Discussions about tight and shrinking budgets are continuing this fall (the **demographic cliff** is looming), and so I find myself bouncing between the optimism and rawness of new students; the frustration of faculty who are doing their damnedest to help students learn the skills they will need to succeed and who are feeling undervalued and vulnerable; and the pressures to develop a long-term budget strategy that will maintain our students' success, reduce **faculty burnout**, and respond to fiscal realities. And while the movement among the needs of these three constituencies has me feeling a bit like I am living in a pinball machine, my work in the classroom is strengthening my ability to think through how to best engage with the other two constituencies with which I must contend.

In other words, I am glad I am teaching this semester. I think my teaching is strengthening my administrative skills, and that I think every academic administrator—especially those whose portfolios include supporting faculty, student success, or academic policies—should be responsible for teaching a class every couple of years. **Richard A. Greenwald**,

writing in 2017, summarizes the case for the teaching administrator nicely:

It's too easy to lose sight of the educational mission as an administrator. The news is always bad, the problems many, the work Sisyphean. In teaching, I am reminded of and witness the transformational potential of the classroom, which is at the center of higher education. . . .

We must remember that teaching is a nourishing act of hope. It keeps your mind in the creative and research world. It helps you recognize the hard work and changing economics of publishing that the faculty navigates in its quest for tenure. Teaching reminds us of the daily grind of education, how it builds class upon class, term upon term, year upon year. It provides a perspective that no spreadsheet can replace.

As someone who loves a good spreadsheet, I find that Greenwald's reminder of its limitations rings true, and even halfway through this semester I have witnessed the "transformational potential of the classroom" and been reminded of how much joy there is to be found in working directly with students who are just beginning the process of figuring out their futures.

Teaching (**as opposed to "professing"**) is joyful work, but it is also hard and draining, and the current moment in which we find ourselves—in which enrollment is shrinking, the value of higher ed is under attack, and the pandemic has **disrupted our students' preparation** for our classes—makes it even harder. University teaching in our new, COVID-endemic environment is different from what it was even in 2017, when Greenwald captured so poetically the value of the teaching administrator. We owe it to our faculty and our institu-

tions to spend time in the classroom so that we are better informed about what our students and faculty need and how we can address their complex and differing concerns.

And what has my time in the classroom made apparent to me?

The pandemic has changed the way our students think about their classes. Students are now accustomed to having a range of course modalities, and they see their schedules—especially

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for general education courses—as even more malleable than they used to. We have taught students to be more aware of their health—both mental and physical—and **they will continue to insist** on that flexibility. For faculty that had been accustomed to insisting on classroom attendance before COVID, it can become increasingly frustrating to balance the need for students to be present to engage in planned classroom discussion or other active learning strategies, and the recognition that students want to control their own daily sched-

ules in a more detailed way. Our institutions may need to rethink academic policies—such as those surrounding pass-fail grading options—that may have been introduced as a temporary strategy to cope with the pandemic and the rapid pivot to remote instruction.

The complexities of our students' approaches to balancing their classes and their lives multiplies the challenges our faculty members are facing. Each of our faculty members is responding to emails from students, juggling requests for accommodations and extensions, and creating classroom plans that may or may not work (depending upon how many students can attend class) all while confronting increased complexity in their own lives. Our faculty are coping with all of the same personal difficulties that our students are facing in addition to the stresses inherent in trying to help college students succeed in their courses.

Both our students and our faculty are struggling as well to cope with the financial predicament of higher education. Rising tuition costs and decreasing funding for public education increase the stress felt by students who are struggling with college costs and teaching faculty whose salary levels and (often) lack of tenure exacerbate their financial anxiety. For faculty who witness students' financial problems while experiencing their own, it can be difficult to hold a positive view of the administrative structures and administrators that can appear as impediments to greater opportunities for students and security for themselves.

This frustration may lead to even more insistent calls from faculty for transparency and open communication, but even the clearest and most frequent communication won't resolve the underlying tensions that appear to put the needs of students, faculty, and institutions in seeming conflict.

The Care and Feeding of Mid-Career Faculty: Professional Development across the Career Life Cycle

Lynne A. Texter and Jenepher Lennox Terrion

To build and sustain faculty vitality, engagement, and professional currency, academic leaders must find ways to acknowledge, encourage, and support faculty at all stages of the career life cycle. There typically are many formal and informal development opportunities as well as significant resources for junior faculty. But there are often fewer opportunities and resources allocated to support mid-career faculty, who may have reached a point in their careers where they are disillusioned, exhausted, or unclear about how to remain focused, engaged, and challenged.

Academic leaders need to be intentional in efforts to recognize and share appreciation for the contributions of colleagues at all points across the career life cycle and in efforts to develop and facilitate a variety of institutional, departmental, and individual professional development activities and programs specifically designed for mid-career faculty.

Faculty at mid-career

The distinctive challenges of life at mid-career are well-documented across the higher education literature. This lengthy career phase is often a time for reflection and reassessment of commitments and pathways as faculty balance a complex web of professional and personal responsibilities. There are few remaining professional mileposts once a faculty member reaches the middle of their career, and many institutions do not have processes in place to encourage continued professional development or to assess performance in teaching, scholarship, and service.

Mid-career faculty are frequently tasked with the bulk of university- and department-level service and administrative work as academic leaders seek to shield junior faculty from heavy service responsibilities so they may focus on teaching and scholarship. Experienced faculty may reach a point where they've "been there, done that"—taught the same courses countless times, endlessly graded student work, dealt with all the

We must also encourage and support faculty efforts to stay relevant, current, and engaged as they move through their careers.

departmental and institutional politics, served on many committees, and had the same conversations innumerable times.

It is unsurprising that there is a growing body of research about the high levels of dissatisfaction among mid-career faculty. In a 2012 survey by the Harvard University Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education, mid-career faculty reported low levels of satisfaction in several areas, including appreciation and recognition, institutional support for research and scholarly work, and information and support for promotion (Wilson, 2012). Undoubtedly, levels of

satisfaction have plunged still further in recent times, due to the significant pressures resulting from the pandemic, Black Lives Matter, and anti-Asian and anti–Pacific Islander violence.

Acknowledgement, encouragement, and support

It is critical for academic leaders at all levels of the institution to acknowledge and express appreciation for the important contributions of faculty colleagues. We simply cannot afford to take any of them for granted, particularly the essential group of seasoned and experienced mid-career colleagues. We need to be mindful to identify meaningful mechanisms to regularly recognize faculty for the myriad of ways they contribute to the life and mission of the institution.

We must also encourage and support faculty efforts to stay relevant, current, and engaged as they move through their careers. While continuing education is mandated for professionals such as accountants, K–12 educators, lawyers, social workers, and health care providers, higher education typically does not require faculty participation in ongoing professional development, and this raises questions about the implications of a lack of sustained investment in our experienced colleagues (Baker, 2019).

Beyond support to stay current in academic disciplines, we need to plan, facilitate, and support opportunities to encourage continued professional development about current trends and best practices in teaching and learning, assessment, educational technology, and more. This necessitates the availability

of a variety of opportunities for ongoing professional development that are specifically designed for the needs of mid-career colleagues and the challenges they face. As Kerry Rockquemore stated so well, "Three brown bag lunches and a mentor match doesn't cut it" (as cited in Monaghan, 2017).

Goal-setting and relationships

As academic leaders seek to support ongoing professional development, we might frame academic careers as an evolution that includes different phases, opportunities, and interests that build on one another over time (Dever & Justice, 2021). Faculty interests and influences change; the contexts in which faculty live and work shift; and varying professional and personal opportunities arise to shape faculty career paths.

Goal-setting is an essential element to keep the career progress and evolution moving forward. For associate professors, the most significant barrier to career advancement is the lack of a clear statement of professional goals and the steps necessary to attain those goals (Strage & Merdinger, 2014). As such, goal-setting needs to be supported at the institutional, departmental, and individual levels.

The literature also provides strong evidence that supportive relationships are significant for professional development, engagement, and productivity, particularly for female faculty and faculty from under-represented groups (Strage & Merdinger, 2014). The relationships may take many different shapes and forms. They key factor is that faculty have supportive professional relationships as they progress through the career life cycle and encounter opportunities and challenges.

To begin to address the needs of mid-career faculty, academic leaders can consider a range of institutional, departmental, and individual practices that can be adapted to different institutional cul-

tures, structures, and resources. Here are some ideas to get you started.[1]

Institutional practices

Institutional practices can lead to faculty feeling disengaged, expendable, or invisible (Erickson et al., 2017), so academic leaders need to implement ongoing practices, activities, and programming at the institutional level to support and encourage mid-career faculty.

- **Mid-career workshops.** Academic leaders might consider the development of a series of retreats or workshops that address the specific needs and issues of mid-career faculty.
  - **Post-tenure orientation**. After following an established pathway to achieve tenure, faculty are often thrown off-balance and find themselves asking, "What now?" Formal programming can be developed to assist faculty as they reflect and envision next steps and set new professional goals for the next phase of their academic career.
  - **Professional growth and renewal retreats**. Invite faculty to participate in programs to reflect, imagine, prototype, and get input from colleagues about career possibilities (e.g., programs based on Stanford's Life Design course). When well-designed, these programs can provide the opportunity to gain insight and seek ideas about possible next steps in teaching, research, and service.
- **Individual, cohort, and reverse mentoring**. Widely used in higher education for junior faculty, mentoring programs can be tailored to the needs of mid-career faculty.
  - **Individual mentoring**. Mid-career faculty might benefit from a mentor relationship with a senior colleague who can provide feedback and guidance about career paths, opportunities, and challenges.
  - **Cohort mentoring**. Institutions might establish a cohort of faculty to participate in a series of workshops

and conversations to develop concrete goals and plans (for example, a plan to attain full professorship).
  - **Reverse mentoring**. Mid-career faculty might instead be paired with junior faculty, who can share their fresh perspective and approaches to areas such as teaching technology, newer research approaches, and student assessment.
- **Leadership development**. Institutions can provide structured, ongoing workshops and training for faculty in leadership roles as well as for those who express interest or have potential to step into leadership positions. Some faculty thrive in leadership roles and are energized by the opportunity to shape policies and practices. But faculty are often cast into leadership roles without adequate preparation, guidance, and feedback. Institutions might, for example, provide robust programming with information and guidance for chairs and directors about approaches to motivate faculty, manage conflict and personnel issues, and offer support to set and attain goals.

Departmental practices

- **Biannual or annual conversations**. Chairs and directors might establish a regular interval to meet with colleagues for engaged conversations about teaching, scholarship, professional activities, and service. The chair or director can share appreciation, discuss progress toward goals, identify challenges or obstacles, offer encouragement, propose new or refined goals, and suggest resources to support the faculty member's efforts.
- **Recognition, encouragement, and advocacy**. It is critical that we develop formal and informal means to recognize faculty accomplishments, offer sincere appreciation for their efforts, and encourage their work and

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Leading with attention to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) is not always easy. Leaders at all institutional levels who truly wish to support their faculty of color, particularly women of color, should ensure that they know who may be interested in moving into academic leadership roles. True and effective leaders are rarely born effective leaders. They are made. Some may appear to come with inherent traits of success. That scenario is often the case when individuals have been part of networks where they have had access to outstanding role models and mentors. Often, talent among faculty of color, especially women, gets overlooked. These professionals may not realize that what got them to their initial roles at an institution may not get them to other (higher) positions there or elsewhere, as Goldsmith and Reiter (2007) would probably say. Climbing the leadership ladder often requires support from others. Here is where leaders truly committed to the advancement of women of color at their institutions can take steps to ensure the success of others.

Leaders who wish to make a difference also need to be cognizant that what some women of color may need is sponsorship, which requires efforts beyond being a trusted mentor. Thanks to a pipeline growing more than ever before (albeit slowly), many women of color are already successful at securing tenure and advancing in rank. But opportunities for advancement in academic leadership are not always present and may be limited. Sometimes, when opportunities emerge, there may already be a plan to recruit external candidates, so the competition may require internal candidates to take a different approach to have a fair chance of landing a new leadership role.

Furthermore, for a variety of reasons, successful women of color in academia may not always verbalize their desire to move into academic leadership roles. When that is the case, they may not even be on campus leaders' minds, as there is often an assumption that once an indi-

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Here are 10 suggestions for how leaders can prepare successful women of color to navigate a new professional path in academic leadership:

1. Open your door (literally and figuratively) and proactively engage with the women of color among your faculty.

2. Assess their interest in pursuing academic leadership roles. Do not assume that women of color will come to you or that they will not be interested in an opportunity related to academic leadership.

3. If the answer is affirmative, make it a point to both mentor and sponsor those women or connect them with others who can assist with either type of support. Presumably, you are an accomplished and trusted leader, and trusted leaders can help the cause for women of color who wish to advance by helping them develop, expand, and nurture a social and professional network with others in academic leadership roles.

4. Help them understand your institution's political and organizational culture and offer your perspective on how to best navigate relationships that can serve them and, ultimately, position them for success!

5. Encourage them to identify potential mentors outside the institution as mentees will likely benefit from casting a wide professional network.

6. In addition to suggesting local and institutional resources, allocate (or advocate to your superiors for the allocation of) funds that can support the women of color you have identified in professional development beyond the institution. Women of color often need those resources to build or enhance their credentials to make their case as to why they merit an opportunity.

7. Whenever vacancies arise, consider those who could benefit from filling them on an interim position. Women of color need practical experiences in academic leadership so they develop their narratives with facts that testify to their leadership qualifications.

8. Show that you care and build trust by engaging in authentic conversations with those you have identified as potential leaders. You can accomplish this by sharing your professional challenges and successes as an academic leader and discussing strategies that helped you overcome issues you encountered along the way. Engage in conversations around academic leadership that provoke a rich professional exchange to help these potential leaders practice for when an interview or opportunity arises.

9. Establish an accountability metric to ensure that women of color are represented and incorporate the metric into a proactive DEIJ culture.

10. Proactively identify and recruit women of color for potential leadership positions not only within your department, college, or division, but across campus when possible.

vidual secures tenure and achieves promotion to full professorship, they have achieved all they hope to accomplish. What many leaders fail to realize is that not everyone is content to plateau. On the contrary, for some, reaching this level of professional success may be just the starting point to keep growing professionally at an institution that the individual knows well. This is where established leaders can play a role by reaching out to women faculty of color and starting a conversation about their leadership aspirations at the institution.

Even in higher education, understanding organizational politics matters. Those in leadership roles probably figured that out already. As Vaillancourt (2021) states, "The reality is that good things tend to come to those who have honed their ability to navigate organizational politics" (p. ix). But not everyone understands how to skillfully navigate these systems right from the start. The question for us, then, is, What makes a difference? Why is it that women, especially, women of color, continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in higher education? It seems to me that we have not only a pipeline problem but also a cultural problem—one that only those who occupy leadership roles and are well versed in organizational politics can help overcome.

As an academic leader, you can be a catalyst for change by supporting successful women of color who wish to further develop and advance in academic leadership roles. Your institution will thank you for your involvement and investment in helping develop future leaders. Those you have helped advance will look at you with gratitude and appreciation and will likely follow your example and do the same for others in time. Let's be sure to lead by example.

As a woman of color, I hold my supporters—mentors and sponsors within and outside my institution—in the highest regard. I will remain forever grateful to each of them. Very much inspired by leaders that I have met along the way and those that I have yet to meet, I have made it a personal and professional goal to help other women of color advance and achieve their professional goals. Everyone who enjoys success should lead the way and support others in achieving success as well.

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Leading Your Academic Department Toward Inclusion: How to Ensure Faculty are LGBTQ+ Competent

Dorian Rhea Debussy

During my six years at the University of Connecticut, I had the opportunity to interact with many different faculty members across our campus community. This was particularly true during my final two years, when I co-ordinated our Rainbow Center's Out to Lunch (OTL) Lecture Series. The OTL Lecture Series—our center's largest and most attended recurring program—hosted fellow academics and community advocates, whose work dealt with contemporary intersectional issues and topics related to the LGBTQ+ community. While the OTL Lecture Series had served as a key fixture to the Rainbow Center's programming for many years, we soon identified that it had missed opportunities in one key demographic on our campus: faculty.

Throughout the next two years, we worked to ensure that the OTL Lecture Series would become a program that also appealed to faculty, while the Rainbow Center also engaged more outreach to this segment of our campus community. Considering our work and the changes in federal educational policies pertaining to transgender students, using the OTL Lecture Series as a way to engage faculty around LGBTQ+ cultural competency soon became another key priority for managing the program. I'm happy to share that, throughout my two years with the Rainbow Center, we had numerous positive interactions with faculty, who had previously never come to our center or actively engaged queer topics in their classroom or research. These positive experiences and my perspective on how they were attained are the basis for this article about how to ensure faculty are LGBTQ+ competent in the classroom.

1. Assess what your faculty know and need, regarding LGBTQ+ competency in the classroom.

While you certainly want to be at-tuned to national and regional issues affecting queer and transgender students, a best practice is assessing what your faculty already know about the LGBTQ+ community before deciding what they need. In assessing this level of knowledge, I'd also recommend being aware of certain things like social desirability bias—a type of response bias where the respondent provides an answer that they hope will be viewed more favorably. In short, you want to ensure that you obtain a clear picture of what your faculty members know and being cognizant of potential issues of response bias can be helpful in getting truly accurate information about their existing knowledge and needs. For instance, you could use an anonymous forum to gauge how much your faculty know about LGBTQ+ issues, which can then assist you in developing and/or identifying trainings and resources that are useful to the faculty within your department.

2. Identify training and educational opportunities that are internal and external to your campus community.

Once you have assessed your faculty's knowledge and needs, you can then use that information to identify various training and educational opportunities both within and around your campus community. For campuses with offices or centers specializing in supporting diverse student demographics, many of these spaces have safe zone or safe space trainings, which introduce basic concepts relevant to supporting and empathizing with LGBTQ+ students. In addition to this, there are, of course, a number of other external opportunities. To aid you in considering the available possibilities for advancing your faculty's level of LGBTQ+ cultural competency, I've listed a variety of such opportunities here: online, queer-specific Title IX trainings from the Association of Title IX Administrators; regional and national LGBTQ+ education and inclusivity conferences like the Creating Change Conference; specialized, discipline-specific trainings that can be offered by colleagues at other institutions; and list-servs like the one offered through the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals.

3. Motivate faculty to engage with queer and trans specific issues and topics in multiple settings.

Once you have identified various training and educational opportunities for your faculty, a best practice is to motivate them to engage such resources when possible. While it may be tempting to encourage a number of simultaneous opportunities, this can be overwhelming for some faculty, and depending on your departmental culture, it may prove more effective to stagger the presentation of

such opportunities throughout the academic year. In fact, staggering these trainings throughout the year can help your faculty stay more mindful of their queer and transgender students, which will further ensure that your department is moving in a more inclusive direction. As a rule, you'll also want to ensure that you convey the complex and nuanced issues that can face LGBTQ+ students in a college classroom, such as ensuring correct pronoun usage, providing consistent representation in the curriculum, maintaining a healthy and open classroom environment, etc. This can further emphasize that true classroom inclusivity for LGBTQ+ students isn't derived from one simple solution, training, or best practice.

4. Recognize that increased cultural competency should build over time and work to keep your faculty members informed about current trends.

As mentioned, there are several issues that can face queer and transgender students, and these can vary across intersectional identities within the community. Your faculty also might encounter LGBTQ+ students who face challenges both inside and outside of the classroom at any point during their academic careers, and your department will likely never be able to host a training to prepare faculty for every challenge that they might encounter. As such, I'd recommend that you be transparent with faculty members and explain that you hope to envision a departmental culture that will build this increased cultural competency consistently over time. This can assist faculty with anticipating your

expectations, while also affirming your commitment to leading your department into a more LGBTQ+ inclusive direction. This final point will also help faculty remain cognizant that many issues facing queer and transgender college students—like the application of Title IX to transgender students—can change rapidly and without much prior notice. Given this reality, it is best to recognize that the work of inclusion is a continual process, rather than something that can be achieved in a single training session. With that in mind, there should be a continued expectation that faculty consider the multiple ways that they can support their LGBTQ+ students in any given course. 🏛

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interests. We also need to advocate for the support and resources faculty need to reach their goals.

Individual practices

Faculty, of course, have the ultimate responsibility for their own professional development and can take steps to establish practices to support continued growth.

- **Seek mentors and collaborators**. A trusted colleague or mentor can listen carefully and question thoughtfully to offer perspective and feedback that will help to guide faculty.
- **Reflections and goal-setting**. Faculty should regularly make time for thoughtful reflection on their work and professional goals. The reflection can be followed by a conversation with a trusted colleague or academic leader who can offer feedback and guidance to refine goals, identify opportunities and obstacles, and offer possible resources.

Bottom line

We need to invest in our colleagues and ourselves over the length and the breadth of academic careers. Rather than heavily front-loading our support and resources to support junior faculty, we need to ensure that we continue to acknowledge, encourage, and support faculty across the career life cycle.

[1]For additional examples of promising practices, consult, for example, Baldwin et al. (2008), Strage and Merdinger (2014), **Magna Publications** (2017), and Welch et al. (2019).

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In the face of this frustration, it can be easy to forget that there are huge amounts of optimism and hope out there among our students: they are eager to engage with their classes, campuses, and each other. Our students are not the individuals who are denying the value of higher education, and our teaching faculty are committed to ensuring that our students have every opportunity to achieve their goals. The decisions we make as academic leaders need to emerge from collaboration with and respect for our faculty. They need to honor the commitment of our students, who are a diverse and witty bunch of people who know that they are being left to clean up a world filled with a heckuva lot of problems they didn't create. They don't have a lot of patience for inequity, busywork, or doing things by other people's standards. Neither do our faculty.

Our job is to make policy decisions that will enable these students to flourish within institutions that can weather the coming changes. Routinely putting ourselves into the undergraduate classroom helps give us the context we need to be sure we don't undervalue or idealize either our students or our faculty members. Yes, teaching while being an administrator might make us feel like we are living within a pinball machine, but **pinball machines are still among the coolest games there are**. ⚖

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personal connections helps new members feel part of the institution. That connection may be part of their decision to stay or leave the university. Colleagues can be mentors, collaborators, and even friends. Welcoming new faculty with conversations, tips, and tricks for success will help them feel like valued members of the department.

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Contributors:

Dorian Rhea Debussy, PhD, is the director of external affairs at Equitas Health and a lecturer in women's, gender, and sexuality studies at The Ohio State University. Previously, she was associate director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Kenyon College, where she specialized in fostering LGBTQ+ inclusion and equity on campus.

Fabiola P. Ehlers-Zavala, PhD, a first-generation scholar of Hispanic background, is a professor of English at Colorado State University, where she has held several academic leadership roles, including academic director and executive director of English language programs. She currently serves as immediate past president of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL), 2023–2024.

Melissa Parks, PhD, is an associate professor of education at Stetson University. Her research interests include elementary pedagogies and curriculum and environmental stewardship.

Constance C. Relihan, PhD, is the dean of University College and a professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Jenepher Lennox Terrion, PhD, is full professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Ottawa. She is the coauthor, with Dr. Sherry Ferguson, of Communication in Everyday Life: Personal and Professional Contexts and has published widely in scholarly journals.

Lynne A. Texter, PhD, is associate professor emerita at La Salle University. An award-winning educator with experience in the US and internationally, Lynne also consults with organizations on communication topics. Her previous roles include associate provost, interim provost and vice president of academic affairs, interim dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, and department chair.

Rolling Out the Red Carpet: Ways to Welcome New Faculty

Melissa Parks

Your department has just hired a new tenure-track professor, and for them, it's the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. Now what? New faculty joining a department may feel an array of emotions—excitement, anxiety, curiosity, and trepidation—all of which contribute to uncertainty and stress (Sun & Simon-Roberts, 2020). They may be unsure of their new identity and voice as faculty and have questions about student engagement. Dealing with those multilayered uncertainties can be challenging, especially when protocols and resources are unknown.

Formal university-sponsored and organized events yield limited meaningful connections, and assigned mentors have limited impact on helping new hires establish themselves within the institution. But chairs can lead department faculty in creating a welcoming and supportive environment for new hires (Fleming et al., 2016). There are several actions senior and seasoned faculty can do to support and guide new faculty. All begin with a friendly conversation. New faculty have not yet experienced the complete dynamic of the department. They do not know who the power players are or who to ask for help. Current faculty can help.

While a faculty handbook is helpful, a face-to-face conversation is more powerful. The conversation needn't be a lecture or laundry list of tasks; a quick check-in and an offer to preview the upcoming calendar will do. From that calendar review, several teachable moments may emerge. For example, new faculty may not be aware of the faculty senate or its charges. They may not know which college or university meetings are required and which are optional. This is particularly important in institutions where there is a hidden culture of expectations.

Faculty and staff guides published by the institution can be overwhelming and not terribly helpful when one does not really know the organizational structure. A general "who's who" cheat sheet does a better job of helping new faculty get acclimated. The cheat sheet could share university contacts, including department administrators and staff along with their roles and preferred ways of communicating. Sharing contacts of personnel in the dean's office and explaining which contact is appropriate for a particular task could also be helpful. For example: Who is the contact for professional development funding? Who can the new faculty member contact if their office is not cleaned? Who organizes and plans the teaching schedule?

Greetings and conversations

Organization and self-sufficiency are important, but conversation can be more meaningful. University events provide networking opportunities but miss the mark in helping new faculty—especially faculty of color, female faculty, and faculty with families—build support networks (Perry et al., 2019). In the beginning, new faculty members do not know what they don't know. Seasoned faculty can help. Simply introducing department faculty and their roles during the first faculty meeting is a nice place to start. Give new faculty an opportunity to introduce themselves as well. Advanced notice is nice so they are not caught off guard. During this introduction, give the names of two or three faculty willing to field questions the new hire may have. These contacts would be interested in responding to texts or phone calls with an aim of support and maybe even a sense of humor. We were all there once. Possible connections for the new faculty members could include a colleague who shares similar content expertise can field coursework questions about syllabus organization and unspoken university culture pertaining to content delivery and class meetings. Someone known to be highly organized and thorough can field questions about faculty obligations regarding meetings, tenure and promotion requirements, and annual faculty review requirements. A third faculty member could serve as service liaison who helps the new faculty meet people beyond the department. This contact might invite the new person to shadow them at a college or university meeting. By being introduced in small committee meetings, new faculty widen their institutional connections while simultaneously learning about the underpinnings of service and how meetings are run at the university before taking on a committee assignment.

Grab a coffee

Finally, how about a cup of coffee? It can be hard to be the new person. Determining the "right" number of contributions the department seeks in terms of departmental work, collegial brainstorming, and interactions at faculty meetings is tough. New faculty do not want to overstep, nor do they want to be perceived as overbearing or underperforming. If you are going to get a coffee, invite the new faculty member. Converse about life beyond the university. Making

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