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# A campus-wide model for supporting untenured faculty including women and minorities: Strategies, recommendations and caveats

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# International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations

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Cultural Copy: Visual Conversations on Indigenous Art and Cultural Appropriation

## A Campus-wide Model for Supporting Untenured Faculty Including Women and Minorities

Strategies, Recommendations and Caveats

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Margaret Atwell, Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs, California State University, Fullerton, United States

Representing Global Diversity, Mediating Cultural Difference: Proceedings of the Diversity Conference 2004



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## **‘Cultural Copy’ Acknowledgements**

Cover Image: ‘Cultural Copy’ Exhibition and Diversity Conference Plenary Session

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‘Cultural Copy’ Exhibition, UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, USA  
July 7 to September 12th, 2004  
Launched as part of the Diversity Conference 2004

BorderZone Arts Inc., Common Ground, The Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Australia

Exhibit Designer: Marco Centin

Curators: Tressa Berman, Marie Bouchard, Jennifer Herd

Curatorial Associates: Vivien Johnson, Matt McKinley, Fred Nahwooksy,

Exhibiting Artists: Richard Bell, Jennifer Herd, Kathleen Petyarre with Ray Beamish, Fiona Foley,  
Gordon Syron, Vernon Ah Kee, Michael Eather and Michael Nelson Jagamarra, Jenny Fraser,  
Frank LaPena, Arthur Amiotte, Anthony White, Colleen Cutschall, Nora Naranjo-Morse,  
Greg Hill, Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith, Sam Toonoo, Roger Crait

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# A Campus-wide Model for Supporting Untenured Faculty Including Women and Minorities

## Strategies, Recommendations and Caveats

**Ellen N. Junn**, Associate Dean, College of Health and Human Development, California State University, Fullerton, United States

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### Abstract

*This paper presents a comprehensive campus-wide strategic model for more effectively supporting tenure-track faculty with a special concern for assisting women and minority faculty. A description of the process and the outcomes includes establishment of a clear, high-level administrative initiative; formation of a campus-wide committee of highly respected faculty and administrators; compilation and discussion of current research and writings on the issue of recruiting and retaining women and minority faculty; collection of campus and national comparison data; creation, administration, and analysis of a survey of untenured faculty; compilation and dissemination of the committee's final report and specific recommendations; and prioritized implementation of the committee's comprehensive recommendations with timelines, identification of relevant office responsibilities and estimated costs. The paper concludes with a discussion of the multiple positive outcomes and caveats.*

**Keywords:** Faculty retention, Campus model to support untenured faculty, Minority and women faculty support

### Tackling the Diversity Issue

In recent years, increasing diversity among the faculty has become a goal of many institutions of higher education (e.g., Turner 1999; Turner and Taylor 2002). Indeed, over the past thirty years, higher education has made impressive gains in enhancing student diversity such that in 2001, 56% of undergraduates were women and approximately 25% were students of color (Trower and Chait 2002). In contrast however, the percentages of women and under-represented minorities in the faculty ranks still lag significantly behind. For example, 37% of full-time faculty are women and this figure decreases to 25% at research universities (U.S. Department of Education 2002). Caucasian full time faculty still dominate the professoriate at 83% and this percentage dwindles to single digits at research doctoral institutions as compared to public two-year institutions (Trower and Chait 2002).

As a result, more institutions are attempting to enhance the diversity of their faculty by actively focusing on recruitment (e.g., Turner 2002) and/or retention efforts. For example, most recently, Harvard and Princeton University have both pledged tens of millions of dollars to study and support women and minority faculty on their respective campuses. This paper describes a strategic, comprehensive, campus-wide process model for examining, identifying and implementing specific strategies for supporting and retaining tenure-track

faculty with a special focus on assisting women and minority faculty.

This case study applies to a large, urban, comprehensive undergraduate and Master's-level state university, but the model and lessons learned are applicable to any institution of higher learning.

### Overview of Paper

In this paper, we begin first by discussing the establishment of a campus-wide faculty support initiative and describe the formation and charge of the committee. Second, we outline the committee's strategies and activities, including data collection from an untenured faculty survey. Third, we present the committee's final report and recommendations. Finally, we close with multiple positive outcomes, suggestions, caveats, and conclusions.

### Establishment and Charge of Campus-wide Committee

In the Fall 2002, the president of the university, after consultation with the Academic Senate, established and charged a 20-member committee of faculty and administrators to study, identify and recommend strategies and/or programs that would better support, strengthen, and retain probationary tenure-track faculty (with a focus on women and minority faculty) through the retention, tenure, and promotion process. The composition of the committee included a majority of well-respected senior faculty who had strengths in both research and teaching and who had



served on various high level, important university committees (e.g., the Faculty Personnel Committee which is involved in the tenure decision process), as well as several key senior administrators (i.e., the provost, a dean, associate vice president for academic affairs, representative from the president's office, director of diversity and equity), and three junior faculty.

The committee was asked to produce a comprehensive final report that would identify and recommend programs and activities and retain tenure-track faculty through the RTP process.

### **Committee Activities and Strategies**

The committee met monthly and completed its work a year-and-a-half later. Under the leadership of the chair of the committee, members engaged in a number of activities. First, the chair assembled and disseminated a set of readings and research articles on a number of relevant topics including: analyses of comparative national faculty data, empirical research on student evaluations of teaching effectiveness as a function of gender and ethnicity, descriptions of efforts at recruiting and tracking minority/women faculty, social psychology research regarding attributional biases, and other relevant topics such as retention case studies.

Second, in order to include a more broad college representation of junior faculty, the chair worked with an eleven-member Subcommittee of Untenured Faculty representing the eight colleges, which included the three original junior faculty on the committee. Together, this group developed and disseminated a qualitative survey for all probationary faculty on campus.

Third, the committee obtained, reviewed, and compared campus data with available national data. While national data is available from widely known sources such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and the U.S. Department of Education, not all of the data is as current, due to the necessary lag between data collection, compilation and reporting. Comparison with national data was important in assessing our baseline data in relation to similar institutions of higher education. Furthermore, charting the changes in our own faculty data over time provided interesting insights and trends.

Fourth, the chair of the committee worked with the subcommittee of probationary faculty in devising, disseminating, collecting, and analyzing the results of a simple, open-ended qualitative survey of all untenured faculty to produce a final junior faculty survey report.

Fifth, after much brainstorming and discussion, the committee formulated a matrix of final recommendations for change, including identifying and assigning possible responsible offices, setting timelines, and estimating potential costs for each strategy. This list of strategies was prioritized in light the data from the faculty survey.

### **Untenured Faculty Survey**

All 213 probationary faculty on campus were invited to respond to an 8-item, open-ended qualitative survey that included questions about their positive and negative experiences with scholarship, teaching, and service requirements, feelings of inclusion in campus community, and their evaluation of the tenure process. An overall satisfaction scale was used by employing a 7-point Likert scale (7=extremely satisfied, 1=extremely unsatisfied). Faculty were able to respond either online or on hard copy. The faculty response rate was 51% (n=113).

Overall, the responses indicated that these faculty were relatively happy (M=4.99, SD=1.3) and felt a part of the campus community. Importantly, an overwhelming majority (81%) of faculty spontaneously cited lack of time as their most salient and pressing concern in terms of meeting their research agenda, teaching well, and engaging in service activities. This was particularly troubling for faculty facing heavy teaching loads of three to four courses per semester.

Second, women and minority faculty, although their numbers often were too small for statistical analyses, were much more likely to raise gender and racial concerns for all questions in the survey. These respondents also were more likely to indicate that the department or campus climate was not as positive, more likely to have had a negative experience with a student, and voiced a desire for a having more diverse faculty colleagues.

Third, almost two-thirds of the faculty cited a variety of concerns about the tenure process. Most of these concerns involved administrative frustrations including meeting deadlines, the amount of time, effort and paperwork required to submit a tenure file, as well as questions about the clarity of the tenure criteria.

In sum, the results of the faculty survey helped to identify many key issues that challenge junior faculty and these data will be used in developing strategies to assist them in the tenure process. In addition, the results of this survey will be used to develop a more specific, quantitative, and ongoing assessment of faculty in the future.

### **Committee's Final Recommendations**

One of the most important purposes of this report is to present a list of potential solutions and strategies and outcomes intended to improve the probationary process and hence tenure experience for probationary faculty. The data from the faculty survey was used in developing and prioritizing this set of strategies. Because the bulk of the concerns from junior faculty revolved around the lack of time and concerns about the tenure process, recommendations were focused primarily on improving the process and stressed the importance

of finding support (e.g., release time) for their research and teaching.

The recommended set of strategies was presented in matrix form with strategies falling into four broad categories: (1) strategies to support individual faculty; (2) strategies to improve the formal procedures and processes of the tenure process; (3) strategies to improve student understanding; and (4) strategies to improve institutional support and infrastructure. For each strategy, the committee also provided suggestions for which offices might be involved, a projected timeline for implementation, and a general cost estimate. Since these are campus-specific, these latter details are not included in this report. The strategies are listed below.

### **Strategies to Support Individual Faculty**

- Develop and/or encourage a supplementary mentoring system for junior faculty.
- Support and encourage untenured faculty to form and join various existing untenured faculty support organizations either at the college or university level.

### **Strategies to Improve the Formal Procedures and Processes of the Tenure Process**

- Strongly urge all departments to develop, adopt, and implement department, program or division-specific Personnel Standards.
- Clarify and make more explicit to junior faculty the mechanics of the file (e.g., explicitly request that materials be submitted in binder form, etc.) via special orientation sessions and workshops.
- Create a website containing all tenure evaluation requirements, relevant forms, and other information accompanied by visual exemplars and/or streaming video explanations.
- Implement an enhanced training program for faculty mentors, department chairs, members of departmental/division Personnel Committees, and the university Faculty Personnel Committee.
- Discuss standardizing the administration, collection, explanation and directions given to students in completing the Student Ratings of Instruction (SRI) forms, and explore the possibility of completing this process online.
- Discuss implementing a campus peer observation of teaching program with faculty trained to observe and effectively evaluate classroom teaching and who write objective and detailed assessment reports of teaching for individual faculty who request this support.
- Develop and include a welcome informational packet with important social, cultural, and community resources and services for new faculty.

### **Strategies to Improve Student Understanding and Evaluation**

- Partner with Student Affairs' Assistant Deans and other key, high-level Student Affairs staff to brainstorm various mechanisms to publicize and enhance student understanding, responsibility, and constructive involvement in the evaluation of their learning and course instruction. For example, consider mounting a Student Affairs' student awareness campaign on constructively evaluating instructors.

### **Strategies to Improve Campus' Institutional Support and Infrastructure.**

- Continue to emphasize the importance of assisting junior faculty in meeting their teaching and research responsibilities in their first two years by considering various innovative and creative support solutions such as course release time.
- Continue to emphasize the importance of providing new junior faculty with research lab space, equipment and start-up funds, and monies for grant and research-related travel.
- Continue to encourage the campus to make available accessible, affordable, high quality (accredited) child care and other related family benefits to faculty.
- Examine all campus deadlines and consider coordinating or staggering deadlines for intramural grants from various campus offices to reduce overlap and conflicts.
- Collect, track, and produce an annual report tracking faculty progress in the tenure process while protecting faculty confidentiality.
- Conduct interviews and/or surveys of newly tenured faculty regarding their experiences leading to tenure.
- Conduct exit interviews of faculty who leave the campus.
- Fund, develop, disseminate and analyze the results of a second, more quantitative survey of untenured faculty and consider administering this survey every 3 or 4 years.
- Establish a special fund in the Provost's office earmarked to fund various proposals and initiatives to better assist probationary faculty.
- Reconvene the committee in one year to assess and review progress and make additional recommendations as relevant.

### **Lessons Learned, Caveats, Next Steps, and Conclusions**

This process model of engaging in a systematic and step-wise series of activities, self-study, and identification of recommended strategies was successful for a variety of reasons.

First, initiative and leadership from the top was instrumental to the success of the committee's work. The fact that the initiative came from the president, with equally strong support from the provost and with the blessings of the Academic Senate elevated and validated the work of the committee. Furthermore, selection of the members of the committee was done in close consultation with the Academic Senate and involved nominating highly regarded, successful faculty and administrators.

Second, while the committee's composition initially may appear overly large and diverse, it was intentional and beneficial for several reasons. For example, with a relatively large committee, the committee always managed to maintain a strong quorum in spite of people's hectic and changing schedules over the course of the entire year-and-a-half process. The large committee also ensured broad representation of faculty across all of the colleges and disciplines as well as junior faculty voices, and thereby ensured a greater diversity of opinion and discussion. Furthermore, having top level, senior administrators (e.g., the provost and president's liaison) on the committee was a key factor in further enriching and grounding the committee's deliberations. Additionally, having top level administrators participate actively on the committee once again signalled the importance of the topic and thereby enhanced all members' willingness to engage in serious and meaningful discussions. Nonetheless, these factors must be balanced against the downside of a committee that may become too large and unwieldy, so finding a reasonable compromise in terms of size and membership is encouraged.

Third, since the directive originated from the president, the committee chair was assured by the president that adequate resources (including staff) would be available to support the work of the committee. This pledge of resources was critical to the work of the committee in terms of permitting the hiring of a graduate assistant to assist in the development, dissemination, collection, and analysis of the faculty survey. Additional staff time was allocated for assisting with other clerical tasks (e.g., compilation, reproduction, and dissemination of the substantial readings for the committee). Strong, top level commitment and resources are key to making this process both meaningful and successful.

Fourth, another key ingredient to the success of the committee involved close collaboration and communication with other related offices across campus. For example, longitudinal faculty data from the campus' Office of Institutional Research and Analytical Studies as well as the Office of Faculty Affairs and Records was very important for the members of the committee to review and analyze. The Division of Student Affairs will be consulted in terms of future work that will involve better educating students about the importance of

rendering responsible and effective evaluations of faculty's instruction.

Fifth, the committee's work included widespread consultation, communication, and dissemination of their work campus-wide. This was achieved in a variety of ways including: disseminating a campus-wide newsletter (hard copy and via email); creating a committee website with relevant materials; sending periodic email updates; and reporting to various other groups such as the President's Advisory Board, the Council of Deans, and department chairs as part of an ongoing Chair Support Program. Future communications will involve working with members of faculty personnel review committees.

Sixth, of the fairly extensive list of recommended strategies, surprisingly, many do not require significant fiscal costs. With the obvious exception of more funds to support faculty with additional research monies and course releases, most of the strategies involved internal administrative or process modifications that do not require actual funding.

One important caveat to consider involves reviewing faculty retention data. While almost all universities collect and report faculty data, it proved difficult to track individual faculty over time since most of the institutional data simply report aggregate faculty numbers by year. Consequently, it becomes impossible to determine if individuals are moving in or out of the pipeline. For example, if in year one, there were 3 African American faculty and year two lists 3 African American faculty, these figures alone do not indicate if these are the same 3 African American faculty in both years or whether the first 3 faculty left after year one, and 3 new faculty joined the campus in year two. While this may be an extreme example, it is clear that institutions that are serious about faculty retention will need to revise and reconsider ways of tracking faculty flow while maintaining personal confidentiality. Indeed, this problem has not gone unnoticed as recently, Maruyama and Sweitzer (2002) proposed an alternate method for how campuses might track recruitment and retention of faculty of color.

This process already has resulted in multiple positive outcomes. First as a result of the report, the provost secured commitments from the deans to provide one course release per year for all of their new faculty for at least one year and sometimes for two years. Second, the report was widely disseminated and discussed as a key component of a day-long, campus-wide forum sponsored by the University Planning Committee focusing on the issue of faculty and staff recruitment. Third, a new ad hoc committee to study and make recommendations on the dissemination and use of student ratings of teaching was established. Fourth, the university Faculty Personnel Committee was charged to review and make recommendations regarding the tenure review process. Fifth, with

encouragement from the administration, the campus children's center sought and successfully obtained national accreditation. Sixth, the campus is considering contracting with Harvard's Dick Chait and his Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education survey as part of their national rollout of the Study of New Scholars.

In sum, this systematic process model yielded a set of specific strategies and recommendations that were formulated and supported by all stakeholders in the tenure process. Although the process does require

sustained effort and time, with strong leadership and commitment, institutions wishing to utilize this method should see meaningful gains in their ability to diversify and better retain faculty, especially women and minority faculty. As a nation, higher education is showing success towards building a community of students that more closely resembles what the rest of America looks like. Now is the time for universities to rise to our commitment to build a stronger, more diverse, and connected community of scholars and teachers.

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**Dr. Margaret Atwell** is Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Reading Education at California State University, Fullerton. As a senior administrator with primary responsibility for academic personnel, she spends her time on faculty matters such as recruitment and retention, orientation and faculty support and faculty employee relations. Her academic interests include literacy development and assessment, teacher preparation and children's and adolescent literature.