

Report to Strategic Planning Committee

Subcommittee 1: Recruit and retain outstanding faculty, staff, and students.

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Strategic objectives for meeting the core goals of CAS

Goal 1: Recruit and retain outstanding faculty, staff, and students.

Pertinent questions to be addressed by subcommittee:

1. What efforts can we make to enhance the quality and diversity of our applicant pools?
2. In many units budget reductions have fallen heavily on staff needed to support faculty efforts. How do we balance needs for faculty and staff support?
3. What efforts that are within the college's purview could be implemented to improve retention of the best faculty and staff?
4. How can we improve recruitment and retention of the best students without putting too much of a burden on faculty?
5. What investments in monetary and other resources are needed to improve recruitment and retention of outstanding employees and students? How we empower departments and schools to improve recruitment and retention?
6. How can we determine if the strategies we implement are working?

A. Faculty Recruitment and Retention

The CAS has approximately 34% of WSU's tenure track faculty. They teach 50% of the university's total student credit hours and account for 23% of the university's total grant expenditures. Faculty are obviously an essential resource for the college, and *success in recruiting and retaining high quality faculty and creating a vibrant faculty community is the single most important determinant in whether the college will succeed in its strategic mission.*

Based on information from surveys, interviews with chairs and directors, and discussions within the subcommittee, we have identified five overarching priorities that the CAS Strategic Plan should address with respect to faculty recruitment and retention:

1. Competitive and Equitable Salaries.

The main obstacle to recruiting and retaining high quality faculty is the uncompetitive level of CAS salaries relative to peer institutions. Simply put, if the college does not address this issue all other efforts to recruit and retain quality faculty will fail. Nearly every chair or director noted that their unit salaries fall significantly below those at peer institutions. Many also expressed frustrations with salary inequities caused by compression or the failure to adequately reward merit. Many also noted the morale problems created by a system that forces faculty to obtain outside offers to address low salaries.

Goal:

Establish salaries that are competitive with peer institutions and equitable within and across units of the college.

Strategies:

- Identify the most severe retention, merit, and equity problems within the college. This could be accomplished through an advisory committee composed of representatives from several units or departments or through a representative subcommittee from the Chairs and Directors group.
- Prioritize the use of CAS resources to bring faculty salaries in line with peer institutions.
- Establish a revolving fund to proactively address these problem areas. Funding sources could come from CAS enrollment growth, accruals generated by the delayed replacement of exiting faculty, diversion of a percentage of funding generated from summer session enrollments and/or F&A recovery, and prioritized use of unrestricted development gifts and funding.

Metrics:

- The college should develop median salary targets for each unit in the college based upon median salaries at peer institutions ("peer institutions" may vary by discipline).
- Develop guidelines for each department or unit to use in identifying and ranking severe compression, equity, or merit retention cases annually.
- Assess progress toward meeting these targets annually.

2. Faculty Start-Up, Recapitalization, and Research/Professional support.

While salaries were the top priority of nearly every chair and director, many also identified the lack of funding for adequate faculty start-up packages, recapitalization of equipment, and internal funding for professional development as major obstacles to recruitment and retention of quality faculty.

Goal:

Offer adequate and competitive start-up packages, regularly update and replace key laboratory and other equipment used by faculty, and adequately support faculty professional development activities.

Strategies:

- Establish a start-up and recapitalization fund within the college. Funding could come from sources such as new revenue generated from CAS enrollment growth, accruals generated by the delayed replacement of exiting faculty, diversion of a percentage of funding generated from summer session enrollments and/or F&A recovery, and prioritized use of unrestricted development gifts and funding.

- Establish a CAS liaison to coordinate department-level purchase and installation of equipment or capital improvement with WSU Facilities and Operations and other providers.

- Develop additional CAS funding to support faculty conference travel and professional development activities.

- Develop additional CAS support to leverage grant and/or unit level funding for RA positions and other faculty research support.

Metrics:

- Develop guidelines for departments and units to identify and rank equipment and recapitalization needs annually.

- Survey peer institutions and establish reasonable goals for supporting faculty start-up packages, recapitalization, and professional development levels.

3. Faculty Governance and Faculty Empowerment.

Many of those we spoke to expressed a sense that faculty have little real power over university governance and have declining control over their own academic and professional activities. Decreases in staff support, growing teaching demands, and the mushrooming of university and college level regulations, rules, reporting requirements, etc., leave faculty feeling increasingly fragmented and marginalized. This leads to a loss of time for the creative and intellectual pursuits vitally important not only to individual faculty but also to the University. Many also complained that administrative centralization and micromanagement of departments is stifling unit level productivity, experimentation, and entrepreneurship. As one department chair commented; *“more faculty governance, less administrative interference; i.e. work toward eliminating top-down hierarchical rule.”*

Goal:

Maximize faculty and unit-level control over academic programs and use of academic resources.

Strategies:

- Establish a process for identifying and eliminating or streamlining CAS regulations over academic program governance (i.e. course scheduling, faculty teaching schedules, course-releases or reduced teaching loads, uses of unit level accruals or development funds, control over summer teaching and/or support, etc.).
- Seek to eliminate, streamline, or consolidate the number of faculty and/or department-level reports and evaluations.
- Encourage units to innovate and experiment with ways to better deliver classroom instruction and facilitate faculty research and creative activities (i.e. team teaching models, flexible or differential faculty teaching loads, flexible course scheduling, flexibility in the use of TA and RA funding, etc.).
- Seek ways to increase the number of TAs, RAs, and faculty support staff.
- Provide clear guidelines outlining expectations and rewards for encouraging unit innovation and pedagogical experimentation, including flexible FTE allocation for team-taught courses within and across departments, and support for developing interdisciplinary, new, or online courses.

Metrics:

- Establish a baseline estimate or survey that reports on the current status of these issues, including the following: time spent on reporting and regulations or numbers of reports required; numbers of existing TAs, RAs, and faculty support staff; current forms of team-teaching models and other forms of pedagogical innovation, along with current policies on FTE allocation and support for course development.
- Report the changes on a two-year cycle to determine whether the desired improvements have occurred.
- Annual surveys/CAS accounting of faculty service activity.

4. *Creating a Vibrant Faculty Community and Improving Faculty Morale.*

Beyond salary, material support, and governance questions, the general climate and level of faculty morale is also an important aspect of attracting and keeping our best colleagues. A vibrant faculty community has many moving parts, but many of those we talked to expressed the view that the college needed to do more to address this issue in a more thoughtful and systemic way. For instance, many expressed the view that factors such as being happy in the workplace, having an intellectually stimulating environment, feeling appreciated within the unit and university, and having a climate of collegiality are as important in many cases as salary in determining whether or not they will stay at the university. Others expressed the importance of having colleagues that share their research interests and suggested use of cluster hires as a strategy for making WSU a more synergistic and intellectually rewarding place for faculty to work. However, such strategies must

also be balanced against disciplinary concerns and the need to cover curricula, especially in the context of reduced staffing levels. Others suggested the need for greater attention to mentoring of junior faculty and leadership development programs for mid-level and senior faculty. Still others suggested the need for more opportunities and spaces for faculty to meet informally, network, and socialize and that this would be an important part of faculty vitality and morale.

Goal:

Strive to create a vibrant community that provides faculty across the college and at all levels appropriate opportunities to advance, collaborate, and socialize.

Strategies:

- Establish a CAS faculty club.
- Develop formal mentoring programs at the college level for junior faculty and leadership training programs for mid-career and senior faculty.
- Develop a college hiring plan that seeks to balance and rationalize clustering or synergistic hiring opportunities with department level curricular and disciplinary needs.
- Task an associate dean in CAS with working with the units to identify and proactively address problem areas of conflict, such as individual faculty with lingering grievances, which lead to poor morale.
- Develop and support innovative ways for faculty to collaborate on interdisciplinary projects.

Metrics:

- Annual surveys of morale and climate within the workplace.

5. *Feeling valued within CAS and the University.*

We all surely recognize that morale within the faculty has been greatly diminished after several years of budget cuts, reorganizations, and contraction within the University. Further, as a result of the prioritizing plan, some faculty members have the feeling of being not valued within CAS and the University. This sentiment came out in several of the discussions and in the written responses. One respondent voiced this opinion: *“One challenge, present though certainly not universally held, is a certain feeling—suspicion, belief, distrust (call it what you will)—that the vision of success and advancement possessed by higher-levels at WSU is, whatever the public language, a fundamentally narrow one, based overwhelmingly on models drawn primarily from the sciences and agriculture, and that scholarship that advances cultural critique and challenges [in the humanities and social sciences] is not similarly valued.”* In order for the CAS to become a vibrant and prosperous entity it needs to develop a sense of community within the college. This can only be accomplished when all faculty and units have a sense that their contributions are valued.

Goal:

Improve morale by developing a sense of worth among all faculty and units in CAS.

Establish university level prioritization and strategic planning in ways that draw on the range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary work of CAS faculty.

Strategies:

- Provide visibility in promotion materials (e.g., *WSU Today*, *Washington State Magazine*) equally across the college.
- Recognize that faculty in units with large teaching loads of service courses have significant research agendas and that not only teaching but research must be valued in those units. There needs to be the recognition that both teaching and research in all units are essential to CAS and the University and that units cannot be divided into “teaching” and “research” units.
- Identify key areas where CAS can help shape university level priorities and areas of emphasis so college administrators can communicate them consistently to upper administration.

Metrics:

- Annual surveys of morale and climate within the workplace.

Overarching metric for faculty recruiting and retention.

- In the opinion of this subcommittee, the ultimate metric for faculty recruiting and retention is simply the success of the recruiting process and the retention rate of our faculty. This can be measured by percentage of faculty offers accepted and numbers of faculty leaving for other positions. An short, annual survey of faculty attitudes and perceptions (perhaps conducted simultaneously with the annual evaluation process) , might also generate valuable feedback for the College.

B. Recruitment and Mentoring of Graduate Students

A talented and productive graduate student community is essential for the vitality of the CAS and WSU. This is true both for the Sciences and the Arts. In the word of one department chair: *“Faculty cannot do their work without graduate students”*. Therefore, recruiting the best graduate students to WSU is of paramount importance. This requires both effort and resources. In the words of one chair: *“We should not expect that the “best” students show up, dropped in our laps, without effort and personal contact.”* In addition, we need to optimize the training and mentoring of the graduate students who are at WSU to help them complete their degrees in a reasonable amount of time and help them find employment after they leave WSU. Based on responses from the Chairs and Directors, and discussions within the subcommittee, we have identified three strategic areas of improving our graduate student community.

1. Improving graduate student stipends

The main issue facing units in the recruitment of graduate students is the level of the stipends. CAS data indicate that the mean stipend of WSU RAs and TAs for most departments is below the average stipends reported in the OSU Study for 2011-2012. In addition, stipends in the former CLA departments are uniformly lower than they are in the former COS departments.

Goal:

- Offer graduate student stipends that are fair and competitive with peer-institutions.

Strategies:

- In the short term, fund the CAS Graduate Recruitment Fellowship at level sufficient for departments to be more competitive in recruiting their best applicants.
- In the longer term, identify funds for increasing stipend levels.
- Identify programs and units with most egregious stipend level problems compared to peer institutions.

Metrics:

- Regularly compare unit level stipend amounts with those at appropriate peer institutions and report on progress toward addressing discrepancies.

2. Develop more effective recruiting strategies across CAS

Another issue involves inadequate resources for recruiting, including insufficient support (financial, staff) for campus visits, updating websites, and promotion of graduate programs through faculty attendance at conferences and professional meetings. Some of the units are doing a good job of this, but all units would probably admit they could do better. Certainly stipend levels figure prominently into this equation, but they are not the only factor.

Goal:

- To recruit a more talented and diverse graduate student population.

Strategies:

- Support faculty and/or student attendance at professional conferences for the purpose of recruiting.
- Provide support for campus visits for prospective students.
- Enhance websites and allow units some autonomy in developing sites that diverge from the corporate design (especially important for the Fine Arts).
- Request CAS or WSU design help for recruiting materials (e.g., posters for booths at conferences).
- Assess the costs to hire grad students on grants and, in disciplines where grant and fellowship awards are smaller (perhaps covering only stipends), improve the training experience of graduate students by providing tuition waivers and health insurance premiums to round out graduate assistantships.

3. Improve mentoring of students

Graduate student access to faculty is also a current challenge. Maintenance and growth in graduate programs has coincided with a decline in faculty members, putting a strain on faculty time with their mentees. In addition, a number of departments are experiencing difficulties with large imbalances among faculty in their graduate mentoring loads.

Goal:

- Successfully train, mentor and place graduate students from CAS.

Strategies:

- Prioritize hiring tenure-track faculty (who participate in graduate mentoring).
- Provide support for increasing faculty involvement with graduate students in the areas of mentoring and collaboration in research and creative activities.
- Require units to develop explicit mentoring loads, incentivizing where needed, encouraging limits where needed.
- The college should assess whether the university's push to grow PhD enrollment is best met by relatively uniform efforts to grow PhD enrollment across CAS units (where applicable) or in targeted areas and reconcile policies and resources accordingly.

Metrics (to evaluate progress toward all goals in Section B):

- The college should develop median stipend targets for each graduate program in the college based upon median salaries at peer institutions ("peer institutions" may vary by discipline) and assess progress toward meeting these targets annually.
- Existing reports from Directors of Graduate Studies may typically comment on their success at recruiting desirable students. After establishing a baseline based on existing reports, perhaps ask for specific comments on graduate student quality or percent of top applicants admitted who enroll after a few years of increasing funding and support for recruitment.
- Assess and annually monitor advising loads, distribution of graduate students among faculty, completion rate per faculty advisor, time to degree per faculty advisor, placement of graduate students following graduation.
- Assess success with exit surveys of graduate students and follow up with questionnaires of students at regular intervals after they leave WSU.
- Require units to annually track and report data on graduate student completion time and placement success

A final issue, discussed in the subcommittee, is that despite the emphasis on PhD students, MS students are also important constituents in the graduate student community and, in fact, may be a better fit for WSU and some units than PhD students. In some disciplines, the MS degree is a working degree with active employment at high salary levels. This should not be overlooked in order to simply increase the numbers of PhD students at WSU.

C. Recruitment and Retention of Outstanding Staff

Classified Staff and Administrative Professionals play a critical role in providing support and service to all areas of CAS. Specifically, it is essential that the staff be able to interact with faculty, other staff and students, as well as the administrative parts of the university and the local community in a fashion that provides the best customer service.

A major concern identified by the committee is the level of staff support in the old CLA departments as a result of deep staff reductions under the service center model adopted four years ago. Many units now have only a single staff support person, leaving the unit unable to meet staff needs in cases of sickness, vacation or vacancy. This mode of operation not only creates hardships for students, faculty, and administrators who rely upon staff support, it also leaves an unfavorable image of a College that does not value student service and is a primary driver of faculty frustration and morale issues.

Well-trained staff is essential to the success of the departments. Professional development for employees is available through Human Resource Services. Encouraging staff to take advantage of these resources should be a higher priority within CAS. Sufficient training creates job satisfaction and increased morale among the staff that are given the support and opportunity to advance in their careers.

Goal:

- To have sufficient staff to provide excellent service to the faculty, students and administration.

Strategies:

- Provide a level of support in the departments that is adequate to service the demands of the faculty, students and visitors.
- Develop a CAS committee to review College wide staffing demands and reevaluate what tasks are best centralized in the service centers and what tasks are better addressed within departments.

Metrics:

- Evaluate the efficiency, performance and quality of the support between the service centers and departments that are not using this mode of operation.