Faculty Success Council

February 24, 2023 Minutes

2:00PM STEAM Center

In attendance: Ligia Focsan, Yadir Yalcin, Catherine Bowers, Katie Adams, Ryan Wander, Adam Wood, Javian Brabham, Lynn Crump, Alicia Roberson, Jamie Landau, Sheri Gravett, Emily Rogers, Kate Warner

1. Welcome.
2. New Faculty Success Survey (Fall 2022): Kate continued with review of the PowerPoint, beginning with the reasons new faculty stay at VSU.
   * Jamie noted that Dr. Gannon of Biology offers the affordability of housing in Valdosta as a selling point.
   * The greatest concern that might cause new faculty, especially assistant professors, to look elsewhere for positions is the budget.
   * Questions about creating a stronger sense of academic or social community generated some comments about loneliness, lack of connectedness, poor peer culture.
   * The FSC considered ways to create a greater sense of community. It was noted that it can be difficult for new faculty in particular to know what other faculty are doing, especially in other departments and colleges. Lynn mentioned the short inter-department presentations of research and teaching updates faculty in LCOBA present as an example of sharing information and experiences. Sheri noted that bringing faculty together from different disciplines could help as well with exploring ideas and developing cross-disciplinary minors such as gerontology, and Kate mentioned a recent article suggesting that newer faculty want to collaborate more often. Alicia added that perhaps new faculty want other ways than email notices to access new information.
   * Jamie asked about new faculty attendance at faculty socials, and Catherine responded that few of the faculty who’ve been at VSU five years or less attend faculty socials. Jamie asked about family-friendly faculty socials.
   * Some leadership comments suggested the need for more connection with university administration; Kate suggested that there might not be much we can request administrators do differently, and Sheri asked what methods of communication do faculty need or want? It was mentioned that there can be difficulty getting answers to questions about administrative decisions. It was then suggested that perhaps ultimate transparency is not really desirable, especially if the answer to questions is “I don’t know.”
   * Kate asked how the FSC suggestion box could be promoted.
   * Javian asked if there is a policy that limits the number of committees new faculty should serve on. Some colleges have such policies to prevent first- or second-year faculty from getting pushed to do too many. Adam suggested that the Council of Department Heads could address this issue.
   * The final slide asked what else the FSC needs to know from new faculty. Among other suggestions, mentoring came up in 31% of the responses, and concerns about promotion and tenure and faculty research came up in 26% of the responses. Javian suggested it would be good for new faculty to know what to start collecting for dossiers as early as the first year. Kate described the COEHS departmental liaison position, in which an assigned faculty member supported faculty in the t&p process. Other suggestions included a writing group of everyone going up for t&p in the next year and a p&t support group through CELT.
   * Kate invited additional suggestions be sent to Emily and her by email and asked for help updating action items in the presentation materials; Lynn volunteered.
3. Action items from above discussion:
   * For “Reasons to Stay,” push the affordability of housing prices.
   * Create opportunities for interdisciplinary research sharing among departments and colleges, much as LCOBA does among departments.
   * FSC can create experiences to bring faculty together in smaller groups, perhaps for mini-presentation, which checks collaboration and research boxes (similar to above).
   * Pursue possibility of a faculty social at CELT or at VSU Alumni House.
   * Ask hosts of faculty socials if at least some of the socials could be family-friendly to allow more parents to attend.
   * Consider other ways besides email to initiate communication with faculty—what methods of communication do faculty want?
   * Promote FSC suggestion box at college meetings or through Faculty Senate Executive Committee as an alternate means of communication.
   * Consider limiting the number of committees on which new faculty serve—perhaps to be addressed by the Council of Department Heads and/or included in our Best Practices.
   * Create and include a checklist for what to do each year in preparing for t&p.
   * Pursue t&p support group with CELT.
4. Update on Best Practices for Department Heads—report deferred until March 24 meeting.
5. Plans for future projects/tasks for FSC:
   * Academic Affairs Strategic Plan Outcome 2.2: “By fall 2023, survey the needs of faculty from diverse backgrounds. (Lead: AA Diversity Taskforce and Faculty Success Council)”—Kate will invite representatives of this taskforce to join our next meeting.
6. **Next meeting: Friday, March 24, 2:00PM, STEAM Center**