

FSI

Williams College

FACULTY-STAFF INITIATIVE

Final Report 2009

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INTRODUCTION

The **Faculty-Staff Initiative** (FSI) was formed in the fall of 2007 by a collective of faculty and staff members who were concerned about problems with recruiting and retaining faculty and staff of color at Williams College. Spurred by an alarming set of departures in the preceding (2006-07) year involving predominantly black and female faculty members, we resolved to devise actionable items that would assist the College to better recruit and retain faculty and staff of color. We agreed to forward specific recommendations to the senior administration and relevant units across the College. This document advances those specific recommendations.

Over the course of the Winter Study and Spring 2008 terms, we met to discuss specific targeted topics: (1) Hiring & Recruitment, (2) Retention & Institutional Culture, (3) Untenured Faculty and Staff, (4) Curriculum, and (5) Quality of Life. The numbers of faculty and staff members attending individual meetings fluctuated but averaged around 16. In all, a total of 47 faculty and staff members attended at least one meeting in that first year (though most attended numerous meetings) and expressed strong support for our collective objective. In 2008-09, FSI continued to meet regularly to explore these and other matters relating to faculty and staff, occasionally inviting members of the College community to discuss faculty and staff matters.

FSI understands that the substantive and long-term presence of faculty and staff of color is fundamental to the College meeting its responsibilities to a rapidly changing student body. We offer the suggestions below to ensure that the College's reality—the lived experience of Williams community members—matches its rhetoric. Rather than only aiming to ameliorate the College's public image or competitiveness with peer institutions, we affirm:

- (a) that in diversifying its student body (which it has impressively done), the College must ensure that a critical mass of equally diversified staff and faculty meet the intellectual, curricular, and extra-curricular needs of this changing student body (and also the faculty and staff);
- (b) that the presence of minority faculty, administrative staff, and support staff—which includes American racial minorities, international citizens, women, transgendered and sexually marginalized individuals—and the productive, non-abusive (intellectual and social) interaction between such groups are essential prerequisites to "the finest possible liberal arts education (that) nurtures in students the academic and civic virtues, and their related traits of character" [Williams College Mission, <http://www.williams.edu/home/mission/>];
- (c) that, conversely, the lack of such engagement represents a deficiency in education and insufficient preparation for the world beyond Williams;
- (d) and that the presence and interaction of a diversified staff and faculty body are fundamental to a richer intellectual and social climate of the College, benefiting minority and majority staff and faculty members of the Williams community in different ways.

Because racial diversity was the primary impetus for this group, we have focused our recommendations towards addressing this matter, but we assert that implementing some of our suggestions will help attract and keep any number of faculty and staff beyond the target population.

While we recognize that we live in challenging economic times, we hold that the systemic issues discussed in this report are top priorities that require immediate, focused attention and positive change. The issues we have focused upon largely preceded the economic downturn.

Although we offer more precise suggestions below, we wish to underscore three broad themes that underwrite the rest of this report, at the outset:

1. We understand the **retention and recruitment** of faculty and staff of color to be equally important, fundamentally interconnected and, therefore, fundamentally reinforcing elements. For example, according to the College's official records, in the last 21 academic years (from 1989-90 to 2009-10), 20 full-time academic faculty members of African descent were hired by the College, seven of whom have left. Of the 13 remaining African/Afro-European/African American hires in 21 years, five are currently in their first or second years at Williams, and only six have tenure. The problem of recruitment and retention of minority faculty working in ethnic/diasporic fields also pertains to those whose teaching and scholarship are in Asian American, Latina/o, or Native American studies. In the last 21 years, only two professors specializing in Asian American (as distinct from Asian) studies have been hired; the one Native American historian hired during that time, who was crucial to the American Studies program, was recently denied tenure. Although the College has made some recent gains in hiring faculty of color in the past few years, efforts at retention need significant attention. Challenges to retaining young faculty of color encompass factors well beyond Williamstown's geographic isolation and include lack of collegial interest in young scholars' work, absence of formal recognition for increased volume and intensity of student mentoring, and paucity of intellectual intersections between departments and programs with overlapping interests.

The improved retention of faculty and staff of color will enable this College to more productively and efficiently recruit new faculty and staff of color; and the better, more creatively we recruit faculty and staff of color, the more we will ensure the stable foundation of a staff and faculty of color community here in the Berkshires. Conversely, the weak retention of faculty and staff of color translates into a deficit when it comes to recruiting faculty and staff of color; weak recruitment, then, impinges negatively upon the retention of the faculty and staff of color already here, who may, in turn, search for better working and social conditions elsewhere. At the same time, perceptions that the administration and faculty anticipate or expect high turnover of faculty and staff of color contribute to an atmosphere of non-inclusion in the College community. We, therefore, encourage a dual mandate of retention and recruitment improvement by, and for, the College.

2. While recognizing that grassroots efforts (projects starting from areas beyond the senior administration) are essential to campus productivity, we also recognize that **strong administrative leadership** is essential to improving the retention and recruitment of staff

and faculty of color. We encourage more aggressive initiatives on the part of the senior administration to better retain and hire faculty and staff of color. Such initiatives, we find, must be guided by improved institutionalized measures that affect the quality of professional life at Williams College, so as to more effectively retain already hired employees. These measures involve:

- (a) more transparency about protocols relating to grievance procedures, representation on College committees, relationships between different offices and/or academic units across campus, individualized retention plans, advancement and promotion, etc.;
- (b) increased communication and consultation between senior administrative staff who make/shape policy and those staff and faculty who carry out and/or are impacted by said policies and who, consequently, may have insights to offer;
- (c) follow-up with the individuals affected by the stronger initiatives.

Many FSI members have encountered difficulties with initiatives short on one or a combination of the three specified areas. In particular, we have noted that problems in these areas often arise from the institutional culture at Williams College, which is too often couched in the rhetoric of or actually driven by personal/nonprofessional relationships rather than grounded in professional relationships. For example, newcomers are inducted into the “Williams Family,” and, more substantively, departmental/program policy decisions are conducted too frequently on an ad hoc level—depending on the history and practices of the unit in question and the chair or director who presently guides it. This also holds for senior-level administrative decisions that have no transparency or appreciable consistency. This blurring of personal and professional relationships may allow for a certain amount of administrative flexibility, but it also has its significant shortcomings—institutional opacity and the exclusion of certain members of the College, chief among them. Such a method of conducting professional business systematically disadvantages newcomers, traditional “outsiders,” or those members of the community who do not share personal or professional connections to the deemed “insiders” of campus culture—in short, the very individuals the College seeks when it attempts to diversify its faculty and staff. The “family” model may have worked better when Williams was smaller and more homogeneous, but such a model does not adequately serve a 21st-century college.

For this reason, members of FSI seek the clear institutionalization of protocols and professional matters, such that communications and procedures (a) do not depend exclusively or predominantly on individual personalities or specific members of the College, and therefore (b) do not exclude future or current employees.

Another concept invoked at Williams, perhaps more explicitly than the “family” model, is the notion of “equity”: the belief that every faculty person is treated equally at Williams, and where no one is given special treatment. When applied to junior faculty of color, this model does not acknowledge the inherent, unequal, and often invisible professional roles that junior faculty of color carry—for example, extra service burdens of student advising/mentoring, recruiting prospective faculty of color, informal mentoring of faculty of color—which usually go unacknowledged. Such a model also tends to frame more general factors—such as geographical isolation from urban communities of color that necessitate

more frequent travel for both professional and personal reasons—as “equal” or analogous across all Williams faculty without acknowledging the greater privilege and resources of white faculty living in rural New England. By attempting to portray these challenges as generic, senior staff face the possibility of exacerbating a sense of professional alienation some junior faculty of color may feel.

3. We understand that improving the professional quality of life for staff and faculty of color, and thus the institutional culture at large, would only **improve the experience of Williams students**. We have witnessed how departures of staff and faculty of color or their absence in particular fields/sectors impact negatively upon the lives of students—both students of color and white students who turn to staff and faculty members of color for curricular and/or extracurricular support. This negative impact ranges from the disruption/suspension of research projects to an increased sense of isolation. We, therefore, hold that a sizable and long-term community of staff and faculty of color is vital to the studies and lives of students across the College.

FACULTY MATTERS

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

FSI has identified retention and recruitment as fundamental issues relating to faculty of color at Williams College. While the college is able to hire faculty of color, there is a history of weak retention that is most visibly apparent in cases of faculty hired in interdisciplinary programs that address issues of race, ethnicity, and diaspora. For example, in the 2007-08 academic year, Williams creatively hired three junior faculty members (2.5 FTEs) in Africana Studies to replace the loss of two faculty members (one junior and one senior) from the program; however, the following year, the program has lost one, potentially two, faculty members. FSI understands these cases to be far from incidental or individually unrelated but rather part of a persistent pattern of the College's inability to meet the institutional or professional needs of its faculty. We have identified a number of factors that have contributed to these departures (addressed below):

- (a) the "second-class status of programs" (and academic work therein), which Dean Wagner explicitly identified in the April 2009 Faculty Meeting, that disproportionately affects faculty of color, who are predominantly either housed in or intersect with interdisciplinary programs that address race, ethnicity, and diaspora;
- (b) the continued inability to provide successful and productive professional (intra-collegiate and career) mentoring for junior faculty members;
- (c) the lack of labor parity or lack of recognition for faculty of color, who:
 - 1. serve mentoring and counseling roles for students of color and those of nontraditional and first-generation backgrounds,
 - 2. perform much of the extracurricular programming for units in question, and
 - 3. engage in broader extracurricular programming outside of their home units that involve racial or ethnic issues; and
- (d) the lack of a sufficient senior faculty presence in Africana Studies (AFR), American Studies (AMST), and Latina/o Studies (LATS), which contributes to or exacerbates the three above items.

We recognize successes in hiring to be only half of the equation for a successfully inclusive and stable professional environment—retention being the other crucial supplement. Continuous departures of faculty of color undermine the stability, coherence, curricular offerings, and thus overall health of a (small) academic unit at the College. The consequence of this problem presents itself in recruitment efforts. That is, the lack of a stable academic community of color (or community of faculty who intersect with the work of faculty of color) is a potential consequential impediment to attracting targeted

candidates of color. Moreover, these regular departures impoverish the intellectual communities at Williams that may emerge among faculty members who share academic interests.

Members of FSI therefore also understand that the consequences of continually departing faculty of color develops into a particular burden for remaining faculty, who experience low morale as well as face the labor of cyclical recruitment efforts to replace departing faculty in their home programs/departments. These burdens, in turn, factor into the decision of current faculty of color about whether or not to stay on at the College or to accept other positions elsewhere.

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS

One issue of particular relevance for minority faculty members—especially junior faculty—has been the question of the relationship between programs and departments. The College has a recent practice of increasing its curricular and faculty diversity by often hiring faculty of color with full or partial appointments in interdisciplinary programs that address race, ethnicity, and diaspora rather than hiring these faculty into traditional departments. The fact that, five years after the first hires into programs were made, there are no institutionalized procedures in place standardizing relationships between departments and programs places the majority of junior faculty of color at a systematic disadvantage.

The recent rapid, not always smooth, expansion in program hiring in Africana Studies, American Studies, and Latina/o Studies has had significant consequences for program faculty that range from the “micro”—the everyday, logistical, and psychic—to the “macro”—institutional and professional (the latter having as much of a material and concrete impact as the former). As has been discussed in the report by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Relationship between Departments and Programs and in meetings between various junior program faculty and Dean Bill Wagner in 2006 and 2007, rather mundane practical issues can have real and profound consequences for a junior faculty person. Seemingly minor details can widen the already existing disparities in importance/power between programs and departments. A few examples:

1. That program chairs rarely have full appointments in programs (with no part of their FTE in a program) means that their time and energy are stretched thin, which compromises their ability to prioritize and carry out program concerns. Program chairs are responsible for advising, evaluating, mentoring, and organizing multiple junior faculty single-handedly, all while discharging their responsibilities to their home departments. When a chair receives no regular semester course release (such as in American Studies, currently with only 1.75 FTEs, in which the chair receives only WSP course release for chairing the program), the ability to prioritize and carry out program responsibilities is further challenged.

Given the small size of programs relative to departments, junior program faculty, especially those with full program appointments, are often more vulnerable than those working in departments in their dealings with senior faculty—both because the numbers are so few and because these few interpersonal and professional relationships become

that much more exigent and determinative of their professional well-being and future. Dean Wagner has taken steps to try to address this latter concern by appointing three-to four-person faculty evaluation committees for junior program faculty. But even with the creation of these evaluation committees, the chair's role becomes disproportionately significant in the professional life of junior faculty in programs (or departments) with very few or no other senior faculty members.

2. The nature of program faculty's relationship to departments, and vice versa, has not been formalized. This means that affiliations are either unresolved or resolved on an ad hoc basis, often dependent upon the decision-makers at a given moment. Faculty members in programs that address race, ethnicity, and diaspora and seek collaborative relationships with a related department often face a lack of transparency or professional (as opposed to haphazardly personal) communication about departmental matters such as rationales for cross-listed course numbering, participation in departmental scholarly activities such as colloquia, and participation in informal departmental activities such as gatherings with potential departmental majors. In short, formal and informal behaviors of departments and/or department chairs can create perceptions or realities of exclusivity wherein it is often difficult for scholarship and teaching about people of color and for junior scholars of color to thrive. The consequent "invisibility" of program faculty within departmental disciplines furthers the impression of a faculty member's lack of legitimacy in his/her discipline of training and research—in the eyes of colleagues, staff members, and students alike—and thus increases feelings of marginalization.

We do not mean to suggest that the "invisibility" of many program faculty in the context of Williams departments results from an intent on the part of departments, chairs, or individual faculty members to de-legitimize or exclude minority faculty teaching in newer, sometimes contested, fields. This situation needs to be more broadly contextualized by historical shifts across American academic institutions and across the social sciences and humanities in the last several decades. While the complexities of the academic culture wars are obviously beyond the scope of this document, suffice it to say that various academic disciplines whose historical investment has been in ideas of canonicity, the Western tradition, or literary and cultural "value," e.g., English, art history, classics, have sometimes been resistant to hiring young scholars in these newer fields of inquiry—including Africana, Asian American, Latino/a, and Native American studies. Because minority Americans and new immigrants are often assumed to be more or less properly assimilated to American and Western culture to the degree that they have mastered the Western canon or "proper English", the question of what counts as "good literature" or "good art" is not easily separable from feelings of exclusion from a majority culture of privilege and "value." Thus, in many ways, these questions of legitimacy go beyond the context of Williams, but we should be aware of them when thinking about the relationship of programs to departments and the impressions created by a series of what may seem small or trivial acts.

Recommendations for formalizing affiliations of program faculty with departments were delivered to the Dean of Faculty by the Ad Hoc Committee on Relations Between

Departments and Programs in Spring 2008; Dean Wagner announced in April 2009 that the Committee on Appointments and Promotions would consider these recommendations in Fall 2009. The delay between the formal, written proposal and its formal consideration for adoption seems to highlight the relative unimportance institutionally of this issue. Yet in the realm of junior program faculty professional development and morale, the issue continues to have significant import.

3. Inconsistencies in how courses are cross-listed can confuse students and academic advisors and may decrease student access to such courses. Courses originating in one curricular structure may not readily fit into another structure: for example, a 100-level course originating in a program in which these are large lecture courses may not satisfy the requirements of a cross-listing department whose 100-level courses are writing-intensive discussion classes; a 400-level program capstone seminar may, in format, look more like a 300-level departmental course. At best the result of these discrepancies is curricular confusion (100-level courses cross-listed as 200-level); at worse, a perception can be created that a program offering is “inferior” to a departmental one (if a 400-level program course is cross-listed as a 300-level departmental course.) Engaging relevant program chairs, department chairs, and current and incoming faculty in substantive communications about course-numbering rationales prior to the development of new courses would be a first step toward addressing course-number differences.

In Spring 2009, five years after the first hires were made into programs, full descriptions for cross-listed program courses were included in departments’ course listings in the online catalog for the first time. (Full course descriptions were never included in departmental listings in the paper catalog). This new parity in on-line course description access for cross-listed courses is a welcome development. It provides a clear example of a seemingly straightforward challenge whose persistence had a disproportionately negative impact on program faculty and whose resolution yields important improvements in curricular access for students and faculty advisors and yields a more inclusive professional atmosphere for program faculty.

4. Although the matter is now resolved, the lack of properly trained administrative assistance support for the first eight months of 2008 represented daily logistical setbacks for Africana Studies, Latina/o Studies and American Studies faculty members, who shared one administrative staff person. This situation was particularly difficult for faculty members without joint appointments who had no other administrative assistant to go to. This situation highlighted the challenges that program chairs face when time and attention are needed for program-specific issues.

SERVICE

Faculty of color, particularly junior faculty teaching wholly or partly in programs that work on race, ethnicity, and diaspora, almost always bear a double (or triple) burden of service. Often, a faculty member of color in such a program is the only person at the College teaching in his/her particular field and one of only a few faculty of color in his/her program or department. Thus, faculty of color, while staying immersed in the research and

pedagogical concerns of their field, must also take on extra-classroom and extra-research obligations not only towards students—who often call on faculty of color for mentoring, guidance, and/or psychological counseling—but towards colleagues and administrators who lack a background knowledge of the history and situation of institutionally underrepresented minorities. And while non-department-affiliated faculty can remain invisible to students seeking courses or mentorship in overlapping areas, these faculty often take on the task of teaching, mentoring and overseeing honors theses for departmental majors who feel alienated by their more traditional disciplines.

The recent hires into these programs—whether longstanding ones, such as American Studies, or recently instituted ones, such as Latino/a Studies, or recently expanded ones, such as Africana Studies—work predominantly on issues of race, ethnicity and diaspora. (Those program faculty who are not ethnic minorities but work on these issues may also be affected by the issues detailed below). The politicized/racialized nature of what many faculty of color and program faculty teach—and their presence/“identity” as people of color—has consequences not only in students’ attitudes towards them and their courses but also can concretely be manifested in SCS scores. The race, gender, sexuality, age, and size of the person standing in front of a classroom does not go unperceived by students; without having to say a word, teachers are perceived and received differentially. Likewise, minority junior faculty who teach on issues of race and ethnicity are always aware of the difficulties of introducing such topics without being slotted into some students’ preconceived notions of a minority professor or otherwise being de-legitimated in the students’ eyes.

The Exploring Diversity Initiative (EDI), while aiming to increase understanding of “diversity” through the curriculum adds another layer of difficulty for junior program faculty. Because many Latina/o Studies and American Studies program courses meet the EDI requirement, quite a few students who sign up for these classes do so to meet the requirement and may therefore be shocked, resistant, and/or angry when expected to participate in discussions of racism and politics within the classroom. Their discomfort may be expressed in a number of ways that add extra challenges to the professional lives of faculty of color, including negatively impacting classroom dynamics by withdrawal or disruption, hostile SCS scoring at the end of the semester, or negative postings on public blogs or Factrak.

MENTORING

One of the key ingredients to the successful early career of any scholar is appropriate professional mentorship. The College has struggled with implementing effective mentoring programs that meet the needs of junior scholars of color, many of whom engage in interdisciplinary inquiry. Recognizing that chairs cannot carry the load of mentoring alone, the Dean of the Faculty has established evaluation and mentoring committees for incoming junior faculty in programs. Recognizing that new junior faculty should be spared constant evaluation and scrutiny, the College began in 2008 to set up mentoring relationships between junior and senior faculty members outside the field of the incoming professor.

While these measures have had varying degrees of impact, the issue of effective mentoring remains a problem. The faculty mentoring program initiated in 2008 offers little in the way of professional advancement and the usefulness of such pairings can diminish as the new faculty member familiarizes him/herself to campus culture; moreover, some matches do not actually reach helpfulness even in terms of general campus orientation. With regards to the former arrangement of carefully selected evaluation committees, aside from the matter of conflating evaluation and mentoring, professional development is still not assured. This is either because (a) the appointed senior faculty are overtaxed, (b) even the evaluating faculty's areas of expertise fall outside the junior scholar's field of interdisciplinary work and thus the evaluation committee lacks sufficient expertise necessary to advise him/her on how to approach scholarship or disciplinary service beyond the College, or (c) a combination of both. In addition, some mentors lack familiarity with fields studying race, ethnicity, and diaspora; these and other mentors lack knowledge of the specific needs and concerns that junior faculty of color face. This lack of awareness, even though not intentionally harmful, can produce a de facto sense by the junior faculty person that his/her needs are not acknowledged or are even denigrated (e.g., by inadvertent or ignorant comments by the mentor on issues of race). Consequently, the junior faculty member may still "fall through the cracks" or search for other job opportunities where his/her professional needs will be met.

TRAINING

While faculty of color are often disproportionately burdened in the ways outlined above, the administration could take steps to build a more supportive faculty culture and to help all faculty (and staff) attain the crucial skills necessary to meet the demands of a continually changing twenty-first-century campus. Too often, faculty (of color and white) lack the skills to tackle challenges that emerge in and beyond the classroom, in part because very few faculty members are professionally trained to handle matters beyond the subject matter of their chosen field. The absence of such professional development yields an intellectually competent faculty who nonetheless lack the tools to approach delicate social issues about different student populations that reveal themselves implicitly or explicitly in the classroom. Demand for such training opportunities was most vocally expressed by faculty members in the February 2008 special faculty meeting in response to the racist incidents that ignited student outrage. Numerous faculty privately and publicly expressed their inability (and consequently unwillingness) to address the subject in the classroom, as requested by a significant portion of the student body.

The lack of sufficient training may be found at numerous levels, and it impacts the lives of faculty of color disproportionately. If faculty of color feel comfortable addressing campus crises, they are called upon (by students, colleagues, or the administration) to do so in various and sometimes numerous ways, in addition to discharging their regular responsibilities. Moreover, they frequently face the consequences of their colleagues' ignorance, which range from racial/cultural slights to the desire to avoid campus problems. These multiple, diverse requests to support and educate less experienced members of the community contribute to a burdensome environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We urge the administration to take the steps recommended below as well as further steps to equalize the professional situation of faculty of color. We would like to see the full and expeditious implementation of the suggestions below and those made by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Relationship between Departments and Programs. Given the persistent pattern of departures of faculty of color, we believe this matter requires vigilant attention from the College. We strongly advise that the College:

1. Formalize the relationship between departments and programs

The lack of protocol can exacerbate the sense of alienation felt by new faculty in programs addressing race, ethnicity, and diaspora. Because this matter disproportionately affects faculty of color, addressing this can help diminish the second-class citizenship of programs.

2. Relieve program chairs

Given the stresses and divided responsibilities placed upon chairs of current interdisciplinary programs, and the repercussions experienced by junior faculty of color noted above, we recommend that chairs who are housed in departments be temporarily relieved of their departmental responsibilities. If the College is unable or unwilling to make senior hires in programs dominated by tenure-track faculty members, it should assure that chairs appointed from other parts of the College should have the support necessary to fully and responsibly discharge their duties for the duration of their tenures as chairs.

We believe a model already exists. Members of the senior administrative staff (Dean of the College, Dean of the Faculty, Provost, and President) appointed from the faculty are temporarily excused from the traditional labor of their home departments for the duration of their appointments. Given that being a program chair involves the building up and maintenance of recent or newly revived components of the College, this existing precedent is an appropriate model.

3. Initiate new professional mentoring programs

In the absence of mentoring that would enable faculty of color to prosper in the Berkshires, we suggest that, when necessary, the College facilitate the mentoring of junior scholars of color by senior scholars from outside the College in the former's field of interest. This would be most appropriate in interdisciplinary programs that address race, ethnicity, and diaspora, where there is insufficient senior presence to guide the junior scholar on professional matters beyond Williams College. College support could entail a formal letter requesting the mentorship, some form of remuneration/recognition, and the facilitation of at least one annual meeting in person between mentor and mentee.

4. Recognize additional faculty labor in evaluation

While the College recognizes the category of "service" as a portion of a junior faculty member's evaluation, the work enumerated above that many faculty of color face in addition to the traditional service responsibilities (committee work, programming, etc.) deserves clear recognition during the evaluation process. While it is frequently stated that any efforts should be noted in staffing reports, such decisions depend upon the

preferences and perspectives of individual chairs, and consideration of such efforts may vary as the CAP's composition changes.

5. Systematize course numbering across college units

The College should streamline its numbering system across departments and programs so as to avoid inconsistencies that may confuse students and disadvantage program faculty.

6. Offer regular professional development around diversity and inclusion

We urge that at least three different types of training be offered:

(a) Social-justice training. This would help faculty and staff members to more ably respond to social crises that erupt on campus by sensitizing members of this community to existing social tensions and by offering strategies for how best to respond to them before, while, and immediately after they flare up.

(b) Pedagogically-centered diversity training. This would enable teachers of all sorts to better handle a racially, sexually, economically, spiritually, and ideologically diverse pool of students in the classroom or other pedagogical forums. Such professional development will help teachers become more conscious of how differences and inequalities manifest themselves in classroom dynamics and to learn strategies to better negotiate those differences, thereby minimizing the potential for alienating situations. An excellent resource for teaching in diverse educational communities comes from the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k1985&pageid=icb.page29807>; this site is now linked to the College's Project for Effective Teaching and Learning web page.

(c) Mentorship training. This would help faculty and staff mentors develop and fine-tune their skills at advising students not only about the academic curriculum but also about strategies for how students can achieve their long-term goals. Some untraditional Williams students (first-generation, working class, students of color, or urban) are unsure about how to navigate through a college education and about how they fit into a privileged (and privileging) campus climate. Faculty (and staff) need training to better identify and respond to students in need, while empowering them to adapt and thrive in their environment. (We wish to acknowledge the first-generation pilot program administered through the Admissions Office in 2008-09, and want to encourage a broadening of this program.)

Training should be organized by the administration in a systematic fashion. For each type and level of training, multiple dates must be offered in order to ensure that those interested in the training can access it. Over the course of a semester, for example, a three-step social justice training program would offer three different dates for each step—therefore, requiring nine sessions (three dates for each of the three steps). We wish to underscore the urgency of the training detailed above. If this College is committed to providing the best educational opportunities and environment for its students, it can no longer neglect offering the necessary skills and tools with which faculty and staff can meet this primary goal.

STAFF MATTERS

Admittedly, improving the climate for Staff at Williams is a challenging task given the diversity in backgrounds, responsibilities, and educational levels represented. One might expect that concerns would vary dramatically by department or that significant differences would exist between the concerns of salaried versus non-salaried staff. Interestingly, this is generally not the case. FSI conversations highlight several overlapping themes that negatively impact staff experience regardless of department or salary type. These issues are addressed further in the sections below.

One main conclusion became quite clear: we cannot successfully recruit or retain staff from under-represented groups until we improve the climate for all staff on campus. A challenge for the senior administration and for all levels of staff is to find ways of fostering a sense of community across all campus constituencies, while helping individual departments to develop strategies that meet their departmental needs through cultures based on teamwork and respect. This would provide working environments in which all members feel valued and committed to their work.

STAFF EXPERIENCE

One major area of concern is the unfortunate but commonly held perception that staff are not considered legitimate members of the Williams community. Staff often feel that they are valuable only in relation to the services they provide for faculty and students and are, therefore, dispensable and replaceable. While an administrative hierarchy is natural in any institution, support staff in particular feel they are at the very bottom of our institutional hierarchy, and thereby, less valued than others. This leads to a culture in which staff do not feel comfortable reporting concerns because they fear it will lead to some sort of retribution, such as less appealing assignments or hours, or even termination. This experience is especially uncomfortable for staff of color or staff with language barriers who deal with insensitive comments or assumptions made about themselves or other members of their group. These types of incidents often remain unreported for fear that staff members will be perceived as “overly sensitive” or as “pulling the racial card.”

Another overall sentiment is that there is a lack of support for innovation or change. Given that the average staff person has been at Williams for 12 years, new staff additions or staff members with different perspectives often feel ignored or as though their ideas are not taken seriously. Moreover, while staff members are often evaluated by their superiors, they are rarely provided formal opportunities or encouraged informally to provide constructive criticism to their managers. Rarely do staff feel able to question their managers’ methods or practices in an open and thoughtful way.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MENTORING

Lack of clear expectations regarding individual roles and departmental goals exacerbates many staff members’ sense of being relatively undervalued at Williams. Many staff are

unaware of opportunities for professional development and of what is expected for growth and upward mobility. Part of the problem lies in the opacity of hiring and promotional practices, which in the past (and thus reflected in many current managers' positions) were often based primarily on longevity and personal relationships, rather than relying on merit or leadership potential. We have been assured that current hiring practices are quite different from those of the past. Yet a commonly held, if inaccurate, perception among non-salaried staff is that hiring and promotion in those ranks relies on personal connections and years in the job more than merit. The difference between the perspective that hiring and promotion practices are merit-based and the perspective of many staff members who work with or under staff who were promoted under the older system illustrates the challenges that Williams's current environment creates for staff satisfaction. For both salaried and non-salaried staff, the presence of managers whose talents do not regularly outshine those who rank below them often leads to frustration and a sense that doing the bare minimum is all that is required. In recent memory, this has also led to the loss of talented professionals, particularly young staff and staff of color.

Another factor contributing to the professional frustrations of many staff members is the lack of management training received or expected of many directors, managers, and supervisors. Many persons in positions of authority have not been trained to manage teams, to promote the professional development of their staff, or to inspire creative approaches to the work at hand. At worst, this leads to loss of some of the most promising members of our staff. At best, it leads to departments that simply maintain the status quo rather than seek to innovate and improve.

Providing formal mentoring to staff members at all levels would help clarify expectations of how each department's and individual's work contributes to the department's success and to the College's educational mission. Many departments do not promote or facilitate professional development opportunities, such as attending conferences or training workshops. Moreover, staff rarely feel that they are encouraged by their leadership to participate in Williams community activities or spaces outside of their department, such as administrative committees, clubs, cultural events, athletic facilities, and other benefits that seem natural extensions of working at a liberal arts college.

SERVICE

Mirroring the faculty experience, administrators of color and from other under-represented backgrounds carry a substantially heavier service burden than the typical staff member. Whether it is through informal or formal mentoring programs, committee representation, or sharing their home with students over holidays, they provide significant service to the community that is not often rewarded or commended, either by the institution or individual departments. This lack of recognition regarding staff service often leads to burn out, loss of motivation, or worse, their departure from the institution.

More generally, staff want to be encouraged to participate more fully in the policy-making and administrative aspects of the college. They want their voices heard on administrative committees and the staff council. Recent work by staff as members of the

Claiming Williams Steering Committee, the Coalition for Building Inclusive Community 2008-09, and the Faculty-Staff Initiative illustrates that such experiences can lead to substantive contributions to our overall community that would not have been made without staff participation, may lead to a greater sense of staff inclusion and community, and can be empowering to staff. When more of these campus-wide opportunities are made available, managers need to encourage participation and allow the time necessary for staff members to participate fully. Some staff have advocated and requested to be placed on administrative committees to no avail, while other staff members are overcommitted to College service and too often asked to participate.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS AND FACULTY

It is of utmost importance that we keep in mind that the students we strive to serve are not just educated in the classroom. They also learn from interactions with and between members of our campus community. The issues mentioned above do not go unnoticed by Williams students. Because many of our staff members are front-line contacts with students, they interact more with students on a daily basis than do faculty or senior staff. Improving the environment for our staff is in our students' best interest. Williams aims to prepare our students to become leaders of the greater global community. What students learn about intergroup relations at Williams will undoubtedly impact their expectations. It is imperative that all staff (and faculty) model for students an environment where diverse individuals feel welcome to live, learn, and thrive.

In multiple ways, staff members have a relatively significant impact on faculty members appointed fully in programs that address race, ethnicity, and diaspora. Administrative assistants play central roles in the quality of professional life of faculty members appointed in AFR, LATS, and AMST because, unlike their program colleagues whose appointments are in departments, these faculty members have no other institutional home to turn to for administrative help. In addition, professional staff members who have doctorates and/or training in relevant areas often serve as important scholarly and collegial professional allies for junior faculty of color, over and above their formal duties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations provide first steps toward improving the experience, retention, and recruitment of staff members at Williams College:

- 1.** Establish a systematic method of tracking the staff experience at Williams. Based on the data collected, set yearly goals for improving the campus climate and establish initiatives based on the research data. Evaluation of these initiatives can then rely on the measurable change of cyclical climate assessments.
- 2.** Create straightforward and transparent professional practices and communication with staff inclusive of issues related to class, gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and staff status in order to decrease confusion and improve staff morale. By generating these professional practices and communications at the senior staff level, these initiatives will impact the full

range of staff, including administrative staff members whose own positions do not intersect considerably with the Office of Human Resources.

(a) Staff diversity training begun in 2009 by Bob Wright, Arif Smith, Chris Cruz, and others is a current professional practice that has had positive impact. We note that, as currently supported, this training will unfortunately be slow to reach all campus employees. It is an endeavor that may need additional staff leadership support in the wake of Chris Cruz's departure from Williams. In addition to the benefits such training will have for the full Williams community, we think that increased, effective diversity and inclusion training of managers and administrators will improve the College's ability to recruit beyond the Berkshires in order to attract staff of color from more cosmopolitan regions.

(b) Increase the review of departments and increase training opportunities for managers, particularly around issues of team building and inclusion. Do senior staff members or the Office of Human Resources ever review departments? If so, do such reviews include support staff? What about external reviews, such as those undertaken by academic departments every ten years? Departmental reviews and opportunities for managers to obtain training about supervision and staff development should be a cyclical and common practice.

(c) Provide educational opportunities for staff, particularly courses in English as a second-language. This could provide teaching opportunities for our students while providing an important service for departments that face language barriers. U-Mass Amherst offers such courses for staff, students, and faculty in the five-college consortium; we may wish to establish a local collaboration with MCLA and Berkshire Community College. In addition, offering educational opportunities in technology several times throughout the year would increase the efficacy and efficiency of most departments and should be considered a requirement for staff development.

(d) Encourage staff to pursue a variety of professional development opportunities. For example, salaried staff are unable to receive compensation for providing college services that extend above and beyond their official positions (e.g., teaching any type of course, participating in a reading group that awards stipends, coaching a sport, or participating in an academic summer program). Review of this policy should be considered.

3. Infuse the campus climate with a sense of community that includes staff.

Staff offices devoted to issues of diversity and inclusion and the many staff members who work as campus leaders on these issues are interested in creating such an inclusive campus community. For instance, the campus calendar and schedule should allow for more staff participation in co-curricular forums, discussions, and colloquia. Staff often feel left out of the intellectual activities available on campus.

(a) Use the wide participation by staff in Claiming Williams 2009 as a model for creating opportunities throughout the year for staff to be invited to participate (without

loss of pay) in intellectual/academic/community-building events. Many staff recently served or are serving as leaders on the Claiming Williams Steering Committee, the Coalition for Building Inclusive Community 2008-09, and other committees across campus.

Managers should encourage such participation across departments.

(b) Communicate clearly and accessibly about whether and how staff members can join campus-wide groups and committees. Processes by which staff members are nominated and/or invited to join the President's Administrative Group (PAG), the Staff Council, standing committees that include staff, or ad hoc committees that include staff are not widely known or understood.

(c) Provide ready access to information about how to navigate the Williams system of posting and filling positions and how to pursue professional development opportunities. This could be done through the Human Resources website as well as via print materials for the many employees who do not access the internet regularly.

(d) Acknowledge and address community perceptions and misperceptions about differences between and within "support" and "administrative" staff. We are aware that the only formal difference between these two categories lies in their hourly (non-exempt) vs. salaried (exempt) status. Yet any insistence that this is the only difference between these groups of valued employees overlooks the many unacknowledged class issues that negatively impact the morale of support staff. We think it important that senior staff members take direct steps to improve the campus community's understanding of support staff members' invaluable contributions to the College's mission

It is also important to acknowledge the diversity of ways in which staff members contribute to the core educational mission of the College. The contexts of staff interactions with or separation from students vary significantly. Staff educators with doctorates or other terminal degrees (e.g., librarians, deans, academic resources staff) and Snack Bar servers both interact with students daily. Some senior staff members and other administrators rarely speak with students. "Hidden" aspects of staff members' important roles should be acknowledged and celebrated for the benefit and education of the full campus community.

(e) Encourage Williams senior staff to include or continue to include "faculty and staff" in most of their addresses. This measure would help strengthen morale and model a campus climate of mutual respect and earned recognition. In short, it is necessary to identify ways to promote public recognition of contributions through simple symbolic gestures and beyond. The compression of status of all non-faculty at Williams to one all-inclusive, low-caste-like, seldom recognized category remains an issue through which staff feel overlooked as members of the community.

4. Make explicit how Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action policies are carried out.

5. Create a position of ombudsperson.

In the absence of an ombudsperson, some staff members go to the Office of Human Resources for questions or complaints about workplace issues; others turn to senior staff members to whom their office reports. Neither of these scenarios is generally perceived to be set up to provide an objective, external review of any discriminatory issue. This is in part because of the way Williams often operates as a “family,” so there are fears that College personnel may have confidential conversations with one’s supervisor. There needs to be an official ombudsperson who is separate and removed from human resources staff. This position might best function out of the Office for Strategic Planning and Institutional Diversity. One cost-effective model would be to share an ombudsperson employed by other regional institutions.

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