# Report on the Review of the UBC Faculty of Science Plan to Support a Diverse Faculty

To:	Professor Simon Peacock, Dean, UBC Faculty of Science	
From:	Ana Mari Cauce Dean of Arts and Sciences University of Washington	Angela Hildyard Vice-President, Human Resources & Equity University of Toronto
Date:	April 28, 2008	
Re:	Report on the review of the Faculty of Science plan to support a diverse faculty.	

We are pleased to submit this brief report following our two day review of the *Faculty of Science Plan to Support a Diverse Faculty*. Let us start by expressing our appreciation to you and your colleagues for your warm reception and your willingness to engage in frank and open discussion with us.

As we outlined to you in the oral presentation of our feedback, we were both impressed by the range of activities that the Faculty has developed to enhance the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty. Clearly there is significant commitment from faculty colleagues and you are already initiating many "exemplary practices". Our comments and recommendations, therefore, should be viewed as building upon what you have already committed to do. We also include recommendations that we believe should be initiated and supported by the University as a whole.

#### **Recommendations for the Faculty of Science**

#### **Equity and Diversity**

In addressing equity and diversity issues, progressive organizations focus not only upon women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal people and sexual minorities, but also upon the intersectionality of equity issues. In other words, diversity is multidimensional and equity initiatives in support of diversity also need to be multidimensional. Gender is a very good initial lens, but we urge you to consider the full range of diversities that our employees bring to the workplace.

#### Recruitment

You have made a number of excellent suggestions in your plan. We would simply emphasize the importance of creating a strong, diverse candidate pool with a process that ensures that there is decanal overview of the breadth of that pool. We also suggest that an annual report be prepared that notes the size of the pool, the number of short listed candidates, the number of offers made to

women and the number of such offers that are rejected. Finally, we are mindful of the fact few Chairs have extensive experience in managing a search and so timely "training" for Chairs and Committees can be extremely helpful.

There do appear to be differences across the departments with respect to teaching buy outs for pre tenured faculty. Clearly there are good reasons for differences across the disciplines; however a clear policy and transparency of process and decision making is helpful.

Partner hires, assistance with housing are clearly important issues and our suggestion is that these be addressed by the University (see below).

### Retention

We endorse your proposal to run workshops to share exemplary practice in terms of support for women, and others, in terms of maternity, adoption and parental leaves, managing the tenure process and so on. Transparency, consistency and fairness are very important.

We heard quite different views regarding retention payments – again we encourage transparency, consistency and fairness by means of clearly articulated policies.

### Mentoring

Although there is clearly an expectation that newly appointed faculty will be mentored by senior colleagues, it was not apparent to us that this is undertaken in a consistent manner across the departments. We were also concerned by the fact that, as we understand your tenure process, pretenured faculty are being mentored by individuals who will subsequently have a vote/voice in whether or not they are tenured. This does make it difficult for junior faculty to raise problems they may be having for fear that they will be judged negatively. We urge you to explore the option of providing mentors who are outside the pre-tenured faculty member's home department. Alternatively, perhaps each pre-tenured faculty member may be assigned to two mentors – one from his or her department and one from elsewhere within the Faculty.

Finally, as you are well aware, there is growing concern that many young women within the physical and life sciences are reluctant to consider a career in academia due to the conflicts they anticipate they will experience managing the tenure process, running a lab and raising a family. Clearly, universities will need to reconsider the demands being placed on these young women. In the meantime, we recommend that you consider developing a mentoring program for young women graduate students with a goal of encouraging them to continue as academics.

# Networking

The impact and value of informal networking opportunities should never be underestimated and we note that at various times former colleagues in the Faculty have hosted lunches etc. We urge the Faculty to provide support for the continuation of these networks.

## **Recommendations for the Provost**

#### **Employee Engagement**

Many of the issues you are attempting to address, for example work related stress, work life balance, the extent to which one feels valued as an employee, one's perception of institutional decision making and so on fall within the overall rubric of employee engagement. While employee satisfaction surveys have been used within the private and the broad public sectors for some time, few universities have used them. A comprehensive survey will provide benchmark data for the institution as a whole as well as for individual Faculties.

The University of Toronto has recently undertaken a very comprehensive faculty and staff experience survey. Based on the information – both quantitative and qualitative – institutional working groups have been established to address such issues as Work Load, Professional Development, Equity, and individual faculties have also created their own working groups. The U of T survey – which includes questions unique to U of T, questions for which there is external (non university) benchmarking data, plus questions for faculty developed in consultation with AAU<sup>\*</sup>) colleagues – is now being used by other institutions. UBC may wish to consider using the survey.

### **Family Care Office**

The recruitment and retention of faculty – as well as senior administrative staff – involves not only the individual recruit but also the partner and the immediate family of the recruit. Issues of partner hires, support for non academic partners in seeking employment, assistance with finding affordable housing, assistance with finding quality child care, assistance with finding quality elder care and so on are complex and time consuming. A number of institutions have created a central office that can provide support and advice to the Chairs of search committees, meet with short listed candidates (and answer questions that candidates may be reluctant to raise with the Committee) and then, once hired, continue to support employees during their orientation. A Family Care office can also broker institutional arrangements with child care/elder care providers and so on.

We urge UBC to consider the establishment of a Family Care Office.

# Housing

It is clear that the UBC housing market creates an interesting challenge especially as North American universities enter a recruitment cycle that is predicted to be highly competitive. This is obviously an institutional issue and not one that can easily be addressed at the Faculty level. We do urge the University to develop a range of approaches to address your unique housing issues.

# **Performance Indicators**

The Faculty has outlined a number of excellent measures and indicators to assess the impact of their initiatives. We suggest that there is a greater degree of accountability – at every level of the University – when performance indicators are created and reported upon for the University as a whole. We urge the Provost to apply similar performance indicators to every Faculty at UBC and, in deed, to work with each Faculty in creating additional measures.

<sup>\*)</sup> AAU: Association of American Universities, www.aau.edu