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Fostering a Culture of Scholarship

A Culture of Scholarship

It is a laudable goal for Salve Regina University to become a University of Distinction. This implies that the University will attain excellence in its facilities, its curriculum, its student profile, and its faculty. Faculty excellence manifests itself in several ways: teaching performance; service to the university or community; and scholarship. Teaching and service are part and parcel of the quotidian life of the university and faculty. Scholarship demands that faculty members reach outside of the daily routine and seek out opportunities to work with their peers, to explore research interests, and to produce a range of discipline-specific products, including lectures, journal articles, monographs, exhibitions, and performances. The question is: how can the faculty and university foster a culture that helps such scholarship thrive?

Role of the Faculty

The faculty is responsible for ensuring that the academic climate of Salve Regina University is vital, challenging, creative, and topically relevant. To this end, faculty members must be active in their respective fields. Faculty members should subscribe to discipline-appropriate professional organizations and publications, and should be encouraged to volunteer for leadership roles on outside organizational and editorial boards. Regular attendance at national and international conferences (with or without the presentation of a paper) is essential for the development of faculty members who are current, networked, and engaged in their disciplines.

All faculty members—junior, mid-career and senior—should be encouraged to set lofty goals and to attain the highest standards in their own personal academic scholarship. At times, this scholarship may be linked to engagement with professional organizations. At other times, this can be a collaborative effort with colleagues within or outside the university. Often, however, this is a solitary quest involving a highly specialized area of research. Whatever the particular circumstance for a given faculty member, there needs to be the strong support of both peers and the administration to provide the incentive and means to undertake such scholarship.

Role of the Administration

The administration needs to provide an atmosphere in which scholarship in all of its permutations is highly valued and adequately supported. In order to encourage both senior and junior faculty, and to attract outstanding new faculty, the university must allocate more resources for scholarly pursuits, conference attendance, and sabbaticals. These are the primary activities by which faculty members keep current, engaged, and relevant in their fields.

Recommendations

The reality of becoming a University of Distinction and fostering a culture of scholarship will not be reached without the sincere will of the institution to commit more resources than are presently provided. Research indicates that peer institutions have exhibited a consistently higher level of support for faculty scholarship. FACSB proposes the following increases and changes in the existing policies to foster a culture of scholarship and promote the image of a University of Distinction:

- **Faculty Development Funds.** The current sum of \$500 per year available from the administration for each faculty member should be increased significantly. \$2,000 is an amount generally in keeping with other Tier II peer institutions. These peer institutions also allow faculty to apply for additional faculty development funds in a competitive manner.
- **Travel Funds.** Each faculty member should have available from the administration up to \$2,000 per year for conference attendance, conference presentations, or for scholarship requiring travel. This is especially important for junior faculty who need to be encouraged to stay current in their respective fields. Regular attendance at professional meetings is an essential part of being an active professional. The university should also make a special effort to encourage junior faculty to engage in scholarship outside of the classroom.
- **Sabbaticals.** Funding for sabbaticals should be commensurate with the quality of sabbatical proposals submitted by the faculty at large. Up to five sabbaticals should be available per academic year, a number that approaches our Tier II peer institutions.

MOTION

Be it resolved that the Faculty Assembly endorses the document *Fostering a Culture of Scholarship*. This document puts forth a concrete proposal for continuing and adequate support from the University for scholarship development funds, travel funds, and sabbaticals.