

FAS Senate

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Informal report of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Senate Ad Hoc Diversity Committee on the Faculty Resources Committee (FRC)

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During the 2018-2019 academic year, the Senate Diversity Committee undertook an informal survey on the efficacy of the Faculty Resource Committee (FRC), particularly as its work relates to efforts to enhance the diversity of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). The purpose of the FRC is to review requests from departments and programs for ladder faculty resources and searches and make recommendations to the FAS Dean on search approvals. The FRC is chaired by the Dean of the FAS and includes the Deans of the Graduate School and Yale College, the divisional Deans (Humanities, Social Science, Science, and the School of Engineering & Applied Science), the chairs of the area advisory committees, and five additional FAS faculty members. The FRC was established during the 2015-2016 academic year as part of the review process conducted by the Academic Review Committee (ARC). The purpose of the ARC process was to regularize the number of faculty “slots” in the FAS, bringing the number of slots on the books from 880 to 770 (with a 10% vacancy rate), and to provide a sustainable system for balancing departmental autonomy with FAS-wide planning. The FRC has now been in place for four years, and it is therefore timely to make an initial evaluation of how well administrators and department chairs feel that the FRC system is working, how well the system is serving faculty diversity goals, and what improvements could potentially be made.

The diversity committee carried out interviews with nine individuals (four deans and five current or recent department chairs) for this effort. The departments were selected to encompass a range of departmental sizes and spanned across the humanities, social science, and science disciplines. In general, our interviews documented somewhat of a disconnect between how administrators and chairs view the FRC process; however, there was some praise for the system, as well as useful critiques, from both groups.

This report is in two parts. In the first part, we summarize key observations and comments that emerged from our interviews. The purpose of this portion of the report is informational; this is intended to communicate perceptions (whether grounded or not) about the FRC system among administrators and chairs. During our interviews, we found that some important comments emerged that were only tangentially related to the FRC system itself, but were instead related to the recruitment and hiring process more generally, or related to the issue of diversifying the faculty. We have included some of these observations for completeness, as they shed important light on how chairs and administrators view the overall system of faculty hiring. In the second part of the report, we present five recommendations from our committee, informed by our survey results.

1. Summary of key observations and perceptions

From administrators:

- The FRC/slot system works well as an instrument for gathering information across the FAS. However, it is not yet functioning optimally as a system for managing resources, at least at the level of growing and pruning different parts of the FAS in ways that involve large-scale redistribution of slots across units and divisions.
- The FRC (along with the tenure appointments committees, or TACs) provides a wider range of faculty with the opportunity to understand other departments and divisions than would be possible otherwise.
- The FRC receives strong proposals for searches from departments. For the most part, departments are making good-faith efforts to make progress on faculty diversity (with some differences across divisions and units).
- The FRC has the right people in the room for decision-making and coordination.
- The system is neither better nor worse than the old system when it comes to the goal of growing the ladder faculty to the target number of 700.
- The hiring process is labor intensive and time-consuming on all sides. At least some of this is due not to the FRC itself, but rather to other aspects of the system, including federal mandates around equal opportunity and heavy faculty involvement in the FAS tenure system (for tenured appointments).
- The FRC system is working well for enhancing diversity in the humanities, but less so for the other divisions (perhaps in part because additional constraints, including space and startup resources, also constrain hiring in these areas).
- The FRC system should be given a grade of B- when it comes to enhancing diversity. The situation could be improved if every department developed a formal diversity plan, and the FRC read all search proposals against that plan.
- The Dean of Diversity should play a role in overseeing the composition of the Tenure Appointments/Advisory Committees and be involved in searches.

From department chairs:

- Without exception, chairs we interviewed found the hiring process to be highly labor intensive (for a large variety of reasons, many of which involves factors that are external to the FRC itself). They expressed some doubt that the FRC system will allow for the faculty size to grow to 700 and thus catch up with the deficit.
- Departures take a minute, but recruitments take a year; the FRC system is seen as contributing to the length of the hiring process.
- The annual application to the FRC creates a psychology that makes long-range planning less likely, and short-term planning on matters of immediacy more likely.
- Chairs would like to see more cluster hiring (to serve not just diversity goals, but also the goals of building fields towards the 21st century) and themed hiring (for example, proposals to hire across departments or disciplines aimed at certain themes). Chairs express uncertainty as to how the current FRC system could facilitate these types of hires.
- Chairs are frustrated by the limitations on the hiring process imposed by understaffing in the FAS Dean's office. Chairs see the processes of recruitment and appointment as bigger challenges than obtaining permission to search. While each of these issues is only tangentially related to the FRC itself, solutions to these problems may involve aspects of the FRC system.
- Even departments that have generally had all of their search requests approved perceive some aspects of the FRC system, as well as the appointment process, as impinging on departmental autonomy and discipline-specific judgement.
- There is a perception among chairs that the calendar of search request submission and replies seems poorly timed for established calendars for searching and recruiting in some fields.
- Chairs in science departments expressed confusion about how diversity hiring is supposed to work under the new FRC system. Under the old (pre-2010) diversity initiative, many science departments successfully made diversity hires by identifying multiple exceptional candidates from a single search and making multiple offers. This style of hiring seems to be precluded under the new FRC system (or at least that is the perception), so chairs are uncertain about how to go about proposing hires that enhance diversity, particularly at the junior level.
- Some chairs perceive that it is easier to make diversity hires at the level of established, senior stars; however, if we want to improve the diversity profile of the academy as a whole, and of individual fields, then hiring at the early career level is a valuable strategy.

From both administrators and chairs:

- Some members of both groups wondered whether there is a way to fast-track certain cases, particularly for lateral hires of established stars. On the other hand, some administrators pointed out that flexibility in timelines does exist, but it may not be publicized widely enough.

2. Recommendations

Based on these observations, our committee makes the following five recommendations:

- **Recommendation #1:** We recommend that each department be asked to develop a formal diversity plan, appropriate to the specific department and discipline, and that proposals to the FRC be evaluated in the context of that plan. We recognize that this will require effort and time on the part of departmental faculty and chairs; however, the benefits of careful planning around diversity in the context of specific departments and disciplines may well outweigh this cost.
- **Recommendation #2:** We recommend that the FAS Dean's Office develop a set of guidelines for departments to consider when proposing hires that serve diversity goals. Right now, there is considerable confusion among chairs about what administrators are looking for when they evaluate proposals for diversity hires, and there is confusion about how diversity hiring works with the new FRC system. The Dean's Office should clearly articulate to chairs how proposals for diversity hires will be evaluated, and what the characteristics of successful proposals look like. This guidance could take the form of a pamphlet, a one-pager, a presentation at a Chairs meeting, or some combination of these.
- **Recommendation #3:** We urge the Dean's Office and the FRC to reexamine the timeframes and deadlines for search requests and approvals, and consider whether moving the timeline up, and/or introducing additional flexibility, might better serve the hiring system. To the extent that flexibility already exists in the system, it should be better publicized to departments and chairs.
- **Recommendation #4:** We recommend that in conversations about optimal timeframes for search requests and approvals, the need for target of opportunity hiring to move faster than the regular process be given particular emphasis. Again, to the extent that there is already flexibility in the timeframes for target of opportunity hires, this should be communicated clearly to departments and chairs.
- **Recommendation #5:** We urge the FRC to continue to incentivize departments to hire faculty that bring diversity along many dimensions. These incentives should encourage departments to hire diverse faculty across all levels, with an emphasis on early to mid-career faculty.