

CLA Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Hiring Practices

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In December 2022, the CLA Faculty Senate Agenda Committee charged us with looking into hiring practices in the college following concerns voiced by faculty who have expressed frustration with their diminishing role in the hiring process and reports that departmental decisions on hiring have been overridden by the CLA administration. We studied the Purdue University hiring guidelines and crafted a Qualtrics report to get the input of faculty, department heads, and the CLA administration. As a committee we have analyzed the results in a **quantitative and qualitative manner** that adheres to our professional scholarly standards. Below is a **data-driven** report on our findings.

Overview

The college has made tremendous inroads in developing new lines for faculty hires in many but not all programs since 2019, which is a testament to the leadership of Dean Reingold and the success of initiatives like the Cornerstone program. The Covid-19 pandemic has not slowed down hiring in most departments, as it has in many other universities across the country. However, such rapid growth during the pandemic has generated new challenges for the hiring process, and many faculty respondents expressed their concerns about how streamlined virtual visits and repeated closed-door decisions for new hires have brought confusion, frustration, and deep inequities in terms of distribution of hiring across departments and programs.

We sent a survey to the CLA Faculty listserv (517 recipients of which 285 recipients are tenured/tenure track or clinical faculty) composed of 7 questions asking about faculty knowledge and experiences of all aspects of the hiring process.

Questions:

- 1) By what process does your unit develop and submit authorization requests for new faculty lines?
- 2) To your knowledge, how is the search committee for a new hire formed in your academic unit(s)? What specific measures did your unit take to ensure that the search committee was diverse and also representative of the faculty?
- 3) How is a job description formulated and by whom in your unit?
- 4) Which measures does your unit take to ensure a diverse pool of candidates?
- 5) To your knowledge, how is a candidate chosen as a finalist in your unit? How many candidates visited campus for your most recent position? Is the visit virtual or in-person?
- 6) To your knowledge, how was faculty input regarding the suitability of a candidate acquired in your unit(s)? I.e., was there a discussion, a vote? Was there an internal committee that chose a candidate, a Qualtrics survey, etc.? Please list all opportunities for sharing input, to your knowledge, even if you did not take advantage of such opportunities.
- 7) What other questions and concerns, if any, related to the hiring of faculty would you like to share with the committee?

Response:

75 recipients took the survey (**26% of tenured/tenure track or clinical faculty**). While respondents didn't answer every question, at least 60 people answered each question. Respondents identified themselves from programs and departments across the College of Liberal Arts and identified themselves across ranks. We summarized the data to maintain anonymity. In the final question on the survey, which was open-ended and asked participants to share any general questions or concerns about hiring procedures, only **3 out of 61** respondents offered an overall positive assessment of current hiring practices.

This report will provide some broad assessments of the two major issues that surfaced repeatedly during the survey results. Then, we compiled specific examples to showcase **representative** faculty input and highlight some analytical data trends.

1) Deep Concerns about a Lack of Shared Governance.

Lack of shared governance is the biggest issue that emerged in the responses. This result came out in responses to every question, especially the first and last question. Time and time again, respondents also expressed confusion about how the hiring process works. This lack of clarity has brought about frustration, anger, and feelings of disempowerment. Overwhelmingly, the survey showed that a **majority of respondents do not feel valued in the hiring process** and understood their expertise and knowledge of field to be disregarded. Many expressed concerns about the difference between human resource guidelines and practices that do not follow these guidelines. This has created a difficult work climate for many faculty members who have expressed concern about **morale** and their department's **ability to fulfill their research, teaching, and engagement missions.**

Questions	Satisfied with level of faculty input/governance	Did not address the issue	Unsatisfied with level of faculty input/governance	Total Responses
Q1: By what process does your unit develop and submit authorization requests for new faculty lines?	7	23	36	66
Q7: What other concerns, if any, related to the hiring of faculty would you like to share with the committee?	2	19	39	60

■ Identified Reasons:

- Lack of transparency
 - **29/60 faculty** highlighted this as a primary concern in response to Question 7.
- Difference between stated HR policies and practice
 - “In theory, the search committee receives writing samples, letter of recommendations, CVs, and cover letters; the committees interview a long list of candidates and then discuss the narrowing of the list to three. In practice, the dean hand-selects the short list.”
- Divides between departments and dean’s office
 - “We are told, not consulted in a unilateral process.”
 - “I’m very concerned about the centralization of hiring priorities by the Dean’s office, lack of input from faculty regarding hiring priorities. Also concerned about the Dean’s office rejecting some finalists for reasons not specified in the job advertisement.”
- Disruption caused by covid-19
- Lack of faculty expertise in shaping the selection process
 - **42/60 (70%)** respondents highlighted this issue in response to Question 7.
“There’s a discussion and a vote. But it seems clear-cut—at least in the most recent round of searches—this is meaningless, especially since hires are made regardless of faculty input. Obviously, it alienates faculty members, who not surprisingly feel alienated from the searches.”

■ Perceived Consequences:

- Negative work climate
- Ineffective DEI efforts
 - “The dean is now driving the job descriptions. The search committee can offer very minor suggestions... so there is zero general faculty input. In the past two years, our positions were defined in ways where there are essentially no African-American candidates, very few Latino/Latina candidates, and quite limited number of women.”
 - Respondents also noted how inaction on filling teaching/research lines for faculty of color and from other underrepresented groups (e.g., African American studies, African American literature and culture, Indigenous studies, Latino/a studies, Asian American Studies) represents a failure to uphold Purdue’s DEI initiatives and contributes to and further amplifies the lack of diversity at Purdue and in the CLA, in comparison to peer institutions.
- Concerns over the quality and fit of candidates and, as a result, departments’ national and international reputation.
 - “Sadly, the process which was marred by a lack of transparency and a disregard for the wishes of the department has resulted in general disillusionment by most members of the department and offers made to several very weak candidates.”

Impact on teaching and quality of educational programs (i.e. limitations on courses offered and research areas to support undergraduate and graduate education)

2) Inconsistent practices across the college and even within programs

The hiring process **varies wildly** across the college. It appears in some departments people have been given multiple opportunities to meet and influence the process, and in other departments these opportunities are very scarce. Some search committees have felt empowered, while others feel that selection is arbitrary without taking into consideration their expertise. Some departments offer an opportunity to vote or convey their feedback, but others do not give faculty a vote or a say in who gets hired. There are **large inconsistencies** within departments and programs, which seem built on inconsistencies in the college and made more difficult because of **lack of transparency and trust in the administration**. These inconsistencies have created a perceived divide between the members of the departments and the dean's office.

■ Identified Reasons:

- Lack of transparency
 - **29/60 (48%)** of respondents to question 7 indicated concern over a lack of clarity or uncertainty regarding hiring practices.
- Confusion over the role of search committees and faculty participation in the evaluation process, including whether or not there is a vote on candidates.
 - “As a faculty member, I feel that we play a performative role and or thoughts or assessments do not matter to the Dean.”
- Unclear rationales for how lines are decided and allocated to departments and programs.
 - **Changing rationales** for how to select and receive faculty lines.
 - “One year it might be the number of majors, and the next year it would be how much the department brings in external funding, and the year after that, it might something else. We get it--these things might different from year to year. But it's impossible to plan ahead and the criteria might even change mid-year after he's already stated what he's looking for.”

■ Perceived Consequences:

- Ineffective DEI efforts
 - Participants noted that potential diversity hires were repeatedly stalled, and diverse pools were undermined by the narrow constraints of lines provided by the Dean's Office.
 - According to one respondent: “Part of our training has been that diversity begets diversity—that is, having multiple people who are part of an underrepresented groups makes it easier for all of them to succeed and feel welcome. But the CLA policy does not seem to follow these principles.”
 - Participants highlighted inequalities embedded with new ranking systems of candidates introduced by the dean's office that prioritize Ivy league and AAU affiliated pedigrees.
 - “That explicitly excludes candidates from HBCU's and numerous other PhD granting institutions that students from historically marginalized communities might attend.”

- Questions about the legality of certain practices.
- Concern over quality of candidates with such narrow searches and small pools of candidates.
 - “CLA’s centralized micromanagement of hiring risks doing further damage to curricular, disciplinary, and intellectual coverage. CLA has been unable to retain, hire, or encourage scholars who bring diversity and critical perspectives to the university. Faculty expertise and shared governance are disregarded over chasing rankings.”
- Low morale and alienation of faculty members.
 - **55 respondents** noted alienation and negative work climate in response to the seven questions.
 - Many respondents noted how long-term hiring freezes harm morale and curb the introduction of innovative and diverse ideas and practices, ultimately threatening the quality of faculty research, teaching, and engagement.

Recommended Action:

75 faculty (26% of tenured/tenure-track and clinical faculty in the college) took the time to share detailed feedback on their engagement with the hiring process and at least **70% mentioned a disregard for faculty participation in the hiring process**. Respondents came from every department in the CLA and from all ranks of tenure, as well as clinical faculty. Lack of clarity and inconsistent practices are causing confusion and frustration across the College of Liberal Arts faculty and having a negative impact on workplace climate throughout the CLA, ultimately dampening creativity and innovation in research and teaching. Moreover, while we could find broad (and frequently vague) university guidelines for hiring, many departments do not have detailed written guidelines for outlining specific hiring practices and procedures and/or are not sharing those guidelines with faculty or involving or updating all faculty during the hiring process.

- We recommend that the CLA Faculty Senate works with faculty members, department heads, and the dean’s office to develop a **“best practices” hiring guideline** that can foster productive conversations moving forward and bring more transparency to the process.
 - Understanding that departments and programs operate differently, we also recommend that department heads and faculty develop written guidelines and practices **at the department level** about specific hiring procedures in advance of launching a search. Such practices are commonplace across peer institutions in the Big Ten.
 - Such guidelines should specify procedures and processes **for involving** a wide and diverse number of faculty in the search process and **for communicating** the search process and outcomes effectively among colleagues.
- Given that pervasive complaints surrounding faculty governance repeatedly surfaced and a perceived divide between the administration and faculty members has emerged, we recommend that the CLA Faculty Senate leadership help cultivate **concrete opportunities for constructive conversations** about hiring initiatives and practices to model collegial collaboration and effective and efficient faculty governance for the broader university.

- For example, one respondent offered one constructive suggestion that might serve as a basis for hiring practices that could come out of these conversations to maintain collegial faculty governance. “In hiring, the Dean should very rarely go against the recommendations of the department, and if he does go against the recommendations, then a detailed explanation of why should be provided. This is the minimum that collegial governance requires, and in the case of hiring, collegial governance is essential for academic freedom.”
- Another respondent offered a constructive suggestion that might help provide more accountability on DEI efforts during searches. “I would like DEI tracking to occur when candidates complete the submission and for a report to be given to the search committee chair [to provide] accurate data and department and college level oversight” of DEI practices.

The future reputation of Purdue University’s College of Liberal Arts and the quality of faculty production as researchers and educators depend on the quality of our hiring searches. If faculty, the experts in these fields, are not involved in or feel alienated from the hiring of their own colleagues, we risk future internal strife, dysfunctional programs, diminishing retention of both new and senior faculty as well as students, and an unwillingness to perform the service that is needed for our college to thrive.