Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty  JANUARY 2022

As we launch into a new calendar year, I am happy to revive the provost’s office newsletter dedicated to sharing faculty development resources, programs and initiatives grounded in Beverly D. Tatum’s ABCs approach to create engaged and inclusive academic communities: Affirming Identity, Building Community and Cultivating Leadership.

I am grateful for the opportunity to interact with and support faculty regularly, starting with the New Faculty Orientation spread over the summer and followed by faculty development sessions offered almost every week of the academic year. These opportunities to connect with my colleagues, sustain and build community, and ensure continuity are essential to my work and to maintaining momentum—especially during these unprecedented times. I acknowledge the additional burdens the pandemic imposes on all of us. I have been impressed with your resilience and dedication to your students.

Finally, I am greatly appreciative of my collaboration with Hayley Spizz, faculty policies administrator, who is my PDOF* partner in the faculty development work.

Hélène Visentin  
Associate Dean of the Faculty/Dean for Academic Development

* PDOF: Provost and Dean of the Faculty—one of Smith’s many acronyms.
Our faculty development work falls into the following categories

1. Toward Equity

We launched three equity-focused initiatives, as sustained and purposeful actions are needed to build a healthy and more equitable community of teachers-scholars.

The Anti-racist Learning Community (ALC) for Faculty and Staff Who Teach: Floyd Cheung and I convened a group of about 20 participants actively engaged in learning together and exploring ways to deepen anti-racist principles in our engagements with students, colleagues, disciplines and communities. We opened our final fall 2021 session to the broader community for a presentation by Tia Brown McNair, Vice President in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Student Success at AAC&U and co-author of From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education (2021). McNair’s session “Using Equity-Minded Strategies to Advance Anti-Racist Curricular Reform” allowed us to deepen our learning about an equity-minded approach to higher education and made us aware of the importance of data to effect curricular reform. Many ALC members are committed to continuing the work during the spring semester via a Sherrerd Teaching Circle. Two projects are emerging: (1) encouraging syllabus review for inclusiveness; and (2) mentoring across power differences.

Support for Non–Tenure-Track Faculty: The provost’s office put new mechanisms in place to better support NTT faculty in non-renewable positions in navigating and being successful during their time at Smith. We created a mentoring program (see next page), curated a list of resources, and conducted a brief survey about visibility and inclusion in their home departments/programs and about communication with their chairs. Each semester, we hold an open meeting to establish a channel of communication between NTT faculty and the provost’s office, share relevant information, and address questions and concerns. Concurrently, we are working with chairs to develop a positive culture and a more inclusive environment so NTT faculty feel welcomed and supported.

The Faculty Workload Equity Working Group: Workload equity has surfaced as a critical issue facing a large number of faculty members at Smith. This is particularly true for women and BIPOC faculty, and the pandemic has exacerbated the issue. Workload equity has far-reaching impacts on faculty satisfaction, retention and productivity, as well as tenure and promotion outcomes and timelines. In concert with the Office of Institutional Research, a small working group of department chairs is currently piloting a program that aims at bringing more transparency, clarity and accountability around faculty workload within academic units. Our work is grounded in the American Council on Education’s 2021 report Equity-Minded Faculty Workloads. What We Can Do and Should Do Now.
2. Onboarding and Mentoring New Faculty

This past summer, we welcomed 75 new members. This is a large and diverse group composed of tenured and tenure-track faculty, visiting assistant and associate professors, full-time and part-time lecturers, laboratory instructors and post-doctoral fellows.

To onboard new faculty, integrate them into our community, and ensure a healthy departmental climate and faculty success, the provost’s office administers three mentoring programs:

- The Board of Counselors
- Departmental and Program Mentoring
- Non-Tenure-Track Mentoring Team—a newly developed program to support all non–tenure-track faculty who are in positions that are not renewable.

In September 2021, we offered a workshop “Mentoring BIPOC Faculty—Strategies for Inclusion (not Reproduction)” facilitated by Chavella Pittman, professor of sociology at Dominican University and founder of Effective & Efficient Faculty. In addition to working with ally administrators and faculty, Pittman is providing consultation sessions to BIPOC faculty and staff who teach during the spring semester.

Because there are myriad ways to mentor well and mentoring is improvable, the provost’s office will be hosting a late August 2022 workshop focused on mentoring across differences and targeted to all faculty who have a mentoring role at Smith.

3. Building Communities of Support

To feel connected, I encourage you to develop a support network and explore the many campus programs and events that foster an inclusive and welcoming environment. You can attend the weekly Liberal Arts and/or Sigma Xi Luncheons. The Sherrerd Center offers a variety of ways to connect with each other: schedule a conversation with one of the Sherrerd Teaching Mentors, attend a Teaching Circle and/or a Teaching Arts Luncheon. This semester the Sherrerd Center and the Kahn Institute are collaborating on a three-part series titled “Democratizing the Classroom.” You might also be interested in reaching out to the Learning, Research and Technology team which offers workshops, seminars, pedagogical consultations, and many other ways to connect and collaborate.

You can join an affinity group under the auspices of the Office for Equity and Inclusion. There are also three junior faculty groups including Junior Faculty in Science and Engineering (contact Alicia Grubb or Niveen Ismail), the Group of Faculty of Color (contact Candice Price), and the Junior Faculty in the Humanities (contact Thomas Roberts or Rebecca Worsham).

Last semester, I hosted monthly cohort lunches for assistant professors, and this coming spring I will meet with a cohort of associate professors. We hosted a January 31 Cohort Bridge Lunch for those assistant professors who participated in the fall cohort lunches and those associate professors who will participate in the spring cohort lunches.
2. Accessing Resources to Meet Your Needs and Develop Skills

For an overview, explore the Faculty Development Map that charts—by topic, sponsor, and position/career stage—the range of resources faculty can access to support their work. To identify funding opportunities that uniquely match your scholarly profile, you can use the Smith’s grant research tool Pivot. Also, remember to check the Smith Moneybook regularly for internal grants and fellowships for research and curricular development. The deadline for proposals for 2022–23 endowed fellowships is February 14, 2022.

I strongly encourage you to explore the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD) core curriculum on such topics as “Every Semester Needs a Plan,” “How to Develop a Daily Writing Practice,” “Mastering Academic Time Management.” You might be interested in attending upcoming live webinars or watching previous recordings. Because an institution like Smith plays a critical role in community and public engagement, I want to draw your attention to NCFDD guest webinars on “Pivot to Public Writing” (March 15, 2–3 p.m.) and “How to Translate Your Research for a General Audience” (April 19, 2–3 p.m.). I also encourage you to explore the NCFDD “tough times” and COVID-19 self-care resources. Smith College is an institutional member, which allows all members of our community to access NCFDD professional development resources for free.

5. (Re)creating a Community of Scholars

With the return to in-person work, the provost’s office offers monthly write-on-site opportunities combined with a research accountability group to allow faculty to have large blocks of uninterrupted time and to connect with a community of support and accountability. During Interterm 2022, we organized a Write-on-Zoom retreat and offered a workshop on goal-setting. We remain hopeful that we will be able to resume write-on-site sessions for the spring semester. If you are committed to developing a writing routine, you can also participate in the NCFDD monthly writing challenge and/or register for the NCFDD 14-day writing challenge on March 14–27 for free (advance registration is required.)

My office is again partnering with Grants and Sponsored Programs to hear from a panel of colleagues with success in competitive grants and fellowships external to Smith this March. At that session, we will also provide information about the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program as the 2023–24 competition opens in February 2022. Lastly, Smith will be co-hosting a “Publishing Day” for Five College faculty toward the end of May. Stay tuned!