Executive Summary

In September 2019, President Thomas LeBlanc announced world-class faculty as a top priority for the George Washington University. Our ability to meet the many demands of our research and teaching missions requires a thoughtful balance of faculty across disciplines and ranks with a focus on engagement in our intellectual community. The charge to the World-Class Faculty (WCF) committee was to develop a strategy to recruit, retain, and promote an intellectually vibrant faculty that leverages our history, location, and emerging opportunities.

The WCF committee took its charge seriously. As educators, researchers, and scholars, GW faculty are dedicated to the tenets of our mission and are integral as we aspire to preeminence as a comprehensive, global, research University. The WCF committee established five guiding principles, two primary goals, and six initiatives focused on developing an environment where our nearly 3,100 faculty can become leaders in their respective disciplines and where GW's nationwide prominence is magnified.

Our recommendations and priorities reflect one overarching aim – to position GW as a center of ever increasing excellence in learning, innovation, and ideas and as a magnet for strategic investment for the future.

GW is a collection of schools, departments, and programs, each of which has its own unique personality, needs, and priorities. These differences should be celebrated and encouraged since it is this diversity that attracts faculty, students, and ultimately, funders. Our goals focus, first on strengthening our tenured and tenure-track faculty who are the intellectual and educational backbone of any world-class academic institution; and second, on leveraging our location to build programs for recruiting renowned teaching, research, clinical, and practice faculty (non-tenured/non-tenure-track). It is important for each school to deliberately adapt the committee’s recommendations to appropriately fit the portfolio of different categories of faculty. Recognizing that in some particular schools certain categories of faculty play an especially important role, more closely parallel to the tenure-track faculty, like the medical clinical faculty in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences. Through this document, discussions of the tenured and tenure-track faculty are likely applicable to medical clinical faculty, as well as perhaps other categories of faculty. In order to elevate all faculty, the committee prioritized two goals in response to the charge:

Goal 1: Faculty Excellence and Diversity

Goal 2: Distinguished Faculty
In preparing our recommendations, we incorporated relevant reports and studies (such as the 2019 Colonial Group Faculty Survey), information provided by the Office of Faculty Affairs, and information and feedback gathered through a University-wide town hall, ideas submitted to the committee through our website, discussions with individuals, and feedback from school and department faculty meetings. We also benefitted greatly from our conversation with and recommendations provided by the Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement about ways to recruit, promote, and retain a diverse faculty.

**Current State**

We begin by noting our committee task: to develop a strategy to recruit, retain, and promote an intellectually vibrant faculty – across all categories of faculty – that leverages our strengths while preparing the University for emerging opportunities. This charge – contained in the President’s invitation letter to the members of this committee – has proven central to our thinking about how to view the challenge that lies ahead. On this score, we think it is important to stress how deeply our faculty itself recognizes our current shortcomings.

The 2019 Colonial Group Faculty Survey is not a highly sophisticated survey instrument, and its questions could be more refined and nuanced. Nonetheless, the results that are relevant to our committee charge are concerning. Standing out among the many answers to general questions is one in particular: compared to the other universities included in this market basket, GW faculty are substantially less likely to report high satisfaction with the intellectual life of the University and far less likely to be very satisfied with overall faculty research and scholarship. This should disturb us all, since it is evident to our own faculty that we could be a far stronger institution.

Faculty Affairs data show that in terms of current numbers, GW has 883 tenured and tenure-track faculty, who are complemented by 1,702 non-tenured and non-tenure-track faculty, and an additional 506 faculty who specialize in teaching and research and whose contracts differ from those used for faculty in the tenured or tenure-track class. The University also holds a number of endowed positions, including 80 professors, 23 chairs, and 1 dean.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats**

In terms of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the picture that emerges is quite mixed. We view our strengths as being in our location, the breadth of programs at the University, talented junior faculty, a commitment to interdisciplinary work (although it is too limited), and the extraordinary resources available in Washington D.C. both in terms of support for faculty research and the human talent on which to draw.

Our weaknesses can best be summed up as a failure to take advantage of our strengths. We don’t do enough to develop and advance rising tenure-track faculty. We have no clear mechanism for taking advantage of the incredible talent found in our region who would love to be part of a University in other than a traditional tenured and tenure-track position. Frequently, we don’t do enough to welcome those faculty who join
us to teach or do research – part-time or full-time. The diversity of our faculty needs to improve. Our faculty, overall, don’t feel that they receive the recognition they deserve. The tools for recruiting world-class faculty in the tenured and tenure-track categories are insufficient, since we cannot offer the kinds of packages that make us competitive.

Our opportunities are many, given where the University is located, and the principal threat is that other universities will figure out how to more rapidly build up faculty capacity and attract resources that might otherwise come to GW.

**Principles**

Our recommendations are grounded in certain basic principles, which themselves reflect several themes that have emerged as we have developed these recommendations: collaboration; competitiveness; diversity; faculty engagement, care, and wellness; and infrastructure and process flexibility. These themes are the foundation upon which we built this report.

**World-Class Faculty Principles:**

1. Promote preeminence by incentivizing, recognizing, rewarding, and supporting faculty excellence whose contributions can further University vision, values, and priorities.
2. Clearly communicate pathways to excellence and infuse resources to support multiple strategies and mentorship.
3. Facilitate collaborative faculty contributions within and across disciplines, academic units, and external organizations.
4. Streamline and continually improve administrative systems and enhance flexibility for recruiting, hiring, and retaining diverse world-class faculty.
5. Strengthen the tenured and tenure-track faculty in disciplines where it continues to be critical to do so, while also further leveraging the non-tenured and non-tenure-track faculty where appropriate for the teaching, research, and service of particular programs.

**Proposed Goals & Initiatives**

As GW approaches its bicentennial, we are in a unique position to look back upon our history and blaze the path to begin our next 100 years. This was an opportunity for the GW community to shape our future and the message was clear: *We must invest in our people, infrastructure, and ideas.* Our committee developed two primary goals, guided by the themes from our community input and the principles we developed. While multiple ideas were shared, these goals emerged as our top priorities based on impact and feasibility.

**Goal 1: Faculty Excellence and Diversity**

GW cultivates and includes diverse people and ideas. The goal of Faculty Excellence and Diversity is to acknowledge and celebrate our faculty’s varied backgrounds, cultures, disciplines, and experiences by implementing the recommended initiatives.
A. Create a Center for Faculty Excellence

We recommend establishment of a Center for Faculty Excellence, guided by an advisory group of senior faculty distinguished in their respective fields. The Center’s mission would be to recommend resources to support school teams and cross-school ventures focusing on attracting and retaining high-performing, world-class faculty. The Center would undertake the following activities:

- Support the recruitment and advancement of high-impact faculty across schools, departments, and programs, with an emphasis on areas identified by the University as key priorities for growth and visibility.
  - Partner with Deans to assess and benchmark the composition of the faculty and optimize the balance and quality of various faculty categories.
- Support efforts by each department/school/division/field to revise their criteria for appointment, promotion, and tenure (APT) to ensure that as faculty advance, they can achieve at levels that reflect those who stand at the top of their fields.
- Incentivize career advancement of tenure-track faculty through core research support, assistance in developing and securing grants and other external funding, a mentoring program, professional development opportunities, and training and support in teaching excellence.
- Help faculty who have achieved tenure to maintain excellence. In order to retain high-achieving faculty and encourage them to continually build on their achievements, make an ongoing investment in career advancement and professional development.
- Strengthen the ties between faculty and GW’s marquee academic activities such as programs, centers, institutes, and initiatives, whether they be within a particular school, span multiple schools, or overlay multiple schools, in order to ensure the integration of faculty into ongoing high-profile enterprises aimed at producing scholarship, advancing certain fields, and developing the collegial and collaborative relationships that are essential to intellectual growth.
  - Establish cross-disciplinary, cross-school outreach as a core expectation of all such programs, centers, and institutes and convene these special University-approved endeavors regularly to identify strategies for outreach to new and rising faculty, as well as those who have achieved tenure.
- Establish an onboarding guide for all faculty, but especially for non-tenured and non-tenure-track faculty, to acclimate them to the culture of GW, integrate their expertise, and communicate expectations shaped by our University values and WCF principles.

B. Develop a University-wide High-Impact Hiring Plan focused on diversity

Establish and continually update a High-Impact Faculty Hiring Plan focused on diversity with overarching aims that can help guide faculty searches, in collaboration with the Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement.

- Provide a framework for building out our aims as part of focused recruitment efforts, in order to ensure that all recruitments include an approved diversity plan,
contain clearly established evaluation criteria, and provide position descriptions that are sufficiently detailed so as to clarify the range of candidates who can satisfy the position description.

- Establish a faculty communication plan that ensures that new faculty are announced and welcomed across campus, relevant centers, institutes, and programs are notified, and that, where relevant, they are integrated into a mentoring plan for those faculty whose work spans multiple departments and schools.

C. Recognize and Celebrate Our GW Faculty

We must more broadly publicize and incentivize faculty successes, achievements, and opportunities for research, funding, and collaboration within and across schools.

- Establish practices to encourage collaboration that highlights opportunities and successes in cross-disciplinary teams.
  - Build a University-wide, cross-disciplinary research portal that documents proposed, current, and past faculty research to promote collaborations that is accessible and user-friendly.
  - Report cross-disciplinary successes and opportunities regularly.
- Recognize the contributions to practice (directorships, membership on prestigious outside advisory councils or committees for government or industry).
- Present teaching and research awards at last faculty meeting of the academic year and/or during a school award ceremony.
- Invest in three-year term chairs to be given to outstanding Associate Professors (generally newly promoted) to support their research. The chairs can be awarded in each school’s last faculty meeting of the year.
- Develop faculty success-focused communications highlighting awards and achievements through digital (emails, main webpage, etc.) and physical advertising.
- Establish GW News programming, a channel highlighting all GW news and events.
- Establish and communicate prominent and accessible paths with steps for faculty to take when published, awarded, or recognized to inform the GW community.
- Expand the existing collection of prizes and other honors bestowed on faculty to recognize unique achievements in the sciences, arts and letters, and professional disciplines.

D. Mentor Program

Initiate a faculty mentoring program to ensure that our tenured and tenure-track faculty have resources to excel as educators, researchers, and administrators. This program would leverage the strengths of our senior faculty and provide (1) a structured approach to acclimate junior faculty to the culture of GW, (2) resources to navigate the complex challenges of their careers, and (3) a model for actively engaging in the GW community. In an effort to ensure the program respects the differences of our faculty, such as race, gender, culture, generations, and disciplines, we recommend that each school develop
mentoring criteria tailored to their unique needs. The Center for Faculty Excellence would support this program in accordance with the following suggested considerations:

- Mentoring is an important resource for faculty at every stage of their career, pre-tenure and post-tenure (including associate professors who are candidates for promotion to full professor), and the program should be monitored by the dean/chair or their specified designee.
- A mentoring program should incorporate both formal and informal activities. Expectations for teaching, research, and service should be standardized within the schools, clearly communicated during on-boarding, and reinforced by mentors.
- Sustaining a collaborative academic environment is the responsibility of all tenured and tenure-track members and cross-school mentors are highly encouraged. All faculty should receive service credit for their mentoring contributions during their APT reviews.

Goal 2. Distinguished Faculty

Initiate programs to attract high-impact professionals, both full-time and part-time that enhance the curriculum and leverage our location. In addition to the currently delineated academic personnel as defined by the *GW Faculty Code*, develop a Distinguished Visiting Faculty and a Distinguished Professor of the Practice program to attract high-impact professionals in order to design and develop unique opportunities for our students and collaborations with our faculty that will enhance the GW curricular offerings and enrich our global research efforts while leveraging our unique location.

A. Distinguished Visiting Faculty

Distinguished Visiting appointments are reserved for instructors who have a national or international reputation as leaders in educational innovation and are the best in the field in terms of curriculum development, educational reform (such as leading a major curriculum reform), and pedagogy.

- Their expertise should be demonstrated through major contributions to the educational scholarship in their field. Distinguished Visiting appointments may vary in length and commitment, including academic year, course-by-course, workshops or speaker-series, limited to a two-year appointment period.

B. Distinguished Professor of the Practice

Distinguished Professor of the Practice appointments are reserved for practitioners who demonstrate professional eminence and sustained activity and accomplishment in their field, such as CEO of a major company, high-level government official, philanthropist, inventor, leader of social cause, impact on society, or public figures.
• This rank is intended to take advantage of the unique range of professionals in the Washington, D.C. area, and is intended for those whose primary field is not in teaching or pedagogy. Appointments may be full- or part-time, with renewable terms.

Recommendations for the Distinguished Faculty Goal:

• Establish a shared database of GW Distinguished Faculty to be used for University-wide educational opportunities.
• Within the next two years, identify Provost-approved, school-specific criteria for appointment and reappointment at the rank of Distinguished Visiting and Distinguished Professor of the Practice. (School APT guidelines should be updated to incorporate these criteria.)
• Develop an annual “Distinguished Faculty” lecture series that utilizes the exceptional knowledge and skills of this prestigious group through discussion panels, workshops, courses, professional development, or other cross disciplinary educational opportunities.
• Establish a GW Society of Distinguished Faculty that can facilitate and cultivate the University’s relationship with its members.

Metrics
The WCF committee recommends using the first 6 months of the strategic plan implementation to determine the baseline data for the following metrics and aim to increase each number/percentage by an amount that is appropriate given the size, activities, and context of each school or program.

• Faculty by school who hold major field awards and other forms of professional recognition
• New faculty hires, across all faculty categories, who are members of historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic minority groups or who are women
• Faculty who publish in highly-ranked scholarly journals and with respected book publishers, and who produce juried performances in the arts
• Faculty by school with media appearances in their respective fields or who have been invited to write op-eds and other opinion articles
• Faculty who have received university prizes and recognition
• Faculty who have received major investigative or research fellowships
• Faculty by school who serve as peer-reviewed journal guest editors or who serve on editorial boards
• Faculty indicating satisfaction with overall intellectual life, research, and scholarship on the 2024 Colonial Group Faculty Survey

Capabilities
Both of the goals require significant investment in space, personnel, awards, funding, assessment tools, and data to have a meaningful impact.
Questions for Consideration

The committee is strongly invested in this plan and its success, as such we recommend actionable responses as a commitment to shared governance.

- When will the university community receive the proposed strategic plan for comments and responses prior to the release of the final plan?
- How will faculty continue to be meaningfully involved in the implementation and assessment of the strategic plan?
World-Class Faculty
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