

Becoming a More Equitable and Inclusive Institution: Principles and Action Items

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Preamble

The Alliance of Distinguished and Titled Professors is dedicated to preserving and enhancing Indiana University's excellence in research, teaching, and service. To that end, we recently organized a series of presentations to learn more about how faculty have fared since the pandemic began. Many faculty have struggled to maintain their research because of disruptions to data collection, reduced access to research materials, lab closures, and the increased demands of teaching, mentoring, and caregiving. We were already aware that the challenges associated with the pandemic have been experienced unequally by our faculty, with women and faculty of color disproportionately affected. We invited faculty leaders to share their experiences so that we could become better informed about this problem and asked administrators to share their ideas about addressing these challenges. This document is our response to the crisis based on those presentations.

The university has already made efforts to adjust the annual evaluation of faculty in light of current conditions. This provides us an opportunity to think more broadly about how we evaluate the varied work of our faculty, and to consider how best to maintain our position as a leader in higher education. We do not know if the effects of the pandemic will be long term, but are certain that the future decline in the number of high school age students will challenge us to maintain enrollment. The current presidential search also provides an incentive to address the challenges and opportunities we face.

Principles

Our recommendations are based on a deep commitment to eliminating racial and gender injustice as well as discrimination on the basis of religion, place of birth, economic status, ability, and other social and cultural categories. Indeed, we do not believe that Indiana University can achieve its full potential for excellence if it fails to address the injustices built into its own structures.

The definition of excellence in research, teaching, and service needs to reflect more accurately the social realities both inside and outside academia. The standards we currently observe do not fully recognize how the creation of knowledge, the approach to excellence in teaching, and our commitment to serve various communities—academic and professional, regional and national—unintentionally reproduce inequities among our faculty. The ways in which faculty contribute to making IU a well-functioning and internationally respected institution should be more fully

identified, valued, and integrated into our organization and policies. This includes a range of under-reported and under-recognized forms of labor, in particular, those involving public scholarship and social justice activities. Addressing and engaging with those core issues calls for a collaborative process that welcomes the participation of those who engage in this labor. We must also educate all who learn, work, and serve others throughout the university about these issues.

IU must also grapple with the inequitable distribution of care work within and outside of the institution. The pandemic has disrupted the lives of many members of our community but more so women faculty and faculty of color who have assumed additional caregiving responsibilities. While some of those responsibilities are to family members outside of the institution, others are to other faculty, staff, and students who need additional support at this time. While the inequitable distribution of care work has become more visible during the pandemic, it represents a long-standing source of inequality in the institution with which IU has not yet reckoned.

A review of the standards for measuring and evaluating excellence in tenure and promotion decisions is essential to building a more equitable institution. This requires that faculty and administrators understand and accept the rationale for the reconsiderations and commit to implementing them. This revision of standards—and, in some cases, modifications of the practices that sustain them—must reflect a long-term institutional commitment, not a short-term mandate soon forgotten. The necessary changes to which we are calling attention require institutional commitment at the highest level, which is especially timely given the presidential search.

IU should consider how policies, procedures, and strategies affect faculty from different backgrounds in different ways. Effective change depends on the recognition that the lives of faculty, both inside and outside of the institution, reflect multiple social and political identities. This recognition, understood among scholars as “intersectionality,” offers the university the opportunity to transform itself into a more resilient institution and a community better connected with and better situated to bring about scholarly innovation and to address societal challenges. Investing in diversity, equity, and inclusion will better enable us to recruit and retain a larger, more diverse student body despite future demographic challenges.

Action Items

Without good data, meaningful and effective changes to institutional policies and practices are impossible. To this end, we recommend the following:

- **The collection of data that elucidate the specific challenges and successes** of faculty before and after the pandemic. We advocate for regular collection of data that render more visible institutional inequities. We encourage the University to continue to support

the surveys that have been conducted this year, to expand the reach of the surveys to the entire faculty, and to make their analyses a basis for review and necessary change.

- **An institutional openness to and expectation that faculty report their work regarding specific socio-political crises** so as to expand conceptions of meritorious service in promotion, salary, and other reviews. Many faculty have statewide, national or international engagement. They have seen substantial change in their involvement with civic communities beyond the walls of IU. We need to understand how we can best recognize and reward public engagement in our evaluations. We can only do that by collecting data, both quantitative as well as qualitative, paying particular attention to contributions of under-represented faculty.
- **A self-examination of how structures and the processes** we currently consider our norms, together with the people who serve in making decisions along the way, **reproduce inequities that demand change.**

In sum, these three action items call for a **thorough review of reporting as well as promotion and tenure criteria and measures** to determine whether they capture the work completely and recognize contributions to the university fairly. If existing standards are found to be incomplete, inconsistent, or unfair, according to the principles outlined above, they should be revised to reflect these principles of equity and inclusion. As the world around us is changing and as faculty are engaging with those changes, their innovations and their translation into scholarship must be captured, especially if they differ from or expand currently understood standards for evaluating research, teaching, and service. The post-pandemic university will look considerably different because of the ways our most forward-thinking colleagues rise to meet the myriad challenges and opportunities that await. Their innovations, in turn, will place our institution at the forefront of transformative post-pandemic developments. Addressing the ways in which we value diverse contributions to the institution, along with our renewed commitment to equity and justice, will allow us to retain, even strengthen, our university and its outstanding international reputation.