

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY TASK FORCE ON RACIAL EQUITY

INSTRUCTIONAL FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

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Recommendation Title: Developing a Faculty Response and Advocacy System at JMU

Problem Statement/Issue:

It is an unfortunate truth that JMU instructional and AP faculty—as well as classified and wage staff and students—may experience harm in the form of intimidation, microaggressions, harassment, discrimination, and other types of emotional, psychological or physical abuse. These transpire through requisite interactions with colleagues, students and supervisors in the course of their regular work as faculty members on a large, busy college campus. Evidence from sources, such as the triennial COACHE survey and University Climate Study, suggests that BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and women faculty at JMU may bear the brunt of such harmful interactions, which can erode trust, confidence and self-efficacy at the least, and can lead to chronic negative professional and health outcomes when individuals are subject to chronic and long-term harm. JMU holds an institutional duty of care to ensure that all campus community members may experience a working environment free of all forms of harassment and harm. As we strive to create an inclusive, respectful and healthy work environment for all faculty, staff and students, we must recognize the reality of harmful behaviors and actions, and seek to mitigate the damage to individual faculty.

Faculty currently have several lines of reporting and recourse when they encounter a negative experience:

- Faculty ombudsperson – serves as a resource for faculty, providing information and resources to guide faculty action regarding their concern
- Human Resources – provides confidential information and guidance regarding personnel matters; provides access to support services including mediation, leave advising, Emergency Assistance Programming (EAP)
- Center for Faculty Innovation (CFI) – offers programming related to professional development, work-life balance, and scholarship support
- Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) – provides guidance and assessment in response to incidents of harassment and discrimination relevant to anti-discrimination
- Title IX Office – provides assessment and management of reported campus incidents involving violations of Title IX
- Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty – provides information and guidance related to faculty grievance, misconduct, and faculty Title IX

Problem Statement and Recommendation continue on next page.

WORKING GROUP LEADERSHIP



David Owusu-Ansah,
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Problem Statement Continued:

In reviewing the purpose and function of these entities, we recognize a gap in our faculty support system, specifically a system to provide trustworthy, trauma-informed advocacy and guidance for faculty who have experienced harm. An advocacy function should integrate with emerging faculty mentoring networks, but should stand alone with a clear purpose and function related to providing advocacy in response to incidents of harm. The function should be designed to address the potential and real risks of reporting through competent and confidential procedures which provide support for all faculty, and which are specifically sensitive to the precarities of pre-tenure and non-tenured faculty. Specifically, the faculty advocacy team should function autonomously in its faculty advocacy role in a manner akin to that of the faculty ombudsperson, rather than as an agent or representative of Academic Affairs administrative authority. Further, the system should function parallel to the Employee Advocacy Network proposed by the Staff Working Group of the TFRE, which focuses on the unique vulnerabilities of classified and wage staff. Of note, the recommended support system would not replace direct OEO or Title IX reporting mechanisms.

Recommendation:

We propose the formation of a cross-divisional working group charged with developing and implementing plans for a standing faculty advocacy team at JMU.

The proposed steps and timeline to be followed include:

- 1. Spring 2022: Provost identifies a working group chair and works with them to identify members of the group by the end of May 2022.** The working group membership should be cross-divisional and reflect a variety of ranks to include: at least one HR consultant, one AP faculty from *each* of the University's divisions, two AUH's from different colleges, and at least three Instructional faculty from across different colleges. The composition of the working group should reflect diverse social locations and include members with important skill sets: trauma-informed counseling and/or advocacy and background in microaggressions and institutional racism/sexism/homophobia. The working group will collaborate closely with the staff working group (refer to parallel recommendation).
- 2. Fall 2022: Conduct a campus audit of how faculty grievances are currently managed and map the pathways for complaints for those in varied roles and positions.** This work should be done in coordination with the findings from the campus climate study, of which working group members should be given complete access. In mapping the pathways, members will: identify gaps and risks to faculty at each stage; use a trauma-informed lens to identify risks to faculty and weight potential for retaliation; and draw upon expertise of campus members at each phase of the audit, including experiential, scholarly, and practitioner knowledge bases.
- 3. Spring 2023: Establish faculty advocacy team.** Based upon the gaps and guidance solicited during the campus audit, the working group will identify: the necessary composition for a faculty advocacy team, the training required for the team to be successful in supporting and advocating for faculty (which may include external training), and identify the revisions to policy and faculty handbook for faculty to report grievances free from possible retaliation.
- 4. Fall 2024: Present changes in policy and to faculty handbook.** Amendments will be presented to all stakeholders with the goal to have changes in place during the spring 2025 revisions to the handbook.
- 5. Fall 2025: Activate advocacy team.** Pathways for complaint and roles of advocacy team clearly delineated across all divisional websites and in the faculty handbook. Advocacy team is activated and in place.

Resources needed to carry out this recommendation include:

- Personnel, including members of the working group as well as ultimately the team of faculty selected to serve as faculty advocates.
- External training and facilitation (e.g., trauma-informed advocacy, mental health first aid, etc.).
- Partnerships, potential partnership(s) with campus experts (Counseling Center staff, Grad Psych faculty) to develop advocacy protocols and personnel training.

Funding, faculty advocates should receive compensation in the form of course release and/or stipend support to recognize the official nature of their commitment to this service.

Rationale:

JMU's institutional ethic of care directs us to attend to incidents of harm in our community. Our analysis has identified a gap in trauma-informed services available to faculty, one that precludes appropriate institutional response to incidents in which our faculty are harmed by others in the course of their regular work and duties. To address this, we propose assembling a cross-divisional autonomous group of campus experts to develop a new advocacy function for all instructional and AP faculty. A faculty advocacy team will serve a critical role in advancing equity on campus by providing a safe venue for reporting abuse and responsive support and advocacy to faculty who have been harmed. The new Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion would eventually supervise this group's work; the faculty advocacy team will have no institutional authority or role in investigations by OEO or Title IX.

Success:

In the short term, progress on this recommendation will be monitored against the steps and timeline outlined above. Once the faculty advocacy team is established, the team will be responsible for providing regular annual updates to the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; such updates would maintain the confidentiality and safety of all faculty and, in a manner similar to reporting by the faculty ombudsperson, would focus on the incidence, frequency and outcomes of its interactions with faculty seeking support. At 3 and 5 years out from the date of implementation, an evaluation of the impact and success of the project will be coordinated by the Vice President's designee. In the long term, overall success of this approach may best be reflected in faculty perceptions of trust in the system of administrative support available to them.