

Faculty Senate Position Paper for Future Academic Hiring

September 17, 2014

Preamble: Although the Matrix strategy for adding new faculty used for the last few years has yielded some notable successes, we believe that returning to the traditional department-based hiring strategy, which is favored by most first-rate universities, is the most effective way of enhancing future faculty strength and prominence and insuring the continual infusion of new talent. It is imperative that this be done in a timely manner to enable us to compete for the available talent as successfully as possible with our peer institutions. This does not preclude some hiring in certain thematic especially active (typically multi-disciplinary) areas on a university-wide basis, as is done at many outstanding universities, but this should be done with significant input from our thoroughly engaged and knowledgeable faculty.

The Main Strategy – Departmental Focus and Initiation

This is the traditional method of adding outstanding new faculty that accounts for the majority of hires at most top tier universities. Each department identifies and justifies its needs for new faculty in various areas within its discipline, based not only on enhancing its research profile but also on the need to provide faculty that can teach the necessary courses with the kind of inspirational insight that is usually confined to those educated at the highest levels in their fields. The departmental requests for new faculty lines are presented to the dean of the college who, based upon input from the departmental chairs and faculty, knowledge of the disciplines comprising the college and budgetary and institutional factors, should be able to make a well-informed decision on which requests are approved.

In order for NJIT to grow its mission in research and education, it is imperative that the university have a concrete plan for hiring new faculty over an extended period of time. Doing so is not only necessary, but is also critical if the university is to advance in the rankings and achieve the reputation that it deserves.

The proposed departmentally initiated strategy naturally involves college-wide (and ultimately university-wide) competition for new faculty lines, which also requires approval by higher administrative authorities. However, the most important competition is with our peer institutions for the best talent available, and the traditional method has shown itself over many long years to provide the best means for effective competition in the university faculty hiring arena. Among the many important aspects, advantages and requirements for effective implementation of this strategy are the following:

- Departments handle the searches and initial recommendations (to the administration) of applicants once the faculty lines are approved.
- Scholarly accomplishments and potential are the primary factors in making the recommendations, but teaching experience and promise should also carry significant weight and such considerations as diversity and projected departmental fit also play a role.
- Excellent faculty hires based on the above qualifications are bound to enhance the reputation of our faculty and strengthen our academic programs, which are the most important elements in improving NJIT's ranking.
- An increase in ranking and consequent enhanced university profile should have many other benefits as well, including enrolling more highly qualified students (thereby increasing retention), attracting the best candidates for faculty positions and insuring accreditation - an important validation where appropriate - for our engineering, computer science, management and architecture programs.
- The proposed strategy should lead to a continual infusion of new faculty into the departments, which is indispensable for vitality and growth and sufficient teaching resources to maintain departmental

programs at a high level. It should also help insure that a sizeable majority of our department members are tenured or tenure-track faculty – enough to teach many of the most important courses in their programs. As a result, our students benefit from the greater insights, expertise, and breadth of knowledge that such faculty typically provide.

- The process needs to be initiated and completed expeditiously – with faculty lines being approved before the end of September and decisions on appointments before the end of December in most cases – so that we can compete with other universities for the best candidates on the most favorable basis possible.
- Extra travel funds should be made available to outstanding NJIT faculty members who are interested in doing some informal faculty recruiting as such personal contacts can often lead to interest and possible applications from exceptional scholars and educators.

2. Additional Strategy – University-Wide Hires in Key Research Areas

From time to time, the university administration, with input from the deans, their departments and their faculty, may deem it advantageous to hire – on a university-wide basis - established experts in active and promising multi-disciplinary areas in order to enhance the research strength and profile of NJIT. This can be done in much the same way as the recent Matrix strategy – with a few improvements such as more involvement of faculty (wherein lies considerable experience and insight related to such matters that should be employed to the utmost). Some of the details and benefits of this complementary hiring strategy are as follows:

- A committee of faculty and administrators with outstanding multi-disciplinary expertise should be established to recommend university-wide hiring in especially active research areas with significant growth potential and in which NJIT already has some expertise. These recommendations should be based on careful appraisal of current and future trends, and may be initiated as a result of such factors as availability of leading experts in the fields of interest.
- Once lines are approved, one or two search committees should be established to solicit, evaluate and make recommendations for the available positions, including suggesting the Department(s) that will house the new faculty.
- These committees, under the auspices of the Faculty Senate, should be comprised of faculty and administrators with broad and deep multi-disciplinary expertise.
- Besides research, an important consideration in these hires is assessing their ability to attract and lead current faculty with relevant expertise in productive multi-disciplinary (funded) projects.
- For best results, the timeline for soliciting and recommending applicants and making offers for the available positions should be essentially the same as for the department-based strategy. When offers are made, the decision on primary department affiliation should in most cases be left up to the applicant, subject of course to approval by the departments, deans, provost, etc.
- A critical goal of the multi-disciplinary hires is to make them magnets for existing and future faculty members with complementary expertise; consequently, their efforts should catalyze research developments in high growth areas, resulting in enhancement in our research profile, improvement in our scholarly environment and a significant increase in research expenditures, all which are paramount for our ranking.