Dear faculty,

I end these newsletters the way I began them this year, with a letter to you, our esteemed faculty.

It has been a productive school year for all of us here at Albright, and not the least of which is the work that has been done with the Sloan grant. The interviews that were conducted this year gave us some incredible insight into both the work and personal dilemmas of being faculty in the 21st century, and we are only touching the proverbial tip of the iceberg thus far. The Dean’s Seminars were informative and engaging, and the Soup Socials provided you with some much needed social time with your colleagues and allowed me to get to know many of you better.

Understandingly, lives are busy with work right now as we send the class of 2011 off to their future destinations and celebrate their many accomplishments (which are, of course, your accomplishments as well). With Commencement right around the corner, I bid you all a safe, relaxing and breezy summer.

American Council on Education Sloan Representative Visit

As many of you are aware, we hosted visitors from the American Council on Education on March 1, 2011, who were here to check on the progress of our Sloan grant. Our visitors were Claire Van Ummersen, Ph.D. and Jean McLaughlin. Van Ummersen is the senior adviser and director of the Office of Institutional Initiatives and McLaughlin is a senior program specialist for the Sloan Projects for Faculty Career Flexibility. The two were pleased with our overall progress with the grant, and they offered constructive feedback and suggestions for further progress as we continue to work on faculty career flexibility. They enjoyed meeting with a variety of faculty members and administrators, and they are in the final stages of their visitation rounds, of which, ours was the first of the liberal arts schools. We will be resuming our conference calls with the liberal arts Sloan recipients in June.

Mini Grants

Thanks to all of you who have submitted grant proposals. We received a variety of insightful ideas, and the proposals were reviewed by the Sloan committee over the past few weeks. Several of the grants have been approved and are in the process of being completed. Two grant applications dealt with being able to eat on campus reasonably, and we look forward to being able to assist with this problem during the upcoming fall and spring semesters. Watch your e-mail for further information. If you plan to submit a mini grant application and have not done so yet, we will continue to accept proposals up to the beginning of the fall semester.

Dean’s Seminars

Jeffrey Osborn, Ph.D., from The College of New Jersey and Elizabeth Paul, Ph.D., from Stetson University visited us on April 14 to discuss faculty workload. The seminar provided extremely useful information and engaging conversation on the issue of faculty workload. As with this year’s previous Dean’s Seminars, the faculty workload seminar was recorded and will be available with the others on the Faculty Balance web site soon.

Tenure

Congratulations are in order for the following members of the faculty who attained tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor in February:

- Visitor Forte, Ph.D., Religious Studies
- Ian Rihle, Ph.D., Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Paula Trimpey, M.F.A., Fashion and Theatre
- Joseph Yarworth, Ph.D., Education

Welcome to New Faculty

In the fall, we will welcome two new tenure-track faculty members. Please give a warm Albright welcome to:

- Christopher Graves, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Kendra Meyers, Assistant Professor of Fashion

Work-Life History and Projections for the Future

WorldatWork, a nonprofit organization focused on a variety of human resource issues, published an article in 2006 titled, Revisiting the Work-Life Dialogue: Past, Present and Future. Undoubtedly, as is implied by the title, the conversation surrounding work-life balance has been going on for many decades, but in the years following the publication of this article, national interest in the topic appears to have excelled. Written by Kathryn Kadlak and Diana Watts, the article purports that the accent since the 1960s has been women in the workforce. While this is indeed logical, and there was a definite need for “reframing the image of men as the ‘breadwinners’ and women as ‘caregivers,’” (41) there was also necessity for a paradigm shift that is still taking place today. The model of the perfect worker, one who had little commitment beyond the workplace, still permeates the ideas of many workers and employers alike.

Kadlak and Watts outline three different models that work-life policies take: the faux painting approach, the fair weather approach and the harbinger approach. Although work-life policies exist within each model, the applications of the policies vary greatly. Faux painting implies uneven application of policies across departments, fair weather often requires the intervention of “work-life champions,” (42) and the harbinger not only has the most uniform of policies, but they are supported and implemented evenly for all employees. The harbinger approach, the most progressive of these models, functions as the epitome of work-life initiatives even though implementing such a program is difficult and can be costly.

In their concluding comments, the authors ponder: “Whether this [the agenda within the work-life dialogue] will be in support of progressive harbinger-style work environments or a refreshment to more modest support is dependent on...the changing economic, legal and political landscape” (42). Five years later, in spite of a struggling economy and regardless of the legal and political conversations about work-life, higher education in general has stepped up to the plate and recognized that work-life initiatives, especially harbinger-style initiatives, are extraordinarily important to the productivity of faculty and staff alike. You may find the entire article at http://iawp.org/iawp/pub/zwf/zwf_ Revisiting_WorkLife_Dialogue.pdf.

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