Revised Faculty Hiring Memorandum

To: Academic Deans

From: John G. Geer, Vice Provost for Academic and Strategic Affairs

Re: Authorization of Faculty Searches for the 2017-18 Academic Year

Date: April 24, 2017

As you may recall, we have revised the authorization (and hiring) process over the last two years with an eye towards pursuing excellence and diversity. For the coming year, we will continue the processes employed last year. Our recent success in faculty hires is amazing and all your efforts are much appreciated.

As you prepare your requests to have faculty hiring searches authorized for the 2017-18 academic year, we ask you again to address the following two central considerations.

(1) Please provide a detailed justification for your request for new faculty, which must include a detailed discussion of how this request can advance both diversity and the strategic mission of your college and of the university.

(2) Please provide an account of the financial implications of all your proposed new hires, which includes a spreadsheet (see attached) spelling out anticipated costs.

FY18 DEAN’S FACULTY SEARCH AUTHORIZATION MEMOS:

Due by May 15, 2017 (if you need additional time, please let us know)

Justification/Diversity Section

For your FY18 Faculty Search Authorization memos please lay out the reasoning for each faculty position: How does it advance your strategic vision for the college? Does it build on an existing area of excellence or perhaps make it possible to start a new area of excellence? In answering these questions, it is essential to show how this position advances VU’s Academic Strategic Plan. In particular, how will these new faculty advance Vanderbilt’s commitment to trans-institutional programs? Who might be partners for you in this search? Searches need to be about building bridges, not silos. Requests should take into account leveraging all expertise across campus, and demonstrate genuine opportunities to advance the university. We will prioritize collaborative and creative approaches, encouraging colleges, schools, departments,
institutes, and centers to work together. Please tailor your requests with an eye toward building intellectual bridges and generating efficiencies.

Within this hiring justification, it is essential to lay out how each request will advance diverse perspectives within our faculty. You can revise your discussion from last year, with updates from any new hires. The goal was to describe existing faculty demographics (separating tenure track/tenured from non-tenure track in your discussion). In this section, it is also important to explain the unique challenges your college/school faces in regards to diversifying the faculty.

As we have over recent years, reconsider all job descriptions. It is important to think outside the box and consider broadening/adjusting job descriptions in a way that builds a diverse and highly talented faculty. This approach dovetails nicely with our commitment to trans-institutional programs. We will be looking to authorize searches that advance these core values of the university. A request to hire cannot be just about replacing a departed faculty member and filling a slot. We want each hire to advance the strategic mission of the university.

Please describe in some detail your specific strategy for advancing diversity from last year and changes you plan to make this year from those experiences. In some cases, this involved “targets of opportunity” where specific diverse scholars were recruited to Vanderbilt. In other cases, a “cluster strategy” was employed to hire a number of scholars at once who advanced diversity. A final strategy was to set aside “diversity lines” to encourage units to hire new faculty who would bring diverse perspectives. These lines were open across a number of fields and allowed the relevant units a chance to hire more diverse faculty. Not all of these strategies will work for each college/school. Even so, there are surely other ideas that you might want to pursue that will help us meet these goals. We need to be innovative and look forward to learning what worked and did not work.

Budgetary Considerations Section

For your search authorization requests, please include in your memo a section that lays out the financial underpinnings of these possible hires. What are the likely costs of these hires? As VU-ETOB shapes budgeting for FY18 and beyond, it will remain critical for the Provost’s Office to ensure that you have the resources in place for the hiring requests and to ensure start-up packages and spending are aligned with the new budgeting models.

We will be providing (soon) a spreadsheet for you to complete and submit with the authorization memo. This spreadsheet will provide all the requested information on possible costs tied to each hire who would arrive in FY19 from the proposed 2017-18 searches and will take into account all the related costs which were included as part of the January budget submission. This would include (1) providing expected salary, startup packages, renovation costs, moving cost, etc., (2)
providing estimates of spending on the startup packages across the next three years, including an estimated breakdown of capital versus operating costs, (3) providing information on expected savings from departures and/or external funding offsets, and (4) accounting for all current commitments, provide a year-by-year analysis confirming the school/colleges’ ability to fund to the proposed startup packages. For some hires, especially in the sciences, it will be essential to consider utilizing shared resources, such as augmenting existing core facilities as a way to advance discovery. Thus, requests must justify how the support for the hire will be sustainable. If it appears that a new hire will likely exceed these estimates, it is critical to inform the Provost’s office as soon as possible and to identify additional resources for that potential hire prior to making any request to hire. So, for example, what tradeoffs are you prepared to make to cover these higher costs? We need, as a result, realistic estimates so we can ensure a smooth process.

THE NEXT STEP IN THE PROCESS: Development of Search Plan Documents

After the Provost responds to each Dean’s FY18 Faculty Search Authorization memos, we are asking again for a Search Plan Document (SPD) for each hire from the specific hiring unit. This plan is sent to the Provost’s office prior to formally launching a search. This process advanced the conversation last year on how best to ensure we have a diverse and inclusive faculty. We do not want to lose momentum.

As you may recall, the SPD for each potential new hire will need to pay attention to the following questions.

1) What is the exact job description? How does it help ensure we are pursuing an inclusive and cutting edge new faculty? How will it help make the unit in question more diverse?

2) What is the specific plan to recruit a diverse pool of candidates in the particular field? This is an important question that requires a detailed answer. It is essential to point out that the Provost’s Office will not approve any request to hire new faculty later in the academic year that has not yielded a diverse pool and given careful, explicit, and detailed consideration to diversity and inclusion in the request to hire. In other words, diversity, broadly defined, must be a central part of all stages of the hiring process.

3) What is the composition of the search committee? How will this search committee demonstrate its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity? We do not expect each hiring committee to have, for example, a URM on it. That would not only unfair to our URM faculty, but it runs counter to our underlying concept of diversity. We want search committees to reflect an inclusive spirit, which involves far more than just demographic representation. The fundamental goal here to ensure we pay close attention to the composition and workings of search committees. Perhaps members of the search committee could participate in diversity training available through such organizations as
the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity. We will also be providing some seminars on implicit bias on campus, such as Efren Perez’s presentation last fall.

4) When candidates are being interviewed on campus, what is the strategy for providing them information during their visit about Vanderbilt’s trans-institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion? The answer to this question is important for all candidates, not just those who explicitly advance diversity.

You can submit these SPDs at any time prior to the start of the search.

If you have any questions about your requests for hiring new faculty, please let me know. Thanks for your time in this important matter.

cc: Susan R. Wente, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
    Susan Hart, Associate Vice Chancellor
    Eric Bymaster, Associate Vice Chancellor