

Department of Journalism and Digital Communication Faculty Meeting
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Casey Peterson
Casey Frechette
Monica Ancu
Deni Elliott
Janet Keeler
Tony Silvia
Mark Walters

MA: What are the odds that we will hang on to lines especially in the light of Bahaa and Bernardo's exit?

CF: A pitch I'd be inclined to make for fall is a full time instructor, a faculty line and a couple of visiting instructor lines to link us to additional tenure line hires. What do we need to prioritize in terms of those additional tenure line hires? This morning I got some news re: Roslyn. Dean Eisenberg is supportive of our targeting this hire especially in terms of diversity. Elizabeth Hoare Freeman is also supporting. Meeting with her and Magali on Tuesday to talk about this and take it to the next step.

TS: Roslyn is on sabbatical. Usually when you do that you sign a contract saying you'll come back. Under those terms she wouldn't be available until spring, right?

CF: Yes, and that is one of several sticking points. Given that uncertainty, the ask for visiting professors is something I feel secure about as part of our pitch. I have had informal conversations with Wiser and Snyder and both would be open to stepping into temporary roles this year. Most of the fall schedule is uncovered, so there is an imminent need to cover our courses.

TS: Is it your sense that administration is being honest with you about the intent to keep this department intact?

CF: Yes, in my conversations this far. My sense is that there isn't an agenda there. Eisenberg will be fighting for departments to maintain their autonomy and sovereignty.

CF: Another issue with Rosyln would be her tenure status, which is important to her. In the next week we can begin to have those serious conversations.

DE: Is there a backup plan in case Rosyln doesn't work?

CF: No, and that is a reason we are meeting here. One person I'd talked to was Steven Buckley. He doesn't have a master's degree so we'd not be looking at a tenure line. Might be doable but maybe there are others we could be reaching out to. A targeted hire at this time might be someone who fulfills the university's diversity goals. One possibility Magali and I have been kicking around would be a joint affiliation with Poynter. Either a joint hire or someone already at Poynter – like Al Tompkins. He had been thinking about academia in the past.

MA: he was the first name that came to mind.

TS: One thing you should be aware of is that he is an “old media” guy.

DE: Another idea – Eric Vaughn. He has two masters and has been working for NYC schools. I think he’d like to have a good reason to come back to St. Pete. He’d do well with NNB.

TS: Second, nothing but great memories of his intellect and work with others.

TS: As we discuss this, I ask: has the logistics of the departures of people changed the architecture of what the department should be short term vs. long term? Should we take a step back and consider the basics like beginning reporting and NNB? Less specialized and more generalized?

DE: But our identity is as a boutique, specialized multimedia department. If we’re just teaching basic journalism, people will say they could just do that at Zimmerman.

TS: Sure, but think about serving students at a foundational level.

MA: I agree with both of you. Let’s think long term about our identity. Where do we see ourselves in five years? I see our department anchored in journalism with a strong focus on digital and multimedia. I’d like to have someone with strong journalism background and experience, teaching incoming students how to write, report, fact check. Once they learn this they need the digital skills to produce audio, video, web design, animation, emerging tech in journalism, social media, bots. And of course they need a basis in theory, law, ethics, and the business of journalism. Let’s start with our highest ideals, see who we can get and scale down from there.

JK: If you want students to have the basic skills maybe the pre core classes need to be changed. With no GPA threshold to get into the program, it’s a lot for 4 semesters.

TS: Whatever we do, we want to be careful not to bring on board people who are narrow in their skills. One of the best successes of Janet is that she is a utility player who can do lots of different things. I’ve always thought that if you are in a journalism department and you can’t teach a basic course, you shouldn’t be there.

DE: What is it you want to achieve in this meeting today?

CF: I want to be able to define what our hiring plan is semester by semester. What roles we want to hire for and what minimum qualifications we want to focus on?

MW: A couple of challenges we have. In my talks with Eisenberg, it’s been made clear that money will follow the units with the most scholarship. We are now being judged on that and it doesn’t matter how many good journalists we have if they aren’t producing research. Should we explore a professor of practice?

CF: Sharing a brainstorm of a semester-by-semester plan. Want to submit something like this to Magali first thing next week. This fall, a full time instructor/professor of practice, a tenure line associate professor and two visiting assistants. In coming semester, hiring assistant professors on tenure line – science/environment/climate reporting and data journalism.

TS: Questions: Do you think four hires is realistic?

CF: My idea was to ask for a lot. This is fewer hires than positions we are losing, so this is in line with the need we are facing right now.

TS: In terms of science/environmental, is there a need to hire when Walters can cover that?

MW: I hope to take the lead in that area.

TS: Do you see a need for a second person in that position?

MW: We need someone at that level. Maybe get by with staff. But there will be a tremendous amount of effort needed in that field. I won't be able to do all this footwork. But I agree that as a matter of strategy that it is good to be "overreaching" with our ask.

TS: In terms of Deni, I know she has the endowed chair. What role could that play in a hiring plan? Is that money transferrable?

DE: We need to keep our hands on the endowed chair. Cheneville has been appointed a chair in applied ethics. We lost the social responsibility chair. We could make good arguments for keeping Poynter chair on campus but we need to consider the endowment doesn't cover my salary. I initially had a \$25,000 research fund to cover my chair but now I may or may not have a \$10,000 fund. The endowment won't cover the salary of an incoming person.

TS: Is it possible to think of the Poynter chair as something we could use as a collaborative hire with Poynter?

DE: Poynter would love it, I'm sure.

MA: Any other requirements for endowed chair? Full professor?

DE: It's described as someone with national/international reputation in ethics. Basically a leader in the field.

MA: At least an associate?

DE: I think so. The requirements were pretty specific.

MW: But there is a bit of latitude on what kind of ethics, right?

DE: Yes. Given our STEM designation, we could hire on someone with a focus on digital ethics.

MW: Is this an opportunity to work with Poynter and build a relationship?

DE: We hire their folks as adjuncts anyway. If we can give a name to the position to bring them on as research professors within our department, it benefits us and them.

CF: Should we be explicit about the endowed chair in our hiring timeline? And in spring 22, should we focus on a super digital role instead of a science/environment hire?

MW: There's a lot of opportunity. In talks with Marine Science, they need people in big data to do visual science and data visualization.

MA: I don't think the four position plan for fall 2021 is realistic. We don't have time to conduct two searches. Is there a term on the Roslyn hire?

CF: No term has been discussed.

MA: We'd be conducting three searches, and I don't think we have the time for that. It's also hard to hire people mid-year. More realistically, maybe next year we could ask for an instructor, an associate professor and one tenure-track assistant professor who could cover the basic writing and reporting classes. Those classes are going to be on the schedule. Then in fall 2022, we can focus on staffing more specialized classes.

DE: My official retirement date is 12/31/21 but Frechette is exploring deferring my deferral so I may be teaching in the fall.

MA: I think that digital classes are our smallest priority.

CF: My thought process on the number of hires is a focus on people we already know to fill many of these positions.

MA: If that's the case my preference would be to go very short term. I also want to explore and see what's there and to hire the best. Bringing people into two-and-three year hires will tie up those lines. What are the chances of us retaining those lines that far into the future?

DE: I agree with Monica that we want to be flexible with positions. But at the same time, it's important that people come in expecting to stay through the entire semester or year. It's bad for our students to have faculty leave them mid-term. Whoever we hire, it should be understood that they stay.

TS: We should keep in mind that when a situation is handled, it goes off the radar of those in charge. We shouldn't get deeply invested in short term solutions of visitors because that will become the permanent solution.

CF: I'm hearing a compelling argument to leave visiting requests out of this plan.

MA: I don't want a patchwork solution. We are looking at the next academic year. We need people to teach courses, so maybe we deal with adjuncts for a year.

CF: Should we try for one full time position for the fall?

MA: Yes, find people temporary for one academic year. But, starting fall 2022 we need the promise of two full time lines.

CF: Putting one of those tenure line positions as a spring 2022 hire feels too rushed?

MA: Have we ever hired someone as a tenure track starting in the spring?

CF: I did, but was visiting.

MW: I have been on committees that have hired in different semesters.

MA: I'm OK for spring 2022, then.

MW: I'm looking at this financially. If we can have numbers accompanying the different hires, that will help when bringing this to administration.

TS: If we are focusing on the need for people to cover basic needs in the department, would it be beneficial to think of crafting a position around a basic course director? That person would teach the basic courses and be involved in recruiting of adjuncts and have a supervisory role.

MA: I think a good person for that is someone with professional experience.

TS: So not a tenure track position, more of a clinical position or a professor of practice?

MA: Correct. Then later when we hire assistant professors, they will teach in areas of expertise.

MW: We want to put departmental needs first. The administration will be focused on the money they're saving and whether this helps our AAU trajectory. If that's the case, the overall rationale for hiring will be that we will bolster our research. We need to lead with that rationale.

CF: Good point. That's the balancing act we have to play. One element of that is a hire that we know will address a need we have in our core curriculum.

MA: We will need an adjunct in fall 2021, right? Based on the courses we are teaching. We will be open in writing, reporting, editing, ethics, law, theory...

CF: The fall schedule is done at this point, similar to fall 2020 with a couple of modifications. Even with two new hires we will be relying heavily on adjuncts to cover those above-listed courses.

TS: It should be pointed out that a number of these vacancies are created by administration. So, it should be made clear that this department is contributing a considerable sum. We shouldn't be ashamed to request some of that back. We should feel justified in expecting that some of that will be used to bolster our program.

CF: Yes, and no other unit at USF is experiencing what we're experiencing.

DE: And if you look at us historically, we are depleted. We've lost positions in the last 15 years. It's not just that we need to replace the people we have just lost, but we are working with a lean department to begin with.

TS: Yes, we lost a position years ago – I think to the math department.

DE: Yes, with Killenberg, Bob's death and Loretha's departure, we got Bernardo – one position. I have to leave.

MA: I need to leave but will send you a synopsis of my remarks.

MW: Can we put together a timeline of the losses of positions?

CP: It's anecdotal, right?

TS: Yes. I can try to think about what happened since I got here.

MW: That would be useful to present to administration.

CF: I was wondering about our self studies. I can refer to the one before last to see where our roster was back then.

TS: I will try to put together a narrative of the moving pieces since I got here.

CF: Next steps, I will weave together all of this into a draft memo to the dean. Will circulate later today and everyone can take a peek. Monday I want to send this along and move forward with a great sense of urgency.