

Guest Editorial

The Work of Faculty-in-Residence in North American Higher Education

Faculty members sometimes live alongside students in campus residence halls at institutions of higher education. The work of these faculty-in-residence (FIRs) is unique within the professoriate, but it is based on a substantial amount of research that demonstrates positive benefits for students. For this issue of *WORK*, the guest editor presents an introductory article that is the first of its kind to trace the history of FIR work and to provide an overarching analysis of the limited literature on this topic.

The guest editor also offers a window into the distinct world of FIR work through a collection of six separate case studies that augment the abovementioned literature on faculty-student engagement, living-learning communities, and FIRs. Researchers have often used case studies to explore and explain the complex systems surrounding a person, group, or event. By gathering information over an extended period of time, both scholars and practitioners write these six case studies as a means to analyzing the complex phenomena and systems involved in their respective FIR programs. They present rich, thick descriptions of their cases, and discuss the implications of FIR work for the practice of higher education administration.

In their case study, “The Decision, Implementation and Assessment of a Credit-bearing Activity Class by Faculty in Residence: A Case Study,” Janet Callahan, Geoff Harrison, Michael Humphrey, Cala Sielaff, and Melissa Wintrow, examine the work of Faculty-in-Residence within living-learning communities at a residential college at Boise State University. The authors describe how seven FIRs (five of whom live in the residential college and two of whom live out of residence) arrive at the decision to require all students within their living-learning program to enroll in a common, activity-based course in Kinesiology. The purpose of the course is to deepen students’ knowledge of campus resources, to develop an infrastructure

where students could actively engage with other students outside their own living-learning community, and to improve certain conditions for academic success. The authors note the challenges and opportunities of such an endeavor, and highlight the importance of collaborating across departments toward the end goal of educating the “whole” student.

Like Callahan and associates, the case study by C. Daryl Healea and Robert Ribera provides insights into the output of FIR work. “Rhett Talks: The Development, Implementation, and Assessment of a Faculty-in-Residence Program,” details how faculty-in-residence at Boston University helped to develop an event for their larger campus community. The program, dubbed Rhett Talks, showcases an array of intellectual endeavors of faculty from across a large research-intensive university. In particular, Healea and Ribera note that the key to organizing this endeavor exists in the close partnership between student affairs and academic affairs. They describe the obstacles to such partnerships and the challenges to assessing their program, but conclude that the investment by their university community has yielded a positive reaction from students and faculty alike.

Michael Humphrey, Janet Callahan, and Geoff Harrison focus on the experiences of faculty in their case study, “Living with Students: Lessons Learned while Pursuing Tenure, Administration and Raising a Family.” The authors discuss how FIRs handle the blurring of their personal lives with their professional lives, a byproduct of having to live where they work. The three faculty subjects of this case live or actively work with living-learning communities in a residential college. The authors profile the challenges faced by FIRs who juggled their FIR commitments with their attempts to seek tenure, to weigh familial obligations, and to navigate their unique living arrangements. The authors conclude that, despite the challenges, FIR

work has been both professionally and personally rewarding.

Elizabeth A. Pyatak, Jesús Díaz, and Celso Delgado, Jr. discuss FIR work as a form of community service. “Engage/Trojan Neighbors: A Community Service Partnership between an Academic Division and Residential Community,” sheds light on the attempts of FIRs to establish and sustain a community service project in a Los Angeles Neighborhood adjacent to the University of Southern California. The project involves a collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs within a living-learning community. In their work, FIRs face a number of challenges to implement their community service project, and seek to create an infrastructure to sustain the program’s successes into the future.

Ria Rombough and Janice Johnson explore the work of FIRs outside the United States. In their case study, “Faculty-Mentor-in-Res: The Development of a New Faculty-in-Residence Program,” the authors describe how and why McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, decided to establish an FIR program. The authors detail the literature they consult, the benchmarking research they conduct, and their resulting decision to restructure. Specifically, residence life administrators at McGill decide to change long-established staffing roles to start a flexible FIR program that could accommodate faculty

on campus while simultaneously respecting the unique demands of the professoriate. While the program has yet to be tested, the case study demonstrates the obstacles to establishing a new endeavor and provides readers with insights into the work necessary to create a new program on campus.

The last case study in this issue, like Rombough and Johnson, provides insights into the development of a new FIR program on campus. In “The Influences of Faculty-in-Residence Programs on the Role of the Professoriate: A Case Study,” Rishi Sriram describes how Baylor University underwent a paradigm shift that places faculty and their families in student residential communities. The author’s findings demonstrate that FIRs’ experiences have caused them to re-conceptualize their understandings of their work to include the holistic transformation of both them and their students.

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