Recommendation Report

Supporting UWT's International Faculty

Collaboration between UWT Academic Human Resources, Faculty Affairs Committee and Faculty Assembly

Prepared by:

UWT Faculty Affairs Committee (May 12, 2023)

Approved by the Executive Council of Faculty Assembly

Faculty Affairs Committee Members:

- Yonn Dierwechter, School or Urban Studies, 2021-2024
- Christopher Knaus, School of Education, 2021-2024
- Orlando Baiocchi, School of Engineering and Technology, 2022-2025
- Ken Cruz, School of Social Work & Criminal Justice, 2021-2024
- Ehsan Feroz, Milgard School of Business, 2021-2024
- Maria-Tania Bandes Becerra Weingarden, School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences, 2022-2025
- Chris Marriott , Chair: Non-Tenure Track Faculty Forum, Ex-Officio
- Andrew Siebert, FAC Coordinator
- **Chair:** Sharon Laing, School of Nursing & Healthcare Leadership, 2018-2024

Academic Human Resources:

Sarah Davies Breen, Director of Academic HR

Background

The UWT Executive Council tasked the Faculty Affairs Committee to address challenges experienced by international faculty at UWT. The specific charge follows:

Lead the discussion on the challenges international faculty face at UW Tacoma and provide recommendations to address these challenges. Collect information from international faculty on the challenges they face at UW Tacoma. Reach out to program administrators at the schools and Academic Human Resources to learn about legal and bureaucratic challenges faced by the international faculty. Deliver a report on the challenges international faculty face, submitted to the EC, that includes recommendations to address these challenges.

The Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) had several meetings between December 2022 and February 2023 to map out the process for conducting this work including selecting a model for identifying UWT international faculty. After discussions with the Director of Faculty Affairs & Academic Human Resources (AHR), it was determined that international faculty should *self-identify* rather than be identified using the UWT tracking system. An email was sent to all UWT faculty on behalf of AHR and FAC, requesting self-identification of international status and for self-identified faculty to indicate their interest in participating in focus group sessions. (Appendix A shows the all-faculty communication).

Approximately 29 UWT faculty self-identified as international faculty and 17 indicated a willingness to participate in focus group sessions. The final number of participants was 11 (a 38% response rate).

The FAC and AHR hosted two listening sessions on March 13, 2023 (n = 5 respondents) and April 17, 2023 (n = 6 respondents). The FAC coordinator emailed the FG questions 2 weeks in advance to all designated participants. At the close of each FG session, international faculty completed a demographic questionnaire, and their FG session responses were transcribed and analyzed.

Process and Findings

Methodology

Focus group sessions lasted one hour, were hosted using Zoom platform and recorded for accuracy. The sessions were facilitated by the Chair of FAC and co-facilitated by the Director of AHR and a member of the FAC. Six questions were posed to international faculty with prompts provided to clarify the questions (See full list of questions in Appendix B). International faculty were queried about professional, personal, and emotional challenges of being an international faculty; they were asked to give recommendations about ways the university can be supportive; and to assess the impact of race, gender and language on their lived experience as an international faculty.

The FAC transcribed each session verbatim, and derived themes to conceptualize main areas of concern. Recommendations were developed for each problem, and campus units/entities were identified to facilitate implementation of recommended strategies.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Participating International Faculty

A substantial number of respondents identified as female (45%) and had a rank of assistant professor (55%). Approximately 55% reported Korean and Chinese identities, and 27% were White. Sixty-four percent were from SIAS and 45% were employed at UWT for less than three years.

Themes
Two common themes emerged for both focus groups and these were, *"Work Authorization Process Concerns"* and *"Social and Emotional Challenges."* Respondents in session #1 reported two additional themes and they were, *"Teaching and Scholarship Challenges"* and *"Economic Burdens."* Respondents in session #2 reported one additional theme, *"Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Support."*

<u>*Theme A. Work Authorization Process Concerns:*</u>

The challenges identified are as follows:

- ➢ Once offered the job, international faculty need to have timely issuance of H1B visa or will need to leave the country.
- ➢ International faculty do not consistently receive adequate communication about the timeline involved in processing work authorization; the steps to take in the process; what to expect at each juncture; what the institution's steps are in the process; and information about possible extension of timelines based on different circumstances.
- ➢ International faculty do not consistently receive clarity on when self-sponsorship might be needed.
- ➢ International faculty do not consistently receive clear explanations about the impact of the H1B process on re-appointment, clear information about expiration of authorization, and clear information about the alternatives to pursue with their Schools if visa is set to expire.
- ➢ UW International Scholars Office has not been consistently clear about the different experiences based on country of origin, including the existing barriers linked to home countries. For example, international faculty from China and India typically have a much longer waiting period toward the path to Permanent Resident Status which comes with additional challenges including multiple visa renewals, international travel challenges and lost professional opportunities.

- International faculty do not know if they will have a job from year to year due to visa status.
- There are work interruptions due to international faculty needing to leave the US if they do not receive work authorization in time – only given one-year increments.
- Incorrect information about required documentation given to international faculty.
- Multiple requests for documentation from the ISO that have already been provided by the international faculty. Contribute to a feeling among the international faculty that their interests are not being served.
- Divergent and inconsistent experiences of different international faculty based on affiliated School or country of origin.
- Inaccuracies in the information shared between UWS and UWT offices leading to missed timelines for visa processing.
- International faculty on many occasions are forced to do most of the legwork themselves and are then burdened with attendant legal fees.
- Faculty putting in extra effort/work to manage their own visa process has contributed to disruptions in day-to-day university work.
- Challenges in retaining other international faculty due to the experience of visa delays and a consequent departure by new international faculty from the university.

Selected Quotes:

"I have my share of H1B process stories - long and delayed and I had to leave the country, because I got the offer in June 2021, but my H1B wouldn't be issued on time and so I have to leave the country, I have to go back to [X country] and then come back here in January 2022 to start my position. It was a long delay, but I just had to wait until I got it. Now the problem that I am facing is a Permanent Residency sponsorship at UW. So, I actually didn't know about this process so much because they didn't communicate with me about what's going to happen." **IF-2**

"Another issue is yes, the International Scholars Office is located in Seattle and sometimes the communication is not really smooth. So, one time when I had to change my visa status, the conversation was missed between the Seattle campus and the Tacoma campus. So, I stayed in the US for about two months without any visa, that is a huge issue. So, at the Tacoma campus, we don't have all the (information) because we don't have an office of international scholar. Not many international scholars are at the Tacoma campus. So, this kind of process (from) the Department or Schools, the process can be different. So, I think there must be some office, or some person, or some staff, who can unify this process for the international scholar at the Tacoma campus." **IF-7**

"I got some support through the first two stages and that took quite a while and then that depended on which advisor I had. Now I have one (advisor) that is responsive and helpful but I was told that the 3rd stage of the Green Card process is between me and the federal government and that I need to hire an attorney which is $5k and I tried to do it myself and it didn't make it through and now I am considering whether I need to get an attorney or not." **IF-8**

Recommendations

Suggested recommendations to assist with identified challenges (including the responsible entities are as follows):

I. UW International Scholars Office

- o *I. Communication with International Faculty*
  - Communicate clearly with international faculty about timelines; what happens when timelines are missed and strategies to stay on top of activities.
  - Be clear with international faculty about needed documentation to process work authorization and maintain an efficient tracking system of the documents already received to eliminate duplicated requests.
  - If possible, emphasize use of the Premium approach in visa processing because this takes less time.

UWT Academic Human Resources

- o *I. Website Development*
  - Include an "International Faculty" link on existing website with resources and information to unify support for UWT's international faculty. The information on the AHR webpage should include resources targeting the following groups: International faculty, School-level supervisors of the international scholar including Deans/Directors/Chairs within Schools, staff who work directly with international faculty in Schools, and search committees involved in hiring new faculty.
    - Reach out to existing/senior international faculty who have gone through the process to acquire information and resources that they feel should be included on the website.
    - Reach out UWT Schools and request a sharing of information with AHR about 'what is working well' in addressing needs of international faculty within individual Schools.
    - Review existing websites from other institutions that support international scholars (faculty and students):
      - o Georgetown University, [Faculty & Administrators | International Student & Scholar Services | Georgetown University](#)
      - o The above site includes guidelines for recruiting teaching faculty; guidelines for sponsoring employees for permanent residency; process of inviting and hiring international faculty at all levels (lecturers, professors, post-docs); explanation of the various visa status – H1B, TN visas.
      - o Arizona State University, [Other Faculty/Scholars visa categories | ISSC | ASU](#)
      - o Sample support resource (this document is for international *students* but can be a template for

developing a faculty resource document), [Faculty & Administrator Resource Guide.pdf | Powered by Box](#)

- o *II. Communication with UW's International Scholars Office*
  - Work closely with UW International Scholars Office to ensure they are on track with all international faculty's paperwork as well as above website development.
- o *III. Communication with UWT's International Faculty*
  - Communicate regularly with UWT international faculty to inform them of the process of work authorization.
    - Provide follow-up support to the international faculty and this may include frequent check-ins; frequent information sharing; communication of relevant information.
    - Provide upfront communication of potential unexpected events including delays attributed to missed deadlines.
- o *IV. Communication with International Scholar's Schools*
  - AHR website should provide information for UWT staff working with international faculty and this might include a specific link directed to staff in Schools titled: "what you need to know to support international scholars (faculty and students)."

II. UWT Senior International Faculty

- o *I. Peer Mentoring of Junior International Scholar*
  - Peer mentoring for new international faculty by more senior international faculty to inform about possible challenges.
- o *II. Resource Sharing if Applicable*
  - Senior international faculty to help put together a list of resources in a packet (consider all the challenges that they went through as a new international faculty and what were needed supports --e.g., affordable legal supports and prices and how to access legal supports).
    - Share resources with AHR to be distributed to new international faculty as well as have posted on AHR website.

III. UWT: Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) or Office of Global Affairs (OGA)

- o *I. Sponsor Educational Workshop for Staff, Faculty, and International Scholar*
  - OEI/OGA should outreach to international faculty to ascertain the types of educational workshops that can support ongoing integration into the UWT community.
  - OEI/OGA should offer the suggested workshops and create videos to be reviewed by international faculty.
  - OEI/OGA should create a link on their website dedicated to hosting videos addressing the specific needs of international faculty.

- [Resources | Center for Equity and Inclusion | University of Washington Tacoma (uw.edu)](uw.edu)

IV. UWT Schools/AHR

- *I. Offer Package to include Legal Assistance for International Faculty as Appropriate*
  - As part of hiring package, UWT possibly offset fees involved in processing the work visa by offering legal assistance as part of the start-up package for international faculty. This can be similar to support offered to new faculty such as provision of lab space.

V. UWT-wide

- *I. UWT ISO Established*
  - UWT may consider establishing an ISO Office on campus that works directly with international faculty or other shared support structures in collaboration with UWS.

Theme B. Social and Emotional Challenges

- Long wait times involved in work authorization is a form of instability and feelings of stress and distress.
- The waiting game is mentally draining, especially not knowing if the international faculty will obtain the work authorization.
- Mental duress interrupts work productivity.
- Additional worry that if international status is disclosed to specific individuals on campus, that more expectations will be placed on the faculty with the thought that the faculty is unable to do anything about it – protections against possible abuse.
- Fear of the unknown is a concern, and it is especially distressing when children and other family members are involved.
- The difficulty of going through emotional upheavals all alone and having to individually figure out solutions.
- Model Minority perception that East Asians can deal with challenges, still be successful and achieve goals regardless of hardships that are experienced. This perception can lead to an assessment that this group does not require support or assistance.
- Invisibility of being an international faculty. Other faculty and other members of the university may not know that someone is an international faculty and that they are experiencing certain unique burdens.
- International faculty feel isolated or invisible because the current DEI structure does not include their experiences or their unique identities as international faculty.
- Isolation leads to international faculty retreating into themselves and often second-guessing themselves in campus-level interactions with colleagues.

- ➢ Fear experienced by faculty due to missed timelines during visa processing.
- ➢ During faculty searches, there is insufficient understanding of the international scholar-specific concerns (when a candidate is an international scholar) by the larger committee members and this leads to discomfort experienced by the lone international faculty who serves on these committees.

Quotes:

*"I wanted to echo (*IF-1 and IF-2*) regarding the emotional stress that we have to deal with. And like (*IF-2*) said, I had to deal with this visa issue for a lot of my life in the US. So, I just live with this. But sometimes it is just a lot and I wish I could talk to someone."* **IF-3**

"The third one is about feeling isolation. I know whenever, we have DEI issue, we talk about people of color and gender/sexual identity issue, but I don't see any workshop that has a specific international faculty category. So, I want to see international faculty in leadership positions, to hear tips and ideas shared by them. I would love to hear from and learn from them. This is one of the few school-wide initiatives that I can share struggles and things like that. So, emotions and community-wide bonding and building are lacking for international scholars and that is very important as well. Thank you." **IF-9**

"It is just difficult to talk to other folks because they haven't gone through this. And the colleagues that I work closely with are not international faculty, so I just have to deal with it on my own, so I just bear with it." **IF-3**

Recommendations

I. UWT: Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) <u>or</u> Office of Global Affairs (OGA)

- o ***I. Assist in establishing a community for international faculty to engage with each other.***
  - ▪ Obtain permission to obtain the contact information for UWT international faculty from AHR and offer a physical space for international faculty to get-together and establish a community of international faculty that includes junior and senior faculty.
  - ▪ Sponsor support groups for international faculty to discuss mutual challenges and to share resources based on identified topics/needs from the international faculty.
  - ▪ Offer events that showcase the various identities (multicultural status) on campus including international status.

II. UWT AHR

- o ***I. Assist with peer mentoring and connecting to larger UWT community.***
  - • Obtain authorization from existing international faculty to share email, names, country of origin and DOB with new international faculty to facilitate peer mentoring.
  - • During new faculty orientation, link new international faculty with other international faculty on campus.

- During new faculty orientation, publicize the work of the Office of Global Affairs whereby international faculty are given opportunities to teach courses across nations (provides a feeling of being valued and offers students different perspectives) – UWT COIL Program.

III. UWT-Wide Culture

- The university should not fear identifying international faculty nor be concerned about singling out anyone. This fear creates barriers for international faculty to self-identify and to get to know and connect with each other.

IV. UWT Schools

- o *I. Mutual exchange of cultures, values and lived experiences.*
  - Value the experiences of international faculty by encouraging them to share cultures, values and lived experiences in classrooms with students.

Theme C. Teaching and Scholarship

➢ The language piece can be an issue evident from student evaluations and from staff and colleagues. [Teaching]

➢ Challenges inherent in engaging in and sustaining international-level scholarships. Funding not available to attend international conferences or to collect data in countries outside of the US – this is a possible barrier to sustaining scholarship activities that have an international focus. [Scholarship]

Quotes:

*"If I am not well-organized, my (*English*) language is not really good, I know that. But that is the reason why I spend a lot of time to prepare for my class, a lot of time, but I also had a lot of negative experiences about this. At the end of the quarter, some students approached me and gave comments appreciating my efforts and devotion to the subject matter. But they always add some type of negative comments about my language and not by themselves but by others. I realized that a lot of advisors actually warn the students about my language, and I think that is really insulting."* **IF-7**

*"…the (issue) is that it is a funding problem because I do international research, I want to go to international conferences that is more expensive than if you go to a conference in the US. But also, interviewing folks in [X country], having to go there, and then maybe having to do the (*interviews*) on zoom, it is not the same. So, for me, the big piece is kind of what funding is available so we can pursue our research if we have international focus of our research. And also, dissemination, right, how do we get our findings out? It is good to get them out to US audience but that is not everyone right, and so that will mean more traveling and so more funding."* **IF-4**

Recommendations

I. UWT Deans and Chairs

- *Promote tolerance and acceptance*
  - DEI Councils in Schools should work to promote all identities and discourage biases among faculty and staff.
  - Consider additional models of teaching evaluations for international faculty including a senior international faculty conducting peer evaluations.

II. UWT: Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) or Office of Global Affairs (OGA)

- *Workshop/seminar offerings*
  - OEI or OGA host workshops/seminars regarding funding for international scholars to engage in transnational scholarships.

III. UWT Senior International Faculty

- *Peer mentoring/sharing*
  - Share experiences (if any) on transnational scholarship with other international faculty.
  - Work with new international faculty and Office of Global Affairs to research available scholarships for transnational research activities.

Theme D. Economic Challenges

➢ Excess costs associated with processing the application for the Green Card for which the international faculty is solely responsible.

➢ Limited socio-economic opportunities for international faculty without Green Cards include inability to purchase property.

➢ Limited opportunities for international faculty include non-existent summer employment with another company, unavailable funding opportunities to expand research or lack of volunteering opportunities.

➢ Some international faculty are unaware that as they go through the process, it might be necessary to retain a lawyer due to the high volume of paperwork involved.

Quotes:

"I have tried to pursue some summer opportunities. I haven't taught a lot in the summer, but I have tried to pursue some summer opportunities, but then finding out that when you are on the work visa, that you cannot be paid by any other organizations other than UW. So, this has really limited my options to pursue any other work that is related to my scholarship." **IF-2**

"But a general request that I can make is with the Premium Process – I know that it is an extra amount of funds that we have to pay, but it is important. So, if it is possible and if it is something that can be taken into consideration, if it is possible to use Premium (both for H1Bs and Green Cards), I think that will save a lot of time." **IF-10**

I. UWT Schools

o *I. Re-Assess Offer Package to International Faculty as Appropriate*
- As part of hiring package, UWT possibly offset fees involved in processing the work visa by offering some type of compensation as part start-up package for international faculty similar to support provided in setting up lab space for new faculty.

II. UWT Senior International Faculty

o *I. Peer Mentoring of Junior International Scholar*
- Peer mentoring for new international faculty by more senior international faculty to inform about possible challenges.
- Open dialogue and sharing of resources/information about navigating socio-economic challenges inherent in not having a work visa.

o *II. Resource-Sharing if Applicable*
- Senior international faculty to help put together a list of resources in a packet (consider all the challenges that they went through as a new international faculty and what were needed supports --e.g., affordable legal supports and prices and how to access legal supports).
  - Share resources with AHR to be distributed to new international faculty as well as have posted on AHR website.

III. UWT: AHR

o *IV. Communication with International Scholar's Schools*
- New faculty orientation may include discussions around addressing SES factors/challenges as international faculty.

Theme E. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

➢ The racial climate for international faculty is not recognized, including experiences of micro-aggressions.
➢ International faculty feel that the current DEI structure does not include their lived experiences or their unique identities as international faculty.
➢ Negative stereotyping towards young-looking female international faculty have occurred from students in the classroom.
➢ Some international faculty, due to close proximity in physical attributes to U.S. majority culture (white and male), have felt that their unique concerns are often dismissed as not as relevant as other international faculty without such close proximity.

- White international faculty misunderstood to be from the U.S., yet they have unique struggles including insufficient command of English language and existing American jargon, all of which interfere with classroom engagement with students.
- There exists a language barrier for international faculty with strong accents.

Quotes:

"But beyond the visa issue, I just want to talk about the culture and environment. I know that we had the racial climate survey a few years ago and we are working on it and because of all the DEI initiatives, I really appreciate it. But at the same time, I want to raise personal experiences – micro aggressions. International scholars raised certain remarks and they were not taken seriously for some reason on the committees." **IF-9**

"One of the biggest impacts on me is that it is sometimes very hard to read the air and to pick up on certain cues, sometimes that makes me insecure, and I don't know how to respond. Am I right? (I ask myself)*. Am I responding in a culturally-acceptable way? That makes me constantly unsure about myself. Is it ok to feel this way about the situation? Am I angry about this situation? I become less confident about how I feel and how I approach the situation."* **IF-9**

"Another thing that I did want to sorta bring up, is that, I am a white, international faculty, and so, it can be very common for me to be overlooked as international faculty; a lot of faculty assume that I am American. And, this can get a different kind of challenge because I am trying to advocate for my challenge as an international faculty and they dismiss them, by saying 'you are not international enough.' Or 'you don't look like you're international so you should not need help' And, I've got a thick skin and I can push through that, but it does wear you down after ten years. And you stop advocating for yourself and you stop saying that you need this because you don't want to hear the dismissals again. So, it can be tough. Thank you." **IF-6**

Recommendations

I. UWT: Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI)

- ***Hold workshops that target specific challenges experienced by the faculty at large.***
  - Microaggressions:
    - Microaggressions targeting international faculty and ways to avoid.
    - Target: Deans/Chairs/Faculty in each School
  - International Faculty American Experience:
    - Presentation of the unique experiences of different international faculty and the challenges faced at American institutions.
  - Acclimating to American "Teaching" Culture:
    - Acclimating to US education system including pedagogical structures
      - Description of the grading system, GPAs, transfer process from community colleges to 4-year universities, etc.
      - Overview of nuances associated with student engagement.
      - Presentation of effective teaching strategies.
  - Challenges and Opportunities of Bilingualism:

- Presentation of challenges and opportunities of bilingualism including experiences of international faculty who present with heavy accents.
- Target: Staff and other faculty

II. UWT AHR

o ***I. Peer mentoring and connecting to larger UWT community.***
- AHR obtain authorization from existing international faculty to share email, names, country of origin and DOB with new international faculty to facilitate peer mentoring.
- During new faculty orientation, link junior international faculty with other international faculty on campus.
- During new faculty orientation, publicize the work of the Office of Global Affairs whereby international faculty are given opportunities to teach courses across nations (provides a feeling of being valued and offers students different perspectives) – UWT COIL Program.

Summary

This report offers straight forward strategies to support UWT international faculty as some navigate an often lonely and challenging terrain of not achieving work authorization while maintaining a portfolio of teaching, research, and service. Specific units are identified that can make a substantial difference in the adjustment, livelihood, and mental well-being of international faculty. The Faculty Affairs Committee, Faculty Assembly and Academic Human Resources have made the commitment to fully support UWT's international faculty.

Appendix A:

Dear Faculty,

<u>Background</u>

The Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) is charged with evaluating the challenges faced by international faculty. To do this work we would like UWT faculty to help us identify "international" status by self-identifying as an international faculty. With your support, we wish to then select a subset of self-identified international faculty to participate in a discussion group with FAC and Academic Human Resources (AHR) to discuss specific challenges experienced as an international faculty and ascertain strategies that can be deployed by UWT and UW to best support international faculty. Some challenges that you experience may include some of the items below:

- Starting the new teaching position at UWT as an international faculty
- Stresses of tenure related to being an international faculty
- Balancing work and family life
- Understanding international culture
- Navigating visa concerns
- Navigating immigration concerns
- Not having sufficient resources from UW to support international faculty in order to address various concerns/stresses
- Not having sufficient resources/support from UW to support early career development
- Difficulty establishing professional and social networks
- Difficulty with some students who might expect U.S.-based accents from instructors.

<u>Questions:</u>

Please respond to the following prompts:

Do you self-identify as an International Faculty at UWT?

Yes____   No___

If you identify as an International Faculty, would you be interested in participating in a one-hour discussion group session with other international faculty (no more than 5 persons per session). The session will be facilitated by members of FAC and UWT Academic HR?

Yes___   No___

Appendix B:

Questions for International Faculty at UWT

The Faculty Affairs Committee and Academic Human Resources are interested in learning about the challenges faced by international faculty working at UWT as well as the opportunities gained by being part of the UWT community. We want to make this a conversation so that faculty will feel comfortable elaborating and expanding on the questions presented.

Q1A: What are some pressing challenges or barriers that you currently experience or have experienced as an international faculty working at the University of Washington Tacoma?

Additional Prompt: [In your response, please also explain how these challenges or barriers have impacted you and if possible, include impacts on your work, mental/emotional health and or your personal life].

Q1B: For the challenges and barriers that you've talked about, what might be some strategies that the university can put in place to be more supportive of international faculty and help to reduce challenges or barriers?

Additional Prompt: [It might be helpful to think in terms of immediate or local strategies, as well as long-term or systemic strategies. All suggestions are welcome.]

Q2A: What do you see to be some opportunities or benefits that you have experienced working as an international faculty at UWT?

Q2B: Have these opportunities or benefits impacted you, and your work, mental/emotional health, personal life or otherwise? Explain.

Q3: Do you see race, gender and language shaping the experience of international faculty? If so, explain.

Q4: Do you have additional thoughts and perspectives to add to our conversation.