

2024 CTE Faculty Fellow

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OFFICE OF FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

I was new to all of this. New to working at a university. New to being a faculty member. New to mentoring. New to being recognized for my ideas. Like many of us who find ourselves in this unique position in academia after being told to go to college to improve your life chances, I knew how to do school. How to be smart. How to be seen enough to get good grades, but invisible enough to avoid being identified as a disruptive Black person. In graduate school, I was mentored to be an activist. I protested against injustices directed as Black people in general, and at my department in specific. I put on programs and courses that increased knowledge of African American life and history. I worked (for free) in my department when resources were cut, using my technological and creative skills to support my faculty (Typing up a faculty member’s hand-written book chapters in the 2010s was interesting). All this happened while I was an introvert, who has difficulty navigating unwritten rules. In starting my faculty life at LMU, I realized I am often the last to know or understand what others may know to ask or have someone to tell. This obliviousness has caused some delay in my career development and a loss of overall lifetime pay (I joke that I will be the last person tenured in my cohort, but my humor covers the stress of only recently figuring out how to be an effective teacher-scholar on my terms/with my personality).

I present this brief biography to note that I am not alone. Many of us entered the faculty without an inkling of knowledge of what it means to be in this role. We are figuring it out as we go along starting from our unique experiences. However, some of us have more resources than others, some of us have more charisma, more mentors, more Chronicle articles, more friends in similar situations, more supportive family members, more industry experience, more departmental or college structures, etc. For some, being a faculty member is a clear process.

For some, being a faculty member is and continues to be this mysterious game, that feels unwinnable, or in a less catastrophizing thought, feels like you are still looking for the secret code.

Yet, we know that who knows the ins and outs of being a faculty across the university, colleges, and departments is unequal. We are not supposed to do the comparison game, but some faculty are more visible than others in terms of public talks, awards, and accolades. Some faculty are more involved behind the scenes in committees, student affairs collaborations, and affinity groups. Some faculty lead often. Some faculty are happy. These faculty appear to know how to navigate this space, even if they themselves have imposter syndrome. But there are others who struggle, cry, and feel isolated because lack what might be necessary and life-changing knowledge, and the ability to find out feels impossible or insurmountable. Faculty members who continue to lack knowledge are disadvantaged. They face limited opportunities, experience increased stress, and feel distanced from the broader community.

As Jennifer, I listen and share what I know as best I can. I am fortunate to have some time and support to learn about this role and its potential resources, and I try to pass this information onto to others. I make time to check in with colleagues, because I know I am not in this alone. And I do not want you to continue to feel alone.

As a faculty fellow in the Office of Faculty Development, I have had the opportunity to talk about how I have experienced privileges and shortcomings in faculty development while at LMU. I speak from my experience and tell what I have observed in my time as an Assistant Professor. I appreciate these conversations, as space and time to express my truths without fear of misrecognition or retribution.

Moreover, I am glad that this has been a semester of change. The CTE and Karie Huchting has already been a beacon of support for faculty, and I have benefited from that work. With the proposal and implementation of a Center for Faculty Development, and Heather Tarleton as

Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Professional Development, there is a movement to empower faculty, consistently providing them with support, tools, and funds to grow their abilities as scholars, teachers, and leaders. There is an outpouring of support from various administrative offices and the work is underway. I believe Fall 2024 will be the start of a faculty-centered era, that not only cultivates an empathetic and well-connected faculty, but hopefully, will develop new voices who will usher in more dynamic and needed change.

I want us as faculty to know our roles, how we exist at LMU, and how we want to grow as people in academia. I want us to continue to ask how we make LMU a space where faculty thrive – where we care for and develop the whole body of faculty.

“...in order that there may be no dissension within the body and each part may have equal concern for all the others. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it. If one member is honored, all the members rejoice together with it.” 1 Corinthians 12:25 & 26.