

Navigating the Tenure-Track Journey: Reflections and Recommendations for New Faculty

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Abstract

This article explores the journey of a new faculty member in academia, beginning with their unexpected transition to faculty life and navigating the tenure-track process. It highlights challenges faced in the early years, with a focus on two contrasting teaching observations. The first observation, featuring unexpected feedback, raises questions about probationary committees and support for new faculty, while the second, marked by collaborative feedback and empathy, underscores the power of constructive engagement. The article provides recommendations for new faculty, encouraging them to foster a supportive community, maintain mentors, trust their instincts, and seek help when needed. Academic leaders, including probationary committee members, are advised to share resources, offer constructive feedback, promote a respectful culture, and actively support new faculty. Senior leaders should facilitate connections, mentorship, foster inclusivity, and review policies for equity, diversity, and inclusion. By implementing these recommendations, institutions can create a nurturing environment where new faculty members feel empowered and valued in their academic careers. This article contributes to the ongoing dialogue on improving the experiences of new faculty members and enhancing the academic culture in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Tenure-track faculty; Career development; Teaching evaluations; Academia career; Faculty experience

Becoming a new faculty member on the tenure-track can be a very exciting journey; aside from completing your doctoral degree, securing a long-term teaching position with the prospect of permanency is a seal of approval that you have ‘made it’ in your academic journey. With excitement also comes challenges, both anticipated and unexpected.

This is my story of going through the initial years of the tenure-track journey as someone who came from a non-traditional route into academia. I start by describing how I got to where I am through outlining my ‘career constellation’ (Magnusson, 2014; Super et al., 1996) and how I have

approached my ‘protean career’ (Hall, 1996, 2002, 2004). Then, I go into sharing my experience as a tenure-track faculty member, focusing on both positive and negative experiences during my probationary period, and the questions and thoughts each experience raised for me then and now. I conclude with final thoughts and recommendations for the higher education field to consider with respect to supporting new faculty members, which, in turn, is intended to contribute to student, faculty, and institutional success.

My intention in telling my story is multifaceted. Firstly, I aim to provide new faculty members with a deeper

understanding of the potential realities they may encounter throughout their journey. By sharing reflection and lessons I have derived from my own lived experiences, I hope they can find value and guidance in navigating their own paths. Secondly, I want to encourage institutions to consider how they can better support new faculty members, as an academic's journey can often feel isolating or overwhelming when faced with unknown challenges. It is important to shed light on these issues within the higher education field as a whole, without resorting to condemning or criticizing specific workplaces. While I am immensely grateful to the institutions that have hired and developed me, I am using specific examples from my experiences within them to help illustrate both challenges and benefits that I've experienced; it is crucial to acknowledge that the issues I mention are largely systemic within higher education and need to be considered collectively.

Professional Origin Story

As I walked across the stage during my undergraduate graduation, a sense of accomplishment washed over me, and I declared to myself that my formal education journey had come to an end. Being a first-generation university student, I had surpassed the educational achievements of anyone in my family before me, and I found contentment in that milestone. Making my family proud as the first-born daughter in a traditional Asian household? Check. Landing a permanent job? Check. Accomplishing various other goals? Check.

When it came to employment opportunities, I didn't have to search far. Throughout my senior undergraduate years, I had been working part-time at my alma mater. Just months before graduation, I had the good fortune of securing a permanent position in the new student orientation office

where I had previously served as a paraprofessional. Over the next decade, my professional trajectory in student affairs and services mirrored that of a co-operative education or practicum student: I actively sought out temporary projects and assignments to broaden my horizons within the field. In this way, I embarked on a journey where I continuously expanded my professional skill set, allowing me to navigate the realm of student affairs and services with confidence and enthusiasm. I didn't know it then, but in hindsight, I was living a protean career (Hall, 1996, 2002, 2004) that capitalized on my desire to continually develop and grow my expertise.

According to Hall (1996), a protean career is a career path that is characterized by self-directed and self-motivated behaviour, adaptability, and continuous learning in response to changing work environments and individual aspirations. It represents a shift away from traditional, linear career paths toward more flexible and personalized approaches to work. In protean careers, individuals take personal responsibility for managing their own careers and making choices that align with their values, interests, and goals. They prioritize personal fulfilment, self-development, and learning over external markers of success such as hierarchical advancement or financial rewards. They actively seek out opportunities for growth and are willing to take risks and make career transitions to pursue their desired paths.

Although a protean career defies a lot of what society has come to expect and deem as a successful career 'progression', Hall argues that the concept of a protean career reflects the changing nature of work in the modern world, largely due to factors such as globalization, technological advancements, and shifts in societal values (World Economic Forum, 2023). Traditional career structures are becoming less

prevalent, and individuals have greater freedom and responsibility to shape their own career trajectories (Buford et al., 2022).

I was fortunate that I somewhat fell into a protean career trajectory; leaders within my then institution consistently reached out to me to take on special initiatives, and this gave me an incredible opportunity to amass experience and insights across a wide range of institutional departments, programmes, and services. I had gained skills and experiences having worked in departments such as university advancement, student development, campus life and engagement, first year experience, academic advising, career and volunteer services, and residence life. My intrapreneurial spirit, combined with the strong ability to foster connections and build partnerships, was recognized and well-utilized as I moved from assistant to manager roles.

While I found immense joy in pursuing and learning from unique short-term experiences, I still felt as though I needed to achieve that societal success of having a job title that included terms like “Associate Director” or “Director”. Despite my breadth of experience and overall likeability, I ran into an unintended issue: On multiple occasions I was given feedback by hiring managers that they didn’t find my resume and trajectory to be “focused enough”, and that the successful candidates had a more logical narrative of progressing within a single area. This lived experience reinforced that protean careers aren’t well-understood (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Upon reflection, I began to question if ‘the’ advanced job title (and subsequent responsibilities) was truly what I wanted. As I observed leaders in positions that I aspired to achieve, I began to recognize that the lifestyles they were leading weren’t conducive to the future I was hoping to create for myself and my family. While it

was the natural progression for me to consider middle and senior leadership roles, I gradually realized I did not aspire to ‘climb the ladder’. Working directly with students gave me purpose, and from my observations of supervisors and leaders I worked for, moving up in the hierarchy meant I would lose this direct student connection.

Ultimately, I realized I valued pursuing work that was meaningful to me and that I’d rather invest my time in continuing to learn and develop, rather than ‘climbing the career ladder.’ Upon this realization, I felt liberated and reassured that continuing to take on termed roles and projects is a suitable career strategy for me. I was, and still am, grateful to Amundson’s (2010) invitation to critically examine the ladder of success metaphor:

This image [of a career ladder] worked brilliantly in a closed and well-structured system, but in today’s world most employees have lost faith in climbing the standard ladder of success. Ladders within companies make sense as long as companies are static, and mergers and takeovers don’t become part of the corporate reality ... The image of the ladder no longer seems to be viable under these conditions (p. 60).

I found myself subscribed to the notion of “career flow” (Niles et al., 2011) where I could ebb and flow from oceans to rivers, collecting wisdom and knowledge along the way to benefit the communities I serve. Additionally, I am also drawn to CERIC’s (2023) Guiding Principles of Career Development which employ a canoe metaphor where, “we use it on our journey, we stock it with the tools we need, and we proactively steer it to our destination; sometimes we face rapids, and as the environment changes so might our course” (p. 1). It is with this mindset, one of adaptability and flexibility, that I have

approached my career, and that eventually led me into the academic tenure-track faculty opportunity.

Entry to Faculty Life

Since I did not wish to pursue a path in administration, I was hitting a professional ceiling at the institution. A fresh start was what I needed. It wouldn't be long after this pivotal realization that I was recruited by a colleague from another higher education institution for a short-term role in co-operative education situated in their campus career centre.

My new institution classified co-operative education educators as faculty members, hence this was my unintentional foray into faculty life. It's important to note that I began this role during my first semester in doctoral studies; despite being 'certain' at the time of my undergraduate convocation that I was finished with schooling, eventually I changed my mind and went back to school, as I was continually inspired – and urged – by several supervisors and mentors who pursued graduate studies in educational leadership. Aside from my regular duties, and keeping true to my desire to dabble in multiple areas and engage in interesting projects, I became involved in supporting numerous institutional projects from serving on the Healthy University Initiative Committee, facilitating consultations on the university's policy on sexual violence and misconduct, to lending my voice to narrate the university's phone tree system, and conducting a year-long research project on how the university was supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. My student affairs background and project-based career experience continued to serve me well as I took on these opportunities. Furthermore,

every project solidified my growing reputation as a creative problem solver, connector, and cross-pollinator of ideas.

Seven years later, I was recruited again by a respected colleague for a tenure-track role at another local university, marking the start of another new professional adventure. In Canada, an academic career trajectory consists of three ranks: assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor. New faculty members typically begin in tenure-track positions as assistant professors. To advance to the next rank of associate professor, they perform a combination of teaching, research, and service at their institution. At the end of a five- or six-year period, they prepare and present a dossier consisting of their CV, teaching observations and evaluations, publications and presentations, and list of service and engagements, etc. The dossier is reviewed and evaluated by tenured peers, who make recommendations to the institution on whether the applicant should be promoted. If a promotion is not recommended or granted, the applicant's role at the institution is terminated (Acker & Webber, 2017; Jones et al., 2012).

Despite the high stakes, what made this particular opportunity enticing was that the assistant professorship contained my two favourite words: "career" and "learning". According to the job description, the successful candidate would not only teach courses on personal work/life transitions, reflective practice, career development, and related subjects to second-to-fourth year students, but also take a leadership role in curriculum design, pedagogy, capstone learning, and portfolio creation. These types of roles are currently rare in my country's higher education field. The chance to shape career education and seamlessly integrate it into the academic curriculum filled me with excitement; it felt like a challenge perfectly suited to my unique skill set.

First Year: Muddied Waters

Of course, if I tell you the rest of my story was smooth sailing, it wouldn't be a good story to share. As a new faculty member at the institution, for the first two years, I underwent the typical faculty probationary period where my teaching and instructional skills were observed and evaluated by a small committee of tenured faculty members. The intention of these evaluations is to focus upon highlighting "areas of strength and of where there is room for improvement in teaching ... this [teaching observation] report should focus on and reflect upon the effectiveness of the methods used".

During my first semester, one committee member came to observe my career development course designed for students in their second and third year of their undergraduate studies. The course participants were a combination of international and domestic students pursuing a variety of disciplines (e.g., arts and humanities, business, science). Some were aiming to complete their diploma and transition beyond the institution and others continuing to complete their degree programmes. The course consisted of asynchronous components complemented by synchronous classes conducted over Zoom as it was the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic when most courses were delivered online.

The committee member observed an asynchronous course module focused on career planned happenstance (Krumboltz, 2009; Krumboltz & Levin, 2004; Mitchell et al., 1999), which in the career development field is a well-known theory validated by many empirical studies. The component they observed:

- provided context on career happenstance theory;

- discussed the idea that your major does not lead to your career aspiration;
- guided reflective activities on the idea of luck, taking action, and happenstance that asked students to reflect on how they are leveraging the five skills of career planned happenstance (curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk taking) and to identify short- and long-term actions they need to take to get closer to their goals; students then shared this in online discussion forums and exchanged advice with one another;
- incorporated a personal journal reflecting on what they took away from the lesson and how learning this theoretical concept would help with their career development; and
- provided additional resources for those who wished to learn more.

At my previous institution when I taught similar courses, students consistently remarked that learning about the theory and the five skills of planned happenstance were immensely beneficial. It helped them make connections about chanced events in their lives, and how they could now take action to generate unplanned career possibilities. Furthermore, the theory was one that is personally relevant to me as I draw from my own life to bring the theoretical concepts to life in my courses.

As a faculty member, I am no stranger to constructive criticism and actively seek it from students and colleagues as part of my professional and pedagogical development process. However, I found my observation report from this committee member to be peculiar. I was under the impression that the purpose of the observation report focuses on my teaching ability, as described earlier by the probationary teaching observation instructions. Despite evaluating my teaching ability as 5 out of 5, the committee member,

whose discipline was outside of the career development field, went on to include the following statement in my formal review: “My primary concern relates to the depth of the course overall – no stated readings, thin critical lens”. They continued to expand upon how applicable – or not – the content may be to all students, including those of diverse and non-traditional backgrounds. Notably, they remarked that, “international students may not have the luxury of career [planned] happenstance in quite the same ways”. When I was reading this remark for the first time, I felt a sense of dissonance as my historic teaching and personal lived experience and empirical evidence spanning multiple decades completely contradicted this comment. Student interest and engagement – regardless of ethnicity and origin – was extremely high whenever I discussed the theory and its applicability in career and life.

When I let the words settle in my mind, I asked myself, “Is my first semester at this institution also my last?” Annon et al. (2018) state that new faculty members often face challenges in managing expectations of colleagues at their new institutions, especially those who hold more seniority and can potentially influence their future at the institution. For this reason, showing vulnerability and seeking support can be seen as a sign of weakness. Laudel and Gläser (2008) identify new faculty members as “the most vulnerable group” (p. 388) in academia due to factors such as high competition for permanent academic positions and intense pressure to excel in all three domains of teaching, research, and service, which often means forgoing wellbeing and work-life balance. In exploring the perspectives of new faculty members, Acker and Webber (2017) discuss the precarity of their roles, highlighting issues around “rocking the boat as an

assistant professor [can lead to] potentially serious consequences” (p. 546).

Despite the warnings from these scholars, my gut was advising me to speak up. I decided to reach out to the chair of the committee – someone I trusted – to seek their perspective. They validated my concerns and acknowledged the peculiarity of the feedback. They advised that I compose a detailed response (defence) to the report, which would be included as an addendum to the teaching evaluation. In my response, I reinforced the effectiveness of the career planned happenstance theory for non-traditional students, particularly international students, and emphasized that students reinforced how valuable the concept was through their reflective journal responses. I also explained that a more in-depth critical analysis was planned for later in the term and that students are encouraged throughout the term to explore social class and job search strategies, prompting students to reflect on their own circumstances and how they impact their career planning. I defended my teaching approach, which focuses on strengths and building confidence through exploring current talents and successes, identifying that this approach aligns with well-researched theories of hope and resilience in career development (Niles et al., 2019). Lastly, I clarified that the week I was observed had lighter readings to allow students ample time to engage with an interactive map, participate in discussions, and complete a major assignment due the following week.

To ensure the response was professional, prior to submission, I had several mentors in the career development and higher education fields review it. Mentors in educational senior leadership roles remarked that if they saw similar evaluative reports, they would have asked the committee member to rewrite the report so that the feedback was constructive, respectful, and focused

explicitly on teaching practices (and not content) and urged me to raise my concerns with leadership. I did so at my annual meeting with my leader, who said though a rewrite was not feasible, their summary report would describe all teaching observations and student course evaluations in my first year, which were overall extremely positive.

While I felt slightly relieved once I had submitted my response, I also wondered about the experiences of other new faculty colleagues. Did they also encounter feedback like this? Did they need to defend themselves and their disciplines in terms of their pedagogical approaches? Consequently, the following questions emerged for me:

- What support can institutions provide new faculty members so they feel supported?
- How do institutions select committee members to serve on probationary committees?
- What training and instructions are needed to ensure committee members are clear about their roles?
- How is trust established between new faculty and their evaluative committee members, and what types of services are offered to faculty to voice their concerns if issues like I experienced arise?
- Is consideration made towards acknowledging the power dynamic between new faculty working to attain tenure, and probationary committee members who are tenured?

Second Year: Smooth(er) Sailing

I was admittedly anxious and extremely nervous when it came time for my second-year teaching observation. In stark contrast to the experience I just described,

however, my teaching observation with another probationary committee member was like stepping into a whole new world. This committee member had observed me during the latter half of my first year and focused their feedback specifically on my teaching abilities, just as intended. What truly set this experience apart was their approach: instead of simply providing feedback *to* me, they actively engaged in generating feedback *with* me. This small but significant difference has had a tremendous impact on my agency and growth as a new faculty member.

While the overall feedback was positive, what stood out was their willingness to offer pointers that would elevate my teaching to the next level. These were based on questions that they originally posed to me and presented as such: “The ‘*Questions for thought*’ in each comment box are not critiques of this lesson. The instructor was excellent. I offer the question collegially for discussion when we meet to debrief this lesson”. Examples of the questions presented include:

- “How do you keep up to date on ideas and resources in bringing your courses together?”
- “When giving instructions for complex tasks (e.g., before breakout groups) what have you found useful so that students don’t get overwhelmed/cognitively overloaded?”
- “How do you feel students using their cameras/showing faces and your need to use PowerPoint can be balanced to create maximum connection?”
- “What are the advantages and disadvantages of staying in the room during breakout groups vs. visiting them?”
- “How do you work to anticipate ways you can challenge students to

raise their game when answering questions?”

- “How do you try to create asynchronous online interaction when not in synchronous classes or walkthroughs?”
- “How do you work to include students who tend not to volunteer to speak either because they are naturally more quiet or they tend to cyberslack?”

These thoughtful questions encouraged me to reflect deeply on my teaching methods and allowed me to take ownership of my professional development. This approach – a dramatic contrast to my first-year review – has truly shaped my journey as a faculty member. It served as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of collaborative feedback. By working together with this committee member, I not only gained valuable insights but also felt empowered to actively contribute to my own growth. They created an environment where I could thrive, and I am grateful for the impact they have had on my teaching practice. I owe a great deal of credit to this individual for introducing me to strategies that I still employ to this day.

In my second year, this committee member returned to conduct another review. I took a big risk with this particular observation as I was showcasing a lesson I hadn’t previously delivered in my senior career capstone course. In hindsight, I would have rethought the decision to have this lesson be observed then because as soon as it was over, I knew it wasn’t my best work, for several reasons. Notably, we were in the Delta variant phase of the pandemic and as a result, my courses continued to be online and the topic I was teaching was rather technical. Some of the activities I designed, such as a peer review, did not work out as planned in the online setting over Zoom, and I should have tested this and made

appropriate adjustments prior to the observation. Furthermore, in my personal realm, my regular energy and attention was divided as my elderly parents had contracted COVID-19 at the time, so I was also occupied by concerns for their well-being and recovery. The usual energy and engagement that I typically exhibit my classes were unusually – and knowingly – absent.

Going into the debrief meeting with the committee member, I felt ashamed and anxious. The trauma I experienced from my first observation report was still looming in my mind. However, it turned out to be another pivotal professional learning moment in my teaching trajectory to date. Once again, the committee member approached the meeting with curiosity and listened actively. They wanted to know my thinking process with respect to the design of the lesson, the objectives, outcomes, and intentions I had set. They invited me to self-reflect and evaluate on how it went before providing their own perspective, noting that the first lesson they observed during the previous year was indeed very different from this second one.

Despite this being a stressful conversation, they made me feel safe enough to share the personal issues I was experiencing, effectively creating a space for “transitional liminality” (Scholz & Szulc, 2023, p. 1043) where they recognized my struggle juggling competing demands from professional and personal lives. They then presented an option that I didn’t think I had: “You could have rescheduled your class. If you aren’t at your best, you are doing a disservice to yourself and your students. Take care of yourself first.” After offering resources they felt would be beneficial to further my teaching, they generously offered to observe one more class, which they ultimately used to compose a glowing review.

What questions and thoughts did this experience raise for me?

- If this committee member had conducted my first observation, or if the same approach had originally been taken, how would this have changed my experience and mindset as a new faculty member?
- What is the role of probationary committee members in helping new faculty members develop and hone professional skills, including teaching? How is this role and responsibility communicated to committee members?
- How can institutions make space for pedagogical experimentation and learning from failure?
- How can institutions intentionally facilitate transitional liminal spaces and environments (Scholz & Szulc, 2023) for new faculty members – in fact, all faculty – to be more of themselves (e.g., providing flexibility when life roles and priorities collide)?

Implications and Recommendations

Based on my personal experience, and informed by the literature, the following section presents a set of key recommendations aimed at supporting new faculty members and institutions in navigating the tenure-track journey successfully. By implementing these recommendations, new faculty members can find a sense of community, access mentorship, and trust their instincts, while institutions can foster inclusive environments and provide the necessary support for faculty members to thrive. Academic leaders, including probationary committee members, play a vital role in supporting new faculty, and their responsibilities extend beyond quality

assurance to actively contributing to new faculty development. Institutions, too, have a responsibility to go beyond mere orientation programmes and to proactively engage with new faculty throughout their initial years, creating a welcoming and supportive culture that promotes faculty engagement and retention. By implementing these recommendations, new faculty members and institutions can work together to promote success, growth, and a sense of belonging within the academic community.

For New Faculty Members

Build a Supportive Community

Seek out and connect with fellow new faculty members within your department and across disciplines. Take advantage of opportunities to interact, share resources and experiences, and provide feedback to one another. McKay and Monk (2017) have found that new faculty peer support groups can promote collegiality and enable new faculty to reflect on their needs and goals, so that they can better attain customized support. Building a network of friends and allies going through the tenure and promotion process together can provide invaluable support and encouragement, in addition to building a life-long collegial network.

Maintain and Seek Mentors

If new faculty members enjoy positive relationships with their graduate advisors and supervisors, staying in touch and keeping them apprised in their journey as trusted mentors can contribute to their professional growth (Owusu-Agyeman, 2021). Former academic supervisors can offer a broad perspective on the academic profession and provide guidance outside the institutional environment. Additionally, new faculty members should enhance their support system by also finding mentors within their institution, particularly those who have recently gone through the probationary period or tenure process.

Ideally, they should be individuals who are open and honest about their lived experiences and trajectories, who can talk about both successes and failures to provide them with realities of the process.

Rely on Instincts and Seek Support

If new faculty members experience what they perceive to be unfair treatment (i.e., a gut feeling that something doesn't feel right), connect with the faculty union and/or trusted mentors – both within and outside of the institution – for their valuable perspective. They must become familiar with their rights and responsibilities. As I became more open with my probationary experience, I learned that my situation wasn't unique. Higher education professionals, including faculty members, both new and tenured, have a collective responsibility to promote a respectful environment for all to thrive (in part, hence this article), and to advocate for future generations and to 'leave things better than they had found them.' Acker and Webber (2017) state: "it is important that all of the pre-tenure academics, however much they 'love' their jobs, have trenchant criticisms of the corporatized university and the ways in which evaluations proceed. In that sense, they do not appear to have become willing neo-liberal subjects" (p. 551).

For Academic Leaders (including Probationary Committee Members)

Share Lessons and Resources

Aim to empathize with new faculty and anticipate some of the challenges they may face. Dickinson et al. (2022) have found that a lack of support at the beginning of new faculty members' journey can equate to feeling of "falling off a cliff" (p. 298). Indeed, feelings of confusion and anxiety can negatively impact their formative academic identity (Adi Badiozaman, 2021, p. 427). Find and create opportunities to offer just-in-time guidance and resources.

While the role of a probationary committee member is in many respects one of quality assurance of faculty members at the institution, new faculty were hired based on meeting or even exceeding entrance qualifications and therefore committee members can play an informal role to support their journey and development as well.

Provide Constructive Feedback

When providing feedback, be respectful, sensitive, and constructive. As the second committee member did for me, present feedback in ways that help new faculty members learn and grow by being curious about their approaches and perspectives. Instead of making assumptions about their thinking and doing, base feedback on inquiry. For academic leaders serving on probationary faculty committees, leverage the opportunity to enhance their own pedagogical approach and consider: "What might I be able to learn from my new colleagues?"

Promote a Respectful Culture

Calling out problematic behaviours and inappropriate comments is not only the right thing to do, but academic leaders are also role modelling leadership for a just workplace, and in turn, empowering others to speak out. This is especially important for colleagues, particularly those coming from underrepresented backgrounds who often feel challenged to express themselves. McKay and Monk (2017) state: "academic developers, supervisors and mentors occupy positions where they themselves can be agentic in supporting [new faculty members] who bring fresh perspectives in responding to the current challenges facing academic institutions" (p. 1261).

For Senior Leaders

Proactively Support New Faculty

Acknowledge that orientation and induction are simply the beginning of onboarding new faculty members, and that

ongoing efforts to help new faculty members adjust to the institutional environment are important. A good start would be to identify key times, such as after teaching observations and at the end of their first semester, to check-in and offer relevant resources. Create safe, non-judgmental spaces for open communication, addressing questions and concerns. Demonstrating support and cultivating a sense of belonging can contribute to faculty retention (Hollywood et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2012; McKay & Monk, 2017).

Facilitate Connections and Mentorship

While this recommendation overlaps with previous recommendations focusing on creating community, it is worth repeating as instilling a sense of belonging and collegiality is critical to new faculty retention and success. Implement mentorship programmes, both formal and informal, to provide organic opportunities for expressing hopes, dreams, and concerns about academic life. Encourage new faculty members to form their own support groups, including reminders to stay in touch with their mentors prior to starting at your institution. Connect them with experienced, welcoming faculty who can share resources and provide guidance.

Foster an Inclusive Work Environment

Higher education institutions, arguably more so than any other workplaces, should embrace the opportunity to be learning organizations (Bohonos & Sisco, 2021). To do this well, they must evaluate policies and procedures related to faculty relations and equity, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring they are practiced effectively. Nästesjö (2023) points out that the pursuit of academic careers remains inequitable with respect to gender, social class, and ethnic background. Create a safe environment for new faculty members, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, to address issues without fear of repercussions.

Acknowledge their courage in bringing forth concerns and take these concerns seriously.

Conclusion

The higher education field continues to navigate turbulent times with declining enrolment and completion rates (Gallup & Lumina Foundation, 2023), rising operational costs while external funding and resources dwindle (KPMG, 2020). Meanwhile, the value and relevance of higher education institutions are consistently called into question (EDUCAUSE, 2023). Ensuring quality education, therefore, is critical to the sustainability of our field and individual institutions, and faculty members play a key role in this key imperative. This begins with fostering faculty engagement and retention, from the moment they begin working at our institutions.

By sharing a brief segment of my story as a new tenure-track faculty, I hope to provide new faculty members with a deeper understanding of the potential realities – the good, the bad, and the ugly – they may face in their own journeys. I encourage institutions to consider how they can better support new faculty members, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds or with protean career trajectories. It is crucial for higher education institutions to provide resources, guidance, and mentorship to ensure the success and well-being of their faculty members, ultimately contributing to the overall success of the students and the institution.

Institutions should recognize the value of diverse experiences and perspectives brought by new faculty members, allowing them to both "fit in and stand out" (Nästesjö, 2023). By fostering an environment that promotes autonomy,

flexibility, and personal growth, institutions can empower faculty members to confidently navigate their own paths and meaningfully contribute to the mission of their institution and the field of higher education.

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About the Author



Dr Candy Ho

Dr. Candy Ho is an international award-winning career development educator and scholar whose expertise is recognized globally through keynotes and engagements. She has been featured in BNN Bloomberg, The Globe and Mail, Financial Post, Canadian Business, National Post, and CTV News. She is currently the inaugural Assistant Professor, Integrative Career and Capstone Learning at the University of the Fraser Valley in the territory of the Stó:lō Nation. In this unique capacity, she teaches courses that help students consider their educational and life experiences, and how these experiences can enable them to achieve their short- and long-term goals, ultimately helping them design the life they want to live. She also holds teaching positions in Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Educational Studies department and in Douglas College's Career Development Practitioner Program.

Prior to becoming a faculty member, Candy has also worked extensively in university student affairs in areas such as first year experience and student transition, campus and residence life, career and volunteer services, co-operative education, academic advising, and university advancement. Her collective professional experiences to date have culminated in her doctoral dissertation investigating the conceptions of post-secondary career influencers in student career success, and she readily shares her expertise locally and globally. Finally, she currently serves as Chair of CERIC, a Canadian charitable organization that advances education and research in career counselling and career development, in order to increase the economic and social well-being of Canadians.