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We should diversify our faculty along every dimension, including previous experience that could benefit our students and our research profile.

Let me say at the outset that this action item is not about our guiding priority to enrich campus diversity and inclusion, which will be discussed more thoroughly in action item #8. In this paper, I want to address a different kind of diversity as it relates to faculty experience, and I'll start by introducing you to someone: Karl Schubert. Schubert is an alumnus who earned his Ph.D. in engineering in 1983. He went on to a 30-year career in private industry, including stints at IBM and Dell, where he was responsible for things like "setting corporate technology strategy, overseeing technology acquisitions, developing and modernizing technology infrastructure, and enhancing reliability." At his last consulting job he helped turnaround the computing and storage divisions at Hewlett-Packard Enterprise. Schubert's wide-ranging experience and knowledge led to an invitation to serve on the College of Engineering's dean's advisory council, which he did for ten years. One concern he voiced in this role was that he thought students lacked the ability to innovate – they couldn't solve problems they hadn't seen already. So, in Schubert's words, Dean John English and Dean Matt Waller invited him to "put his body where his mouth was."

After transitioning into a more formal consulting role, then a staff role, Schubert was hired as a Professor of Research in 2018. During this period he proved instrumental in the development of our new multidisciplinary Bachelor of Science degree in data science. Schubert helped bring together several colleges, industry partners, and other stakeholders to create this exciting new program. His background in business, engineering, and project management was indispensable to identifying the needs of industry while working

with three different colleges to craft a rigorous curriculum that satisfied all. By any measure, this was a major accomplishment for our campus. This year, Schubert was promoted to a Professor of Practice in the College of Engineering, while also serving as Director of Research for Innovation and Data Science Initiatives for the College of Engineering and the Sam M. Walton College of Business.

So why am I discussing Karl Schubert at such length here? Because despite making these critical contributions to our academic mission, he does not hold a tenure-track position – largely because he doesn't have the publication or funding history we would typically expect and require of our tenure-track faculty. He is the holder of nine patents, though, and his other significant contributions to our teaching, research, and outreach missions can be clearly documented. For many years our university, like the great majority of universities in this country, has generally used the same set of criteria for hiring faculty onto tenure track. This usually includes things like the number of publications the candidate has, the grant dollars generated, the quality of the candidate's doctoral institution and graduate program, letters of recommendation, their teaching experience if relevant to the position, and perhaps, most importantly, a prediction that these activities will continue for many years to come. We have hired great faculty using these criteria. However, looking to the future, it's my belief that these guidelines need to be reexamined and revised as we move forward in what has become a rapidly changing landscape in higher education.

In a previous paper, I made the case for hiring more faculty with diverse research backgrounds, including “research productive individuals from industry, government laboratories and the business and entrepreneurial world.” This action item is simply an expansion of that idea, and an argument for broadening our criteria for determining who’s eligible for tenure-track positions. In fact, I think we should be making a bigger effort to target and hire faculty with significant non-traditional academic backgrounds, just like Karl Schubert. They can make vital contributions to teaching, discovery, private sector partnerships, outreach and engagement, and even commercialization efforts.

Of course, this is not exactly a new idea. For years, we’ve had the executive in residence title that’s enabled colleges to bring in faculty with recent, applied knowledge in their industry or profession. The Bumpers College has been particularly adept at making these professionals available to their students. And departments such as creative writing, journalism, art, and others have always employed faculty who may not have terminal degrees in their field, but are nevertheless highly qualified, working professionals who can come in as visiting professors or in some other capacity. More recently, we updated our clinical faculty title to be more descriptive of what these faculty actually do. Now we have appointments for clinical, research, teaching and professor of practice faculty that better reflects their roles. Very importantly, these appointments can now be made over multiple years, thus giving these faculty some additional security. What often distinguishes them from more traditional tenure-track faculty is that they may have spent some or most of their careers outside of academia, and may not have the same publication history or research background we typically prioritize when hiring tenure-track faculty. They may also teach more or have more administrative responsibilities. I can’t state strong enough how important our non-tenure-track faculty are here at the University of Arkansas.

That’s why I think we can and should be more intentional and strategic in hiring faculty who have what we often call “non-traditional” backgrounds. Not only

that, I think we should be offering them better pay, clearer paths to promotion, and, when appropriate, tenure-track positions that would otherwise be precluded by their “non-traditional” vitae. As we pursue more research partnerships with private industry, faculty with an industry background may be better able to shape curriculum and interface with industry partners. Like it or not, national funding sources have become unpredictable, and if we want to grow our research enterprise, industry partnerships will be crucial to that. Faculty with a foot in both worlds can be a great asset, especially as research becomes more collaborative and interdisciplinary.

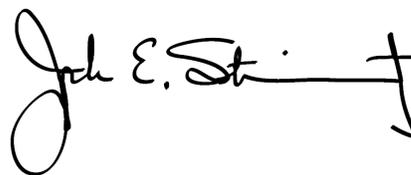
At the same time, we should also consider hiring master teachers onto the tenure track—that is, faculty who have a national or international reputation for teaching. These are faculty who may contribute articles and books on the pedagogy of their discipline, win awards, teach workshops and present at national conferences. The University of Arkansas has always prided itself on the quality of its teaching, and our faculty signaled their ongoing commitment to it by identifying **Promoting Innovation in Teaching and Learning** as one of our guiding priorities. I think there’s no better way to show that commitment than actively and aggressively recruiting great teachers, even if they may not have some of the other qualifications we usually expect of tenure-track faculty. After all, what we should care about is the impact of these faculty on our academic mission; specifically, the life-changing impact outstanding teachers can have on our students.

Ultimately, I think the traditional guardrails in academia can be widened for the good of our students and in support of our basic academic missions – preparing students for the workplace and contributing to discovery of knowledge. I want to make one thing very clear, though. This is in no way intended to diminish the importance of faculty with traditional academic backgrounds. These faculty are the backbone of this university and will continue to be so for years to come. Nor is this intended to diminish the importance of tenure, which sets higher education apart from other endeavors. Indeed, I am actually suggesting a more flexible

and expanded definition of what might constitute a tenure-track path because I think faculty with non-traditional backgrounds can be a great complement to the work we do here. Indeed, they already are. All I'm really suggesting is that we do a better job of incentivizing and compensating these hires. And we should start by examining what requirements we have for the hiring of tenure-track faculty and what non-tenure-track ranks may be available for appointments. We should be looking for opportunities to hire faculty who have a variety of experiences before arriving at the U of A, be it in teaching, medicine, business, the arts or some other area that could benefit our students and our research profile. They can bring timely, real-world experience

that will add value to a U of A degree, and augment the research, scholarship and creative activity already being done here. The bottom line is we don't want to limit our perspective and approach to what might be possible in the future.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe E. Steinmetz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joe Steinmetz,
Chancellor, University of Arkansas