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An inside look at UB

New program offers faculty glimpse at administration

By JESSICA KELTZ

Reporter Contributor

Four senior UB faculty members have begun a new fellowship program designed to give them an inside look at the university's administration, with the goals of both bettering the university and helping bridge the gap between the faculty and the administration.

The fellows in the UB Faculty in Leadership Program are Sharmistha Bagchi-Sen, professor in the Department of Geography, College of Arts and Sciences; Rajan Batta, professor in the Department of Industrial Engineering, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences; Marilyn Morris, professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences; and John Yeh, professor and chair of the Department of Gynecology-Obstetrics, School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

Satish K. Tripathi, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, said two of the fellows are working in the Office of the Provost and two in the Office of the President, each conducting a research project that will benefit the university's long-term goals. The fellows receive part-time release from teaching for the year and are invited to meetings of the deans and sometimes other administrators.

"They're really learning how the university works overall, in addition to the projects they're working on on their own," Tripathi said.

The fellowship program came about both as a result of faculty requests to get more involved in the operation of the university and from a perceived need to "demystify Capen Hall," Tripathi said. Although having more faculty members move into administration would be a positive result, it is not the program's central goal, he said.

"I hope they get from this a glimpse of administration and whether they're interested in (working in) administration in the future," Tripathi said. "But I also hope they get some sense of how the university works and some sense of satisfaction from working on projects they're interested in."

The faculty fellows also talked about the need for more communication and understanding between faculty members and the administration.

Bagchi-Sen said the fellowship offers her a chance to apply her research, which includes university/industry linkages and technology cooperation. In her project, she will study the university's economic impact, both locally and nationally, with a focus on alliances with industry—especially the biotechnology industry.

"A lot of faculty shy away from administration or are very uncomfortable saying they want to be a part of administration," she said. "More of us need to engage, and then I think we won't have those walls."

"Especially for social scientists who are engaged in policy debate, this is a nice opportunity to see how everything works," she added.

Yeh said he hopes his fellowship will end up benefiting his department.

"Being on the inside, I hope to have a better idea of what's expected for our department by the North Campus administration," he said.

Yeh will investigate the possibility of creating a centralized office for postdoctoral researchers employed at UB, and implementing program reviews in the provost's office. He said that although the office used to do such reviews, it hasn't in a "significant number of years."



BAGCHI-SEN



BATTA



MORRIS



YEH

"I think the (fellowship) program is a great idea because it does, over time, give a good number of faculty members an inside look at the running of the school," Yeh said.

Morris will focus her research on student recruitment and retention, and also on tuition policies.

"I think it gives me an opportunity to see whether I'm interested in pursuing a career in administration," she said. "I'm exposed to issues that I don't see at a department or a school level."

Morris said that faculty members care about improving the university and this program may give them a chance to do so.

"We'll have faculty really working on issues that we think are important and I think that will benefit the institution," she said.

Batta will work to assemble workshops for department chairs. As a former chair of the Department of Industrial Engineering, he hopes that his personal experience will benefit the fellowship program.

"The program was of interest to me because it would give me an opportunity to get a feel for university central administration without a long-term commitment," he said. "This way, I could decide on my career path in a more informed way."

Tripathi said he hopes that faculty members who might be interested in moving into administration will use the program as a way to find out if that's something they want to pursue. Although the fellowships are for one year, they can be renewed for a second year, he said.