

Pre-tenure faculty workshop discussion summary
January 9, 2008

Activity description:

Participants (about 45 pre-tenure faculty members) were assigned to tables with facilitators, more or less by college, and asked to address the question “What actions could the University and/or departments take to help make you a successful faculty member? These can be things that are already working well for you, or things that you don’t have but feel you need.” After a few minutes of silently generating ideas and writing them on post-it notes, participants were asked to clarify their items and group the items into themes, then prioritize the top three or four actions and report back to the group. Notes from the reports and discussion follow.

Common themes that emerged:

- More resources in general, including both personnel and \$\$
- More structured and accountable mentoring
- Specific and balanced feedback on performance (not just negative feedback)
- Supporting the whole person: Work-life balance issues, spousal support
- More supportive campus climate in terms of diversity, especially regarding race & gender

Open discussion of common themes:

Clarity and communication:

- Theme of clarity, all the way through the system, clarity of policies
- Communication is a theme throughout

Variations by discipline:

- While categories were similar across groups, there are variations even within disciplines, so it is important to recognize individual needs and allow for freedom of expression (Example: format of tenure dossiers constrains expression)
- Categories are similar but the ways the groups described them are different. There are big differences even within a single department. It is important to note that we are individuals and that the university honors this in everything but the structure.
- Noticed that groups ranked the priorities differently, based on their experiences (college and individual differences)
- Research support needs vary by college – these needs are different
- Ways that the university communicates with pre-tenure faculty, often in dollar terms, sends a message that does not value “whole people”, need other benchmarks than \$\$

- We get a lot of data from our college that compares us to other colleges (dollars per FTE, dollars per square feet). That does not make us (in the humanities) feel valued.

Retention:

- “I’m tired of watching all my friends leave.”
- University needs to make every effort to keep colleagues, be explicit about wanting to keep people.
- If we want to retain our young colleagues, we need a culture that supports that. It needs to be put down in black and white.
- Need to make a culture that explicitly emphasizes desire to retain faculty
- Regardless of generation, people stay where they are respected and valued as a whole person.
- “This generation thing, I don’t know how to respond to it. I am one of those people who is generation X. I came here to stay. That is not to say that I will stay if I get abused. I came here with the intent to stay. I know other people of my generation who feel the same.”

Individuality:

- “I look at the things on the wall that have only one dot. Each individual has individual concerns.”
- Everybody is an individual – not a one size fits all solution for these issues.
- Even issues that got few votes are important to someone – need to look at all the input
- Want to make sure that we pay attention to items on wall that have only one dot – that is one person’s retention issue. Hope that we pay attention to those too.

Multidisciplinarity:

- We’re all in multidisciplinary areas. There’s a need for communication across departments.
- Multidisciplinary environment is another aspect of collegiality

Collegiality:

- A positive result of 4/16: increased collegiality
- Impression of more collegiality at university level
- Most immediate interface for junior faculty is at the department level, need for senior faculty to take the lead

Diversity:

- Clear support at the university level for departments to focus on diversity

- Need more clarity about where the climate issue is coming from – example of spouse appointment (dept issue? Or university issue?)
- Departments need to see clear support from the university level
- Attention at both levels is needed
- Need clear support from the university to support departmental climate initiatives.

Detailed Flip Chart Transcription

CLAHS 1

What actions could the university and/or departments take to help make a successful faculty member?

1. Climate (21)
2. Getting Tenure (17)
3. Research Support (11)
4. Mentoring (10)

1. Climate

- Take diversity seriously by promoting it through actions not just with words
- Don't create such a negative fearful environment that I am immobilized
- Move from a 'back door deals' culture to a more transparent, inclusive culture
- Transition from a fear culture to a performance support culture (and you'll get more productivity)
- Regular department meetings so that policy and programs can be communicated and developed
- Aggressively address the counterproductive elements of Tech culture (e.g. resistance to diversity and the sexism)
- Improve collegiality, congeniality in the department
- Advocate for more freedom in composing tenure dossiers to enable greater expression of self

2. Getting Tenure

- Clarify tenure expectations, maintaining quality as the most important aspect of my work
- Write tenure criteria and make it clear
- Department can be less contradictory about requirements for service while expecting more research and exceptional teaching.
- Clarity on tenure, especially research and publications
- Don't provide conflicting messages about tenure that keep me feeling unbalanced
- Establish clearer requirements for tenure
- Continue clear evaluation
- Clear statements on expectations
- Support submitting publications (editors, etc.)
- Departments could begin to broaden what is viewed as scholarship
- Recognition of current success and less emphasis on doing more and more
- More info on expectations in 1st year

3. Research Support

- Clarify level of university support for individual faculty members
- Provide funding for GAs who can support my research

- Support research by reducing teaching load for first or second year
- Provided a research associate (\$35 - \$40,000) to assist me
- Clarify what is expected regarding research and publishing
- Support collaboration with tenured faculty in research
- Assist with statistics and research design
- Provide laboratory space for collaborative research with grads and other faculty
- Provide more \$ for purchasing research materials, books, etc.
- Get feedback from tenured faculty when dealing with journal editors' responses
- Establish an active 'ideas for research' collective think-tank
- Provide departmental and university financial and logistical support for research

4. Mentoring

- Having a mentoring program
- Put into place a collaborative team mentoring system that is taken seriously and employs best practices (USU has a good one)
- Collectively discuss and define aspects of successful mentoring
- Monitor and support efforts of mentors
- Mentoring from other departments
- Senior faculty could make a greater effort to mentor by helping jr. faculty make connections
- Untenured faculty mentoring meetings
- Continue: mentoring group
- Mentoring
- Mentoring should not be tormenting

Additional Issues of Concern:

Work/Life Issues

- Departmental support for spousal hires and other family-related issues
- Spouse/partner job/hiring assistance
- Spouse hiring
- Spousal hiring
- Leave policies
- Active encouragement of flexible schedules
- No teaching of courses away from base site

University Goals

- Redefine the goal of the university away from 'top 30'
- Make students understand what a research university is
- Stop consistently ignoring the contradiction in terms between 'a top 30 research university' and 'a university without Ph.D. programs in core social science disciplines'
- Match the distribution of faculty lines to places overburdened with students and research productive

ETC.

- Understand the responsibilities attached to administrative positions
- Parking issues
- Assistance in recruiting doctoral grads
- Match contact to responsibilities
- Take measures to replace supporting staff when they are unable to work

CLAHS 2

What actions could the university and/or departments take to help make a successful faculty member?

+ Things already working well for you

- Things you feel you need but don't have

1. \$ resources for scholarly activities (13)
2. Expectations, feedback, and mentoring (10)
3. Support and retain the "whole person" (9)
4. Diversity of curriculum and faculty roles (7)
5. Others: Collegiality (3), teaching load (3), classroom and facilities (2), inter/intra departmental equity (2)

1. \$ resources for scholarly activities

- I need an individual session with a knowledgeable liberal arts person who can help me strategize funding for my research agenda
- Provide updated info on sources of funding
- Research funding for junior faculty
- Graduate assistants interest in my topic area
- More funding for research/travel (library)
- Funding for travel
- Accessible \$\$ internally to establish record of funding/research agenda (to up competitiveness for external \$\$)
- Library more funding
- Seed money through college grant program
- Funding for travel
- Funding and support
- Research/publishing support
 - Hire manuscript developer for faculty
 - ASPIRE program
 - Research/travel funding
- Provide support with grant writing process
- Provide financial resource to support grad students (TAs)
- University doesn't seem to understand what humanists do and don't respect their research
- Freedom to do my work

2a. Expectations & Feedback

- Tenure expectations from department through university since all departments are very different and acceptance by one may not be acceptable by others
- Clarity of expectations, clear tenure and service expectations, consistent advice in this respect
- Create incentives for departments to provide regular feedback
- Annual performance review with sch. of ed director with written feedback
- Provide sufficient info to the faculty regarding the tenure/evaluation process

2b. Mentoring

- Facilitate mentoring connections
- Formalize the mentoring currently done by good citizens
- Pre-tenure mentoring
- Research mentoring
- Better mentoring by accomplished senior faculty
- Informal mentoring from senior women who have served on dept/college P&T committees
- Teaching mentoring for own majors

3. Support and retain the whole person

- Commitment to increasing diversity
 - Maybe more flexibility in hiring practices (vs. fear of losing positions if can't hire in a given year)
 - Valuing (not running off) diverse faculty
- Post April 16 attention to faculty needs not as teachers
 - Trauma counseling/support groups
 - Give all faculty one semester research leave
- Spousal hire policy: implemented haphazardly across university
- Aggressive retention efforts – higher raises/incentives/rewards keeping any one person helps keep more, losing any one person has snowball effect
- Time expectations: need for family time
- New work/life suite of options
- Child care: more available, high-quality daycare in Blacksburg
- Spousal hiring: more creative efforts for faculty of both genders

4. Diversity of curriculum and faculty roles

- Acceptance of non-traditional roles: extension and non-research teaching
- Internationalization just doesn't mean scientist and engineers going abroad, it means preparing students for global/world course offering (foreign languages should be improved)
- Better diversity of course offerings (foreign languages) diversity overall!

5. Other:

a. Collegiality

- Informal socials
- Very good colleagues (smart and likeable)
- Create forum for senior and junior faculty to become acquainted
- Monitor departmental atmosphere
- Improve departmental climate
 - More equity in departmental service obligations
 - Clear messages about collegial relationships in a professional environment

b. Teaching Load

- Course release x2 in first year and x2 in 4th year
- Have at least one mandatory light teaching semester
- Hire more faculty to reduce teaching load

c. Classrooms and facilities

- Need better facilities (classrooms)

d. Inter/intra departmental equity

- Equity: deal with issues of teaching, research leave, start-up packages, and salary compression
- More commitment to equity/fairness

CALS/NR/VM

Common Themes

1. Research Support (money, human)
2. Structured and accountable mentoring
3. Clear feedback – positive and constructive (multidisciplinary expectations)
4. Support the whole person (work/life balance, spouse, family support, childcare)
5. More supportive campus, climate for diversity

Other Issues:

1. Difference in rankings
2. Different kinds of research support
3. Customization of actions needed by discipline
4. Freedom from rigidity from forms, freedom of expression
5. Retention of all - concept is important/people are important

1. Research Support (14)

- Need: more opportunities for competitive seed grants to build a track record for grant agencies
- More departmental support for grad student tuition and stipends
- Need more space/staff for campus-based daycare so can enroll infants (not just starting at 15 months)
- Support graduate students and internal research \$\$

- Support to and identify quality graduate students for successfully research programs
- Provide more support for project wrap-up, data analysis and interpretation
- Provide more administrative assistance for individual faculty
- Provide adequate physical facilities for basic needs for new faculty and their groups
- Decide as a university where we wish to lead and focus efforts on those areas with energy and transparency
- Seed \$ for new faculty to perform research
- Need: more structured “research orientation” program for new faculty, e.g. processes for submitting grant proposals, internal vs. external
- Professional help with proposal writing
- Need help in preparing a grant proposal
- Needed: college or departmental support for research grant proposals, electronic signatures
- Need secretary support and/or departmental personnel to take care of equipment
- Need to reduce paperwork especially related to extramural funding and student advising
- Departments should have electronic copies of commonly used safety protocols for CHP so everyone doesn’t have to spend time re-writing
- Increase funding proposal development and support – grant writers and statistical assistance
- Find more effective ways to enhance the quality of the grad student pool

2. Mentoring (8)

- Formal teaching and mentoring programs
- More exchange between faculty about areas of research
- Formal departmental or college mentoring program
- Tenured faculty should all take the initiative to be welcoming and provide mentorship to pre-tenure faculty, not just a single designated mentor
- Formal mentoring system with multiple members, possibly including a member from outside own department
- Working well: department head who meets one-on-one regularly and informally to get feedback from all faculty

3. Evaluation Expectations and Feedback (15)

- Back off on strict \$\$\$ thresholds. Each faculty member’s areas of expertise and talents should be recognized as well as availability of funds in their research area. Some might be more valuable as teacher, other as researchers, etc. Recognize roles in tenure decisions.
- More positive feedback from college/university. Less talk about how we are not meeting funding/PhD expectations
- Working well: low teaching load for junior faculty
- Active plan to reduce undergrad advising load
- Already have: yearly formal review

- Clarify roles related to teaching, research, and extension
- Need: expectations of pre-tenure faculty, how differs based on FTE
- Need more awareness of service load at all levels especially for under-represented individuals
- University/college/department session regarding tenure dossier preparation/expectations
- Be transparent about criteria used for tenure, including characteristics (numerical where possible) of past successes and failure
- Clearer expectations on amount of funding needed for tenure/successful career
- More positive feedback. Tired of hearing about having to constantly do more
- Give us our research/teaching/service appointment so we know how to balance our work
- Active plan to restrict service – extra activities for pre-tenure

4. Childcare/Spousal Opportunities (12)

- Need outreach to spouses and other to support them in entrepreneurship (Radford offers small business advising services to local community)
- Need more focus on/support for local economic development to provide job opportunities for spouses
- Need more health care options
- Things not working for me: spousal hire
- Need incentives for individuals/organizations to open more daycares
- Improve childcare options
- Affordable/available childcare options
- Prove more childcare!
- Real spousal hiring: not just assistance in job searching

5. Collegiality and collaboration (8)

- Greater participation in informal gatherings to promote collegiality
- Things working: cluster of people with related experience
- Find ways to reinforce multidisciplinary, across departmental work. Balkanization does not help our students.
- Promote collegiality and professionalism
- Hire an associate professor: currently all our full professors are male and all assistants are female

COE/COS

1. Clear feedback success and mentoring (10 votes for this theme)

- Provide help for science writing and editing (for international faculty)
- Shepherding (i.e., “adopt” the research of junior faculty in a bigger group) – this does not equal mentoring
- Train senior faculty to serve as effective mentors (not parents, not slave drivers)
- Continue improving mentoring – assistant professor meetings
- Mentoring

- Provide training on management, people management, grant management, etc.
 - Let assistant professors have a voice in department politics; make sure that they are an integral part of what happens in the department.
 - Clear expectations - help come up with some work plan that can be referred to for evaluation
 - Continue improving clarification of tenure expectations
 - Giving feedback (be frank)
 - Clear, concrete annual feedback from department P&T committee
 - Clear and timely feedback on performance and progress
 - Provide yearly in-depth faculty reviews by more than one reviewer – e.g., personnel committee vs. just department chair
 - Expand what dept does to track and distribute \$
 - Distribute \$ and publication data for successful tenure cases
 - Clearly and practically define a manageable understanding of the balance across teaching, research, and service.
2. Time release from administration and/or teaching (9 votes for this theme)
- Limited service responsibilities for pre-tenure faculty
 - Reasonable non-teaching/non-research service requirements
 - Course release time in first two-three years while starting up lab
 - Provide 1-semester research leave some time in last 2.5 years prior to tenure
 - Less paperwork for small things such as travel approval forms
 - Let the faculty focus on a few things to do them nicely
 - Stop asking scientists to be like engineers, get connection to industry
3. Initial support (8 votes for this theme)
- More guidance in assembling, negotiating start-up (does dept head need to be “bad guy trying to save the university money”?)
 - Professional support for grant-writing and grant management – seed money for pilot data
 - Help/training on grant proposal writing
 - Continue improving help with grant writing
 - Joint proposal writing
 - Better staff quality by providing a better salary for them
 - Ensure there is competent support staff and eliminate (or reassign) poor support staff
 - Make sure that the salaries of all assistant professors are equal at the beginning of their careers
 - Provide funding for GRA support in early years
 - Make sure that new faculty members get graduate students – usually students prefer to go work with established faculty
 - Stop trend of research seed money (and other resources) going away from junior faculty and toward large projects/senior faculty
 - Provide initial financial support to establish research groups – support successful faculty afterward as well

- Treat research funding not as an absolute \$ amount but as something to be considered in the context of available funding and disciplinary norms
4. Worklife family support (8 votes for this theme)
 - Improve childcare conditions
 - Childcare/ opportunities for spouse
 - Better employment assistance for spouse/partner (more helpful/less offensive/ignorant; funding to create positions on campus; ongoing to retain faculty)
 - Cultivate technology-centered resources in area for spouse/partner employment/quality of life
 - Family-friendly scheduling of responsibilities (e.g., meetings held during typical 8-5 childcare hours, modified duties available, flexible class scheduling)
 - Support family by providing better infrastructure for that
 - Organize social events
 5. Improved climate for diversity (7 votes for this theme)
 - Continue dialog on diversity by bringing in excellent outside speakers and visiting faculty
 - Continue and expand efforts to hire more diverse faculty
 - Please be aware of and do something about issues faced by international faculty
 6. Creating community and social activities (1 vote)
 - Increase centralization of information about events (seminars, workshops, etc.) on a master campus list/website
 - Organize department-level meetings/lunch for pre-tenure faculty
 - Organize social events: faculty mixers, non-scholarly activities, something that can build community among people new to the area
 7. Senior faculty need to stay up to date (lifelong learning) (1 vote)
 - Make older faculty go out and work in industry again
 - Make older faculty up to date with latest technology