TIPS FOR PROMOTING FACULTY VITALITY

Continuous Quality Improvement in Academic Life

FAQs:

What do FACULTY members want and need, especially new and/or early career faculty members?

- A strong sense of community with a culture that promotes inclusion, supportive integration and mutual contribution throughout each individual career accomplishment and unit/institutional achievement, and thus:
  - Relevance
  - Identity
  - Belonging
  - Teamwork
  - Communication
  - “Success”

- An effective and comprehensive promotion and tenure system
- A balanced, respectful and integrated work-life continuum
- A system that insures ‘transparency’ so that every entity involved in the faculty appointment (career) is working together toward achieving the same goal(s):
  - The faculty member is oriented to and fully understands her/his specific role with written individualized details.
  - The faculty member’s role and role details match those expected by the department, since these were delineated cooperatively with the supervisory leadership and/or Chair (Director), and everyone agrees.
  - The faculty career development plan goals are aligned with these same role specifics in the form of SMART goals, and are realigned annually. (SMART = Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound)
    - The role/goals are aligned/optimized relative to XYZ compensation plan.
    - The role/goals are aligned/optimized relative to the promotion and tenure criteria.
    - Formally assigned mentoring is aligned with the role specifics and the faculty development SMART goals.
    - Through the annual faculty evaluation processes, the mentor provides and receives input about the quality of the mentoring relationship(s).

Department Chairs, unit Directors and other faculty members with established careers, whether as formal mentors, sponsors, informal advisors or colleagues, play key roles in creating the academic culture that supports the success of new and/or early career faculty members as an integral part of the success of the department and institution as a whole.
What are FACULTY members trying to achieve and not necessarily taking the straightest pathway to get there?

1. Join and participate in a collegial and academically stimulating environment
2. Career guidance [through mentor(s) - inside and outside ‘home’) 
3. Excellence in Teaching
4. Excellence in Research
5. Excellence in Service
6. Excellence in Citizenship and Community
7. Career advancement (Promotion, Awards/Honors, Opportunity)
8. Tenure
9. Maximum compensation
10. Meet family needs and goals in balance with career
11. Plan for the future
12. Live life (as personally defined) to its fullest potential

What threatens productivity and retention of FACULTY members, especially new and/or early career faculty members?

1. Mismatch of defined expectations, efforts and evaluation
2. Isolation
3. Ineffective communication
4. Over-commitment
5. ‘Chilly climate’ or non-nurturing professional environment
6. Low or declining professional worth, value or respect
7. Entrenched institutional ‘tradition’ leading to ‘red-tape morbidity/mortality’

What is the basic message that the new and/or early career FACULTY member should hear from his/her superior(s) (f. ex. Division Chief, Director, Chair, etc.)?

- We are here to help you, and at the same time, you will also be helping us!
- We will help you...
  a. Because you offer great potential or we would not have hired you.
  b. Because you are an eager and active participant in building your own career as well as contributing to greater academia: the unit, department, school, institution and the world.
  c. Despite knowing that you won’t necessarily be a superstar by tomorrow, but that you will be turning into one over time.
  d. Figure out what matters.
  e. Figure out what does not matter.
  f. Make an aligned and achievable plan with prioritized and measureable objectives.
  g. Through facilitating the development of strong mentoring relationships.
  h. Develop connections and define your greater ‘community’ role(s).
  i. Set priorities and make progress toward establishing harmony in an academic career.
  j. Set priorities and make progress toward establishing harmony in life (as you expect it to exist).