

2004-Physics Chairs Meeting
June 4-6, 2004
Sponsored by APS/AAPT
American Center for Physics (ACP)
Session 5: Breakout Groups
Group2A: Faculty Development Issues

The session started with a question, “what is faculty development?”

Discussions revolved around ‘mentoring’ junior or tenure-track faculty (TTF); mentoring teaching faculty and evaluation of teaching, primarily at liberal arts colleges. Some discussion took place on “post-tenure review” and on “how-to-motivate” senior faculty who are not productive any more. Other items discussed were ‘faculty rewards’ and ‘sabbatical’.

Mentoring

Mentoring of junior or TTF is done in many different ways. Some use formal mentoring by assigning a senior faculty to mentor a junior faculty. Mentoring faculty receives credit towards his/her service by doing so. Others use informal or non-structured mentoring of junior faculty. While mentoring may include guidance or direction to keep the TTF on right track with regard to research, teaching and service, and more importantly about the expectations of the department. According to some other schools, mentoring also includes assistance to new/junior faculty for finding right kind of child care, schools for the dependents, housing etc. Performance of the TTF is also evaluated annually by tenured faculty committee and/or by the chair. Mid-term review of the TTF is also performed by many schools as part the department’s/college’s tenure-promotion policy/procedure. Faculty committee and chair meet separately or jointly with the respective faculty to discuss about the outcome of evaluations. One chair mentioned that a TTF receives the fourth year off (leave to do research at home institution or outside) if his/her third-year review shows outstanding result.

In general, many physics departments conduct annual performance evaluation of all faculty. The evaluation is conducted by chair, and faculty is conferred with about his/her performance before sending the report to dean.

One chair mentioned that his/her department conducts 6th year review of the tenured faculty. For this, each faculty member provides a performance improvement plan. Yet other schools conduct ‘merit review process’, which includes ‘evaluation’ by students and by peers. Faculty members are also expected to update CV annually.

Mentoring Teaching

In some schools, particularly in teaching intensive institutions, each faculty member produces a teaching portfolio (TPF), which contains ‘innovation’ in teaching, new ideas, teaching philosophy, teaching techniques etc. A departmental committee reviews the TPF, and each faculty is evaluated annually based on his/her performance and success in meeting the TPF. One chair mentioned that his/her institution hires an outside consultant to give workshop on TPF. Funding for the workshop is provided by the provost’s office.

Another chair mentioned that TPF evaluation of a mentoring faculty includes: (1) teaching as per TPF, (2) visit of class room by two faculty members, and (3) conference with the mentoring faculty. A good number of chairs showed reservation about the 'evaluation of a faculty by students,' although it is practiced in many schools.

How about development of senior or tenured faculty (TF)???

What to do about those TF who become inactive? Answers were 'be careful', 'be patient' with them, and read this book *Whale Done: The Power of Positive Relationships*. Find things that they do better. Some chairs practice this formula: 'increase teaching load' if for 3 years a TF has No grant, No GA, No publication. Comments....."they may teach badly", or consider teaching as a "punishment"! Some schools take into account higher teaching load in consideration of merit raises.

For new faculty, check national academy conference report, 'making the right moves' on line: www.hhmi.org/grants/office/pdfs/book.pdf.

Few other points with respect to Faculty Development

Buy out time from grant or research 'incentive pay' is negotiable with chair/dean. Professional Development assignment (PDA) or sabbatical leave, or external funding to take a semester or year off for research. Some schools do not allow buy out time or do not grant sabbatical leave.

Scriber's comments: *If there is any error and/or omission, I take the responsibility. I thank the participating chairs for their inputs and cooperation.*

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