

Support for Associate Professors
A summary of a series of conversations

Faculty Development Advisory Board
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Introduction

During the 2003-04 academic year the Faculty Development Advisory Board consulted with Associate Professors at SCU, asking what kind of support for scholarship they would find useful from their departments, their college/school, and the University. Four Focus Groups were held in February 2004; several associate professors met individually with Advisory Board members; and a few sent email. The following pages document these conversations. The Advisory Board offers these recommendations as a report on the comments of the Associate Professors. No attempt has been made to consider budgetary issues or practical concerns.

Part I summarizes the most pressing or most consistent recommendations of the Associate Professors. The recommendations are divided into three categories: Time and Money, Structural and Procedural Support, and Knowledge and Intellectual Climate.

Part II describes in greater detail the Associate Professors' expressed needs in the three categories.

Part III addresses miscellaneous comments and caveats in no particular order.

Part IV outlines the current university programs and procedures that Associate Professors perceive as supportive.

I. Summary of Recommendations from Associate Professors

A. Time and Money

*Introduce a "senior faculty leave" following successful pre-promotion reviews, similar to the JFDL.

*Provide mini-sabbaticals for retiring chairs -- time off or course releases after serving at least 3 years.

*Offer competitive release time options through the internal grants mechanism for work on exceptional research; Offer incentives for significant service work (stipends, course releases).

*Initiate the new sabbatical policy.

*Offer a few fully-funded sabbaticals (two quarters, full pay), with a competitive application process.

B. Structural and Procedural Support

*Provide a "pre-promotion review" for associate professors, available by request, to give associate professors strategic advice on when to apply or how to prepare for promotion. Faculty who recently served on R & T committees could participate in these reviews.

*Consider modifying or reforming the multiyear evaluation system for tenured faculty. Simplify the system or replace it with a system that institutes cost of living and merit increases and departmental developmental reviews in place of current multiyear evaluations for tenured faculty. Alternatively, transform the multiyear evaluation system for Associate Professors into a "pre-promotion review."

*Protect all tenured professors from excessive service demands.

*Support faculty research needs through scheduling and integrated course assignments (integrating research and teaching).

C. Knowledge/Information/Intellectual Climate

*Clarify the standards for promotion to full professor: Provide opportunities for discussions of research/scholarship expectations for promotion.

*Provide opportunities for discussions of research strategies (how to publish books, how to write external grant proposals, etc.)

*Communicate the results of this project to the university community and to the Associate Professors who contributed.

II. Associate Professors' responses to the question: "What could be done by the University, the College/schools, and the departments to better support associate professors?" (Expansion of summary above.)

A. Time and Money

*Research leaves: Create a competitive Associate Professor equivalent to the JFDL.

- Establish a Rotating Endowed Chair to offer competitive one or two quarter research leaves for tenured faculty to focus on their research.

*Provide mini-sabbaticals or course releases for faculty stepping down as chairs. Provide extra research support or post-docs for faculty serving as chairs.

*Provide more research funding for associate professors; expand internal grants.

- Allow stipend payments during the academic year rather than only in the summer.
- Provide summer stipends through Internal Grants.
- Offer internal grants for preparing major external grant applications to support research projects.

*Sponsored Projects is very helpful but is currently understaffed as it tries to keep up with greater numbers of faculty submitting and receiving grants. Expand the staff.

*Support departments that don't have excellence funds for travel etc. Some departments lack these funds because they can't offer summer courses (and therefore they have few funds to support faculty research). Should excellence funds be shared among departments?

*Encourage the Centers to do more to support faculty, and to communicate the ways they already do this. Faculty think that Centers primarily look outward, toward the community, not inward, toward the faculty.

B. Structural and Procedural Support

*Offer pre-promotion reviews

Tenured faculty could receive periodic pre-promotion reviews, mentoring, and formative or developmental review by their peers, or by faculty who have recently served on the R & T committees

*Consider revising the multiyear evaluation system

The current system takes many hours of associate professors' time, whether they are the reviewers or the one under review. After many hours preparing and reviewing multiple year evaluation materials, tenured faculty members usually receive four possible solutions:

- A multiyear "short form" (a c.v. and a professional development plan) could replace the current longer process.
- Tenured faculty could be given regular cost of living and merit increases on a step system, reserving the

time-consuming evaluation process for tenure-track faculty.

- Exceptions to this could be made only in rare cases in which a faculty member's performance is dramatically lower or higher than the norm.

* Work-load, Service, and Health

- We cannot develop as teacher/scholars and live balanced lives when we live in “a culture of endless self-sacrifice.”
- Our mentors and colleagues need to understand the conflicting demands we face, especially those of us with families.
- Associate Professors, especially minorities and women, are tapped for too much administrative service – chairs, Centers, surveys, etc.
- There is a tendency to shield assistant professors from service responsibilities. This helps them get promoted, but puts a large service burden on associates and cuts into promotion rates. Ask full profs to do more service; share service load more widely among Associate Professors as well.
- We should ensure that our faculty are healthy. Problems with work-life balance lead to stress and immune system failure. The “sustainability” issue is really about faculty sustainability!

*Scheduling

Department chairs should be aware of their vital role in supporting faculty development: assigning classes related to our research areas, scheduling classes with our research needs in mind. Faculty should be able to repeat a class at least once a year; T/R, M/W, or weekly evening seminar-scheduling should be available regularly. Course clustering should become a more legitimate option.

C. Knowledge/Information/Intellectual Climate

*Clarify the standards for promotion to full professor: Organize discussions of promotion time-line, criteria, expectations, and SCU statistics. Make available the cvs of recently promoted faculty. Address questions such as the following:

- Are committees sufficiently aware of the differences in disciplines when evaluating faculty? Research in the physical sciences requires a great deal of lab time, so papers are not published as often as in some other areas. Do R & T committees understand that directing a play is both teaching and scholarship?
- Do R & T committees understand that supporting undergraduate research is not entirely beneficial to the faculty? It actually requires a great deal of time to train and mentor student assistants.
- Is a co-authored article with an undergraduate teaching or scholarship or both?
- Do R & T committees respect the scholarship of teaching as well as the scholarship of discovery?
- What does “distinction” in scholarship imply? Are the criteria changing?
- Is the external review process weighted against those who apply for promotion? At many schools, scholarship expectations are higher than at SCU. When external letters are sought from faculty members at such schools will they view the scholarly productivity through the lens of the expectations for their home institution, not using the SCU standards as the guiding framework? How much will they know about SCU?
- Do the committees expect perfection in everything? Would one bad set of course evaluations ruin one's chances for promotion?
- Does the weighting of the three areas (scholarship, teaching, service) during the associate cycles affect promotion chances? If an associate weighs teaching more than scholarship in the 3-year cycles will she pay for it later when she applies for full?
- What are the statistics on promotions and denials?
- How long do successful candidates for promotion typically wait before applying?

*At the end of each year, after the R&T decisions come out, schedule a meeting for department chairs and members of the R&T committees (like the one at the beginning of the year). Without breaking confidentiality, discuss what worked, what didn't and why, giving recommendations for the future, etc.

*Provide opportunities for discussions of research strategies:

Offer symposia on writing books and finding publishers, writing external grant proposals, planning for a sabbatical/using sabbaticals efficiently. Offer more writing groups and establish support groups for associate professors.

*Offer institutes, like the Institute on Globalization, every three or four years.

*Encourage faculty to participate in funded short-term reading groups focused on recent scholarly and pedagogical developments.

*Communicate the results of this project to the university community and to the associate professors who participated.

III. Miscellaneous Comments and Caveats

*When faculty in the sciences and performing arts are tenured they are subjected to many service demands. In some departments no faculty member has been promoted in many years. There are few role models and mentors for associate professors in these areas.

*The university should recognize scholarship in its own “back yard.” Scholarship done on campus isn’t respected (acting, directing plays, etc.). There’s an inverse relation between distance from campus and “status.”

*Develop a more consistent approach to faculty-student research across departments. Ensure that support of undergraduate research benefits the faculty member as well as the student. Give appropriate credit for faculty-student publications.

*Give consistent messages. Are we seeking national reputations or are we student-centered? Can we be both?

*The 3-year evaluation cycle for tenured profs. is a mixed blessing. On the positive side it reduces the concern for yearly productivity, allowing for the pursuit of larger projects that take some years to develop. On the negative side is that with a lack of supervision and oversight, some profs. can let scholarship slide for three years. A discussion about the scholarly expectations for each 3-year period, before the cycle begins, would be beneficial.

*As departments are staffed with more part-time and temporary (term lecturer) faculty who teach but do not participate in hiring, evaluation, advising, and mentoring, there are not enough tenured/tenure track faculty to do their fair share of the regular work of their departments. The lion’s share of this service work falls upon the tenured faculty, who are unable to devote adequate time to their scholarship and professional development. To ensure greater academic quality, we need to increase the ratio of tenured/tenure track faculty.

*We need to let faculty decide independently when to apply for promotion. Some departments are pressuring faculty to apply for promotion before they feel ready.

*We need to address a widespread sense of discouragement, betrayal, and entrapment:

- Some Associate Professors feel that they’re being told they’re losers, even as they chair departments, head RLCs, serve on major committees, etc. There are mixed messages from the university.
- Some Associate Professors feel that the rules have changed – they came to SCU because it respected teaching, and now feel they’re being held to Research I standards.
- We should acknowledge that many Associate Professors won’t apply for promotion. Even if they are continuing with their research, their heavy service obligations will inevitably diminish their scholarly productivity. It may take ten years to produce three significant papers – they fear that slower productivity = diminished national reputation = no promotion.

- We should find a way to honor the choices made by those who will remain Associate Profs forever. (Master Teacher Model, NYU)
- In many departments, especially the sciences, there's no culture of promotion. People tell us, "Forget it. You're not going to get promoted." Many faculty members are demoralized.
- We should recognize that in some departments (or some sub-fields within departments) it's virtually impossible to do the kind of research that would lead to promotion
- We should find a way to honor Associate Professors who provide extraordinary service to the university, putting aside their teaching and research for long periods of time.
- These concerns are related to hiring difficulties: We need to consider what we ask chairs to do in hiring & mentoring: Chairs are asked to hire excellent scholars as assistant professors and to urge them to look ahead, beyond tenure, toward promotion to full professor. This feels disingenuous, given the realities of SCU.
- In the sciences there's been a decline in numbers of applicants for positions, searches have lasted two years, we've sometimes been unable to hire our first choice candidates, and we've lost a few promising faculty. We may be asking the impossible.

*We need to recognize that our disciplines are constantly developing. Most of us are now teaching and doing research in areas that we did not study in graduate school. We are continually reinventing ourselves as teacher/scholars to keep up with changes in our disciplines. Have our R&T standards and support for scholarship kept up with these changes?

IV. Associate Professors' responses to the question: "What are the greatest strengths in the University's current support for Associate Professors?"

Sabbaticals

Internal grants

Student research assistants

Leave without pay is possible (with external grants)

Ability to combine research with teaching

Family leave policy

Grant writing support in the College (Marie Brancati's support, Amy Shachter's HHMI Grant)

Sponsored Projects

Flexible weighting of evaluations

Flexible scheduling for faculty with unusual obligations (actors in Theater, etc)

Course release for scholarship (from seven course load)

Collaborative scholarship is valued

Multi-year evaluation policy provides useful feedback.

Good modeling/mentoring: Many chairs and associate deans stay home at least 1/2 day each week to write.

Good department chairs can play a great role in supporting faculty with course assignments in their area of research, consideration with course scheduling, active mentoring and encouragement of their professional development.

IT support

Library, electronic journals, library liaisons

Raising salaries to benchmarks

Housing program

College's Excellence funds