

Developing a Climate for Continuous Development across Faculty Ranks: An Initial Focus on Associate Professors

Abstract

The IUPUI School of Science (SOS) has been very successful at providing the necessary support structures for probationary faculty resulting in positive promotion and tenure decisions. In addition, we have recently been fortunate to attract an extremely talented group of young faculty. As a result, the School is increasing its funded research profile, is growing and establishing novel and meaningful graduate programs, and graduating record numbers of undergraduate students. To sustain this level of achievement, we need to continue to find ways to strengthen all aspects of our academic mission.

[A five-year strategic plan for the School of Science](#) was recently completed and one of the explicit goals was to foster an environment for staff, students and faculty that supports their continued development. A review of our current development practices suggests that the majority of resources and focus are on the Assistant Professors and highlighted the need to extend the focus and provide more support and structure to our faculty at the Associate Professor rank. This proposal outlines a set of structures and programming that will provide immediate support to the current population of Associate Professors, but is importantly designed to establish a stronger climate for continuous development, throughout-the-career for all faculty in the School. We believe that this purposeful approach to faculty development will result in more engaged faculty and an energized climate for ongoing development and growth.

Purpose and Goals

The SOS has approximately 45 faculty that are currently tenured at the Associate Level. Of those 14 (31%) have been in this rank less than three years, 16 (36%) have been in rank between 3-8 years, and 15 (33%) have been in rank longer than 8 years. Given the existence of many developmental resources for untenured faculty within the School (e.g., formal mentoring, frequent meetings with Chairs and Deans, periodic feedback including a formative third year review) and lack of similarly focused resources for the Associate Professors, the current proposal will outline a set of activities intended to support and facilitate the continued development of these faculty members.

Needs Analysis. Following best practices in organizational development, we conducted a needs analysis through a survey and meetings with relevant stakeholders in the SOS to guide the current proposal (Falletta and Combs, 2002). First, we surveyed Associate Professors in the School about their plans, experiences, and desired mechanisms for their development toward

promotion. Second, we met with the Deans and Chairs to incorporate their goals, opinions and perceptions of the School needs. It is important to garner support from all individuals involved in the process to maximize engagement and commitment to the programming.

The survey was made up of 11 items assessing faculty perceptions of current support, current plans for promotion, and perceptions of the School's and University's support towards these goals. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In addition, we asked them to select, from a list, the types of activities or information that would assist them in their development (e.g., clarification of promotion criteria, developing a plan, reviewing successful dossiers, etc.). Faculty were also asked to identify the best mechanism to receive such support (e.g., mentoring relationship, meetings with chairs, meeting with promotion and tenure committees). Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional thoughts in an open-ended option.

Twenty-eight (62%) of the solicited faculty participated in the survey. The majority (N = 17, 61%) reported being in the Associate rank for less than 5 years; 3 reported 5-10 years; 6 reported 10 or more years; and 2 individuals did not identify their time in rank. Faculty generally responded positively that they had a plan for promotion to full (Mean (M)= 2.32, on a 5 point scale from strongly agree to strong disagree). Interestingly, while 15 (54%) faculty responded positively regarding their confidence in being promoted in the next 5 years (M = 2.50), 13 (46%) of the respondents responded from neutral to strongly disagree. In addition, they were less positive when asked whether they receive regular encouragement about promotion to full (M = 3.48), whether the School is effective at providing career-related guidance (M = 3.81) and whether the School and University have clear goals related to supporting faculty to promotion to full rank (M's = 3.86 and 3.70, respectively).

When asked what types of information or activities would help faculty; 20 (71%) asked for clarification of criteria to full professor, 20 (71%) identified reviewing successful dossiers as helpful, and 18 (64%) identified developing a plan for promotion. When asked to identify the mechanisms that would be most helpful, 18 (64%) identified having a mentoring relationship within the School as the most beneficial mechanism. Other mechanisms identified were meetings held with P&T Unit Committee Chair (N = 13, 46%), group meetings with Chair/Dean (N = 12, 43%), and periodic developmental feedback from the Departmental Primary P&T committee (N = 12, 43%).

These data suggest that Associate Professors generally perceive a lack of support from their school and the University at large regarding their development. In addition, they would like to obtain support through interactions with their Chair, Deans, and mentors from within the School. Finally, it appears that some of their identified needs are simply resources (e.g., successful dossiers) that could easily be made available to them. Based on these data and

conversations with the Chairs and Deans in the SOS, this proposal will outline some proximal goals that we believe will benefit the current group of Associate Professors, with a more distal (long-term) goal of establishing a culture of continuous development in the SOS.

Proposal Goals:

- 1) Increase the percentage of Associate Professors who responded positively when asked whether they have an active plan for promotion to full professor. The respondents in our initial survey reported an average of 2.31 (on a 5 point scale). Our goal is for that average to improve to an average of 2.00 by May 2016.
- 2) Increase the amount of feedback given annually to Associate Professors regarding their activities and plans for promotion. Currently this activity is not routinely offered by Departments (outside of the annual review with the Chair) and so we will work with Department Chairs to make this available to all faculty. Our goal is to report that 50% of Associate Professors have received feedback from their department P&T committees by May 2016.
- 3) Increase Associate Professors' confidence in being promoted within the next 5 years. The faculty average on this item was 2.50 and only 15 (54%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident about obtaining promotion in the next 5 years. Our goal is to increase the percentage of faculty reporting confidence (agree or strongly agree) to this item to 65% by May 2016.
- 4) Increase faculty perceptions of the School's commitment toward their development. The survey respondents averaged a 3.81 (disagree) on this item. Our goal is to reduce this mean significantly to 2.50 (between agree and neither agree nor disagree) by May 2016.
- 5) Establish at least 7 mentor-mentee pairings for the initial program year. Ideally, this would mean at least one mentoring pair for each of the seven departments in the School.
- 6) Establish other developmental programming for the SOS.
 - a. A national expert in faculty development will provide a colloquium to faculty and interact with Chairs regarding best practices related to faculty development by May 2016.
 - b. An electronic repository containing at least 10 successful dossiers (representing the disciplinary diversity of the School, and including senior lecturer and tenure-track promotion dossiers) will be created by December 2015.
 - c. A town-hall type meeting will be held with interested faculty and a panel of experienced members of School and University P&T Committees before May 2016.
 - d. The Dean will meet with 15 (approximately 33%) of the Associate Professors by May 2016 to discuss their needs for continuous career development.

Methodology/Intervention

In the paragraphs below, a description of several independent yet related interventions will be described to achieve these goals. To facilitate real organizational change, there cannot be a single intervention, rather there needs to be a multi-pronged and multi-level approach. For example, to achieve real and sustained changes to the climate for development in the School, in addition to interventions focused on the faculty, we will need to provide training and support to department chairs and make structural and resource changes in the School (Goodstein & Burke, 1991). The primary program to support the current Associate Professors will be a mentoring program. For the initial program we will focus on a small group of faculty, but anticipate that this number will increase after the first iteration. Additional programming, resources, and activities focused on facilitating faculty development will be available to all 45 Associate Professors in the SOS. Also, activities aimed at providing Department Chairs with training to help them better facilitate their faculty's development will be implemented. Finally, some resources will be made available to all tenure and non-tenure track faculty in the SOS.

Mentoring Program

This initial mentoring program will begin with at least 7 mentor-mentee pairings. Ideally, we will have a mentee from each department in the School of Science, however we will select up to seven interested mentees. The intended length of the formal program is 12 months, although we anticipate that these relationships will continue much longer. There will be four 'check-in' meetings throughout the year, with assignments due at each meeting and updates and goals shared with the group. Success factors identified by Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008) were incorporated when relevant.

Identifying the Mentors. Potential mentors will be identified through meetings the Dean and Chairs will have with Full Professors in the SOS. The program and its goals will be described to the Full Professors and we will ask them to self-nominate based on their interest. Interested mentors will submit a curriculum vita and a completed mentor interest form (see included questions). These documents will be shared with interested mentees to begin the matching process.

Identifying the Mentees. The initial mentees will be identified through an application process. The Dean and Chairs will invite all Associate Professors to a kick-off meeting in April 2015. At this meeting, the needs analysis data will be shared and the proposed set of activities focused on the Associate Professors will be introduced, including a description of the mentoring program. We will encourage all interested faculty to apply to the initial program. The application will include a copy of the curriculum vita and a mentee interest form (see attached).

These documents will be used to identify the four initial mentees and to facilitate the matching process. If we receive more than seven applications, we will try to accommodate them all.

Matching Process. Interested mentors and mentees will receive the appropriate completed interest forms. In addition, a lunch meeting will be held with all interested parties to openly discuss the aims of the program. The over-riding goal of this luncheon will be to provide an avenue for the faculty to get to know one another. The mentoring facilitator will collect mentor and mentee preferences following this meeting and generate mentor-mentee matches.

Kick-off Meeting. In May 2015, a kick-off meeting will occur. The mentoring facilitator will present data and research on behaviors that lead to successful mentoring; highlighting the needs and responsibilities of both mentors and mentees for successful relationships. A facilitated conversation will follow to help mentors and mentees establish their expectations for this process.

Check-in Meetings. Check-in meetings will occur during the months of September, December, February, and May. In these meetings, the mentors and mentees will meet to discuss progress and will provide an opportunity for the group to provide suggestions. In addition, a specified visitor will be identified for each meeting (e.g., SOS P&T committee chair) to share information and/or answer questions for the group. In September, the mentee will be expected to share their 1 year developmental plan for promotion to Full Professor. For each subsequent meeting, the mentor and mentee will identify a specific goal to be completed during each 3-month period and progress toward those goals will be discussed at the December and February meetings. The final outcome in the May 2016 meeting will be an updated 3-year developmental plan.

Mentoring Facilitator. The mentoring facilitator will be a current faculty member in the SOS with knowledge of mentoring best practices. This person's role will be to send periodic updates and reminder e-mails to participating faculty, to send e-mails regarding internal and external opportunities for members, share relevant articles about faculty development, and conduct individual check-ins with mentees about progress. This individual will also be the person who will help facilitate mentor-mentee relationships that may not be progressing satisfactorily from either side.

School Wide Developmental Programming and Resources

- A. An electronic repository in our School intranet will be created that will house examples of successful promotion and tenure dossiers. This will include dossiers from Lecturer to Senior Lecture, Assistant to Associate and Associate to Full. We will include dossiers from across departments and across areas of excellence. We will work with members of recent SOS P&T committee members to identify exemplars in the areas and seek

permission from those faculty before posting them. This repository will be reviewed and new examples will be added every two years.

- B. The Dean and Chairs will identify 4-5 representatives from the SOS who have significant experience on either the Unit level or University level P&T Committees. We will ensure that they are representative of the types of scientific disciplines found within the 7 departments. We will invite all faculty in the SOS to attend this meeting to learn more about the process and provide them opportunity to ask for clarification regarding promotion and tenure standards and criteria. This type of meeting will be offered to the faculty every year.
- C. The Dean has recently required the Department Chairs to address mentoring needs with all faculty during the faculty annual review meeting. In addition to this, Department Chairs will offer all Associate Professors the opportunity to have their curriculum vita or a developmental plan reviewed by the relevant members of the departmental P& T committee (i.e., Full Professors).
- D. The Dean currently meets with all probationary faculty members on an annual basis to identify any needs they may have and offer assistance in their work towards promotion and tenure. He will extend this offer to meet individually or with groups of Associate Professors from departments.
- E. The School will annually identify an external speaker to come provide guidance about faculty development issues. Depending on the feedback received from the audience, the utility and efficacy of the external speakers will be regularly reviewed. Suggestions for appropriate speakers will be sought from the faculty since many in the School are knowledgeable about the subject through their professional and scholarly interests. The focus of the talks may rotate from best practices around the primary areas of excellence (teaching, research, and service).

Budget

1. Mentor - mentee pairing: Professional development funds of \$500 and \$1500 respectively, for 7 pairs; this will total \$14,000. The mentee money will be released in portions after each check-in meeting. Mentors will receive half of the money at the beginning of the program and the other half at the end of the program.
2. Faculty leader/coordinator for the SOS Mentoring program - \$4000 (summer funding).
3. External speaker (Expert in Faculty Professional Development) - \$2000.

Grand Total - \$20,000 (\$10k from campus, \$10k match from School).

Assessment Plan

The assessment plan for the current proposal will incorporate a variety of data including monitoring for completion of stated activities and surveys of relevant constituents. The mechanisms to assess the short-term goals during the first year of the program are outlined below.

Goals 1, 3, and 4 (as listed on page 3). An overarching goal of the proposal is to improve faculty perceptions support for development and developmental activities at the School level. Goals 1, 3, and 4 are related to faculty perceptions of support from the School, their confidence in their promotion outcome, and their report of an active plan for development and promotion. We will use the survey data from the needs analysis as a baseline and re-survey the Associate Professors in May 2016. We will compare these data to assess improvement.

Goal 2. In April 2016, Department Chairs will receive a survey requesting information about the number of Associate Professors who formally received feedback from the departmental P&T committee. This data will allow us to determine if our goal of 40% has been met.

Goal 5. In May 2016, we will assess the number of active mentoring relationships in the School at the Associate Professor rank. We will assess the number of individuals who successfully completed a final 3 year developmental plan and will assess both mentor and mentee perceptions of their satisfaction with and utility of the relationship and the mentoring program. These data will provide feedback to make improvements and changes for the subsequent mentoring program.

Goal 6. The activities outlined in Goal 6 (e.g., repository, national speaker, faculty-Dean meetings) will be assessed for completion in May 2016.

Plan for Sustainability

As described above, the data from our survey of associate professors indicates that there is a general sense among them that the School, and the institution, do not regard their advancement to the full rank as an important goal. The general goal of our efforts is to alter the climate and culture within the School so that this pervasive sense among the associate professors that the School is detached from their professional interests is ameliorated to the point that these faculty members feel that their goals and interests are aligned with those of the School. Altering the climate and culture will take a few years, and therefore we are very much cognizant of the fact that our efforts must be sustainable over the long term.

Our strategy for building a culture of continuous development rests on several elements, each of which will become an integral and essential part of each department's general operations. For example, the dean will continue to insist that each chair explicitly ask each faculty member at the faculty annual reviews whether the faculty member has a mentor, or wishes to have one. This practice will be explicitly enforced with regard to associate professors, so that these faculty members are aware of the importance that the School leadership places

on their receiving the support that they need for their advancement. Also, our plans will include buy in not only from the current dean and department chairs, but also the School's senior and junior faculty, so that a change in the leadership will not jeopardize the mentoring efforts that will be put in place now.

The dean and the chairs will encourage the associate professors, during their annual reviews, to review the dossiers of faculty who were recently promoted to the full rank so that they can think about how to structure their own dossiers.

The School will commit to providing the resources that are necessary for the professional advancement and productivity of the Associate rank faculty. Assuming that the assessment of the current program is satisfactory, the School will provide the financial resources for additional mentee-mentor pairs. In addition, the School and the Department chairs will work with these faculty members to support their plans and momentum as appropriate within the overall needs of the mission of the School.

Much of the success of the mentoring program will rest on the department chairs being an active part of the process. They are the ones with the greatest knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of the faculty, and the obstacles to advancement that may be hindering someone. However, department chairs are often not provided any training in this arena, and therefore, during the initial weeks of the program, we propose to bring an external expert to hold a workshop and facilitate the training of the chairs. This workshop will focus on helping the chairs to identify associate professors in their departments who could benefit from mentoring, how to gently broach the subject with their faculty, how to establish and monitor a successful mentor-mentee relationship, dealing with potential problems, and developing reporting and accountability mechanisms.

Finally, to ensure that the School is building a culture of continuous development, and to ensure that the climate of support for associate professors in the School is improving, it will be important to have strong accountability mechanisms. We propose to build in these mechanisms at many places to ensure that there are no gaps in the administration and management of the program. The mentees will be required to complete the mentee interest form and write a brief proposal requesting that they be paired with a mentor. The coordinator of the program will monitor the relationship and provide regular reports to the dean and the relevant chair(s). The coordinator of the program will report to the dean, and will be evaluated by the dean with regard to their efficacy in managing the program.

In summary, by committing to providing the necessary resources, providing effective training to the chairs who will be at the front-lines of the mentoring program, and building strong accountability into the program, it is expected that the School will develop a strong and effective mentoring program that will alter the climate and culture within the School.

References

Falletta, S.V. and Combs, W. (2002). Surveys as a tool for organization development and change. In J. Waclawski and Allan H. Church (Eds.). *Organization Development: A Data-driven approach to organizational change*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.

Goodstein, L.D., and Burke, W. W. (1991). Creating Successful Organizational Change. *Organizational Dynamics*. 4, 5-17.

Zellers, D. F., Howard, V. M., and Bracic, M. A. (2008). Faculty Mentoring Programs: Reenvisioning rather than reinventing the wheel. *Review of Educational Research*, 78, 552-588.

Mentee Questionnaire

1. Please complete the following sentence? *My primary motivation for seeking a mentor is*
2. What sort of information, knowledge, support would you like to gain through this relationship?
3. How would you best like to interact with your mentor? (e.g., face to face meetings, e-mail) and how often?
4. What personal or career goals do you hope this relationship will help you to achieve?
5. The formal part of this relationship is intended to last 12 months – could you describe your goals for the next year?
6. What do you expect to give in this relationship?
7. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
8. What motivates you? What holds you back?
9. If you have had a mentor previously, please describe what worked best in that relationship and what did not.

Mentor Questionnaire

1. Please complete the following sentence. *My primary motivation for mentoring is*
2. Can you please describe how your experiences and expertise can contribute to this relationship?
3. What sorts of topics, information, knowledge do you feel you could provide a mentee?
4. What do you expect to give in this relationship? What do you expect to get from this relationship?
5. What personal goals (if any) would being a mentor help you to achieve?
6. What expectations or assumptions do you hold for the role of mentee?
7. How would you best like to interact with your mentee (e.g., face to face meetings, e-mail) and how often?
8. If you have had a mentee previously, please describe what worked best about that relationship and what did not



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February 1, 2015

Mentoring Academy Review Committee,

I have been working with Drs. Vemuri and Williams to develop the current proposal and give my fullest support to these efforts. I have asked Dr. Williams to serve as the program facilitator. Her training in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and her research in employee feedback and developmental systems provides her the expertise to fill this role. Further, Dr. Williams was one of the two Science faculty that led the development of our School Strategic Plan which, in accord with the IUPUI plan, contains critical objectives to optimize faculty development and mentorship.

The School of Science will provide the necessary administrative support and resources to the proposed mentoring program and associated activities. In addition, assuming the mentoring program generates beneficial outcomes for participants, the School will work to continue the program in subsequent years.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,

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