

Heads Workshop: “Supporting a High-Quality Faculty”
Saturday, January 28th, 9:00 am–1:00 pm
Tutorium in Intensive English Conference Room, 1333 South Halsted Street

CASE STUDY #1: Faculty Retention

Scenario: An associate professor in your department who has been a solid and productive researcher, teacher, and colleague for ten years approaches you to alert you that he is exploring opportunities at other institutions in the city. When you inquire about the reasons underlying his decision to consider leaving the department, he sighs and says “I just don’t feel like I belong here anymore”. When you ask him to explain, he says “I don’t want to cause YOU any trouble...I haven’t decided anything yet, I just didn’t want you to hear it from someone else.”

What do you do?

Questions to guide discussion:

How do you define the problem?

What additional information do you need to gather?

What resources can you mobilize?

As Head, what specific actions will you take? What do you need to delegate to others?

How will you decide whether you’ve reached your goal?

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CASE STUDY #2: Championing Your Faculty

Scenario: An associate professor in your department was granted tenure two years ago. At the time, her second book was about to be published by a major university press and since then, she has received a major award for it and been invited to serve as a keynote speaker at the primary conference in your discipline. In addition, she has just gotten a substantial grant with colleagues from an Ivy League university for a new project that promises to have a significant impact on her specialty.

Recently, you heard her introduced to a colleague at another school as a rising star and began to hear rumors about other universities’ plans to recruit her. Although she has not openly expressed any dissatisfaction with her position in the department, you are concerned that she will soon be wooed away by another university.

What do you do now?

Questions to guide discussion:

How do you define the problem?

At what point(s) can you intervene to address it?

What information do you need to gather and how will you do it?

What factors do you think will determine her decision(s)?

What kinds of departmental, campus, and disciplinary resources can you draw on?

Who else can you mobilize to support your efforts?

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CASE STUDY #3: Supporting Your Faculty

Scenario: A promising assistant professor in your department has just completed her third-year review. The faculty member’s progress is excellent in two of the three areas that count toward tenure: Her post-dissertation research is proceeding well and several journal articles are under review or in press. The level of service is appropriate and includes reasonable proportions of departmental and campus-wide committee work as well as thesis supervision.

Her teaching, however, falls below the departmental standard. Her student evaluations have repeatedly been below average, although many students acknowledge that she possesses command of the subject. The department’s Director of Undergraduate Studies, who has observed three different courses over the last year, reports significant problems in the presentation of complex material, management of classroom time, and interaction with students. If it continues, the low teaching performance threatens the assistant professor’s chances of promotion and tenure.

What do you do now?

Questions to guide discussion:

What is your goal?

What additional information do you need to gather?

What departmental and campus resources can you mobilize to address the situation?

As Head, what specific actions can you take? What can or should you delegate to others?

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CASE STUDY #4: Leadership

Scenario: One of the mid-career associate professors in your department is a member of a group that is underrepresented in your discipline. When he came up for tenure four years ago, there was no question about granting it, and his teaching evaluations have remained excellent. In fact, many students see this teacher as a role model in the field and seek him out as a teacher and advisor. Because of his commitment to increasing diversity throughout the university and his awareness of students’ needs, he finds it impossible to refuse the many requests he receives to supervise theses and to serve on campus-level committees.

However, since receiving tenure, he has performed only a small amount of research and published nothing new. Although he has recently given two conference papers, several senior colleagues have begun to complain that he is not living up to the department’s reputation for scholarly excellence. The associate professor has not told you directly that he feels overburdened by service responsibilities or wishes he had more time for research, but you are concerned that the complaints from other faculty members will increase and that this will lead to conflict within the department.

How do you resolve this situation?

Questions to guide discussion:

How do you decide exactly what the problem is?

What would constitute “solving” it?

What are the possible explanations for the current situation?

What departmental and campus resources can you mobilize to address the situation?

As Head, what specific actions can you take? What responsibilities, if any, do other departmental faculty have?