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**Faculty and Department Head Annual “Leading Creative Experts”**

**Professional Development Conversation**

**Department Head Preparation Guide**

***A Part of the Initiative to Transform Annual Review Conversations to***

***Foster Innovation and Equity among Creative, Expert Faculty***

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Please do not use or adapt without acknowledgement.

Please check in with us to learn more about best practices and department head training that

undergird this approach.

**Introduction**

Annual faculty reviews provide an invaluable yet often untapped opportunity to help springboard and foster faculty’s short- and long-term professional development. As part of WPI’s ADVANCE grant, we have successfully piloted a new model for annual faculty reviews.

*The goal? To transform these conversations*

*from a purely evaluative to a professional development model.*

**New Proposed Conversation Model**

The new model involves four key facets:

**Facet 1: *Reflect and Situate*** (Faculty and DH prepare individually, prior to meeting).

**Note:** We recommend sending discussion preparation materials to faculty *at least two weeks in advance* to allow adequate time for preparation/reflection.

**Facet 2: *Inquire and Validate*** (together, in conversation)

**Facet 3: *Co-create within constraints*** (together, in conversation)

**Facet 4: *Commit* *and Follow Up*** (Faculty and DH, during and after conversation)

**Facet 1: Reflect and Situate prior to Annual Development Conversations**

To prepare for your conversations, we suggest that department heads engage in the following strategic preparation, guided by the following prompts.

***I. Strategic Preparation***

What is your strategic vision for your department?

* What are your priorities? Why?
* What are your constraints?
* Where do you want the department to be in 3-5 years? Why?

Reflect and situate:

* How does each faculty member’s work portfolio “fit” with the department’s goals?
* What is the constellation of faculty strengths/weaknesses within your department?
* Where are potential areas for amplifying or multiplying impact across faculty?

How can you help catalyze potential?

* What range of resources could you offer to different faculty—now and over the coming years? (See pages 3 and 4 for potential resources)

***II. In advance of each faculty member’s conversation, consider:***

***Fostering Pride, Purpose and Belonging***

* Reflecting on the past year, what three things are you most proud of in this person’s work?
* *Why is this kind of work important to the department? To our institution?*
* What are this faculty member’s dream projects? *Why is this kind of project important to the department? To our institution?*

***Prioritizing and Co-creating across opportunities and constraints***

* What is this person’s current portfolio of activities (teaching, research, service)? Where are areas of strength? Improvement? How might they develop further?
* What do you see as their “role” in the department? What activities might they be involved in that do not show up in the annual report?
* What is the **highest-impact use** of this faculty’s time? *Why?*
* How might this faculty member prioritize across their demands? *Why?*
* What resources or support might help catalyze this person’s efforts—especially in light of COVID? (See suggested list)
* What other non-monetary rewards or validation might make them feel valued? (See suggested list)

**Sample Resources that Department Heads Can Provide**

**Time and assistance**

* Course release or re-scheduling teaching load
* Graduates and Undergraduates to help in labs or with research
* TA and PLA allocation
* Summer graduate or undergraduate student support
* Committee relief
* Staff assistance
* Developmental or editorial writing support

**Status tokens and other benefits**

* Office space improvements or new desk
* Support for professional/leadership development
* Other…

**Enable on-campus recognition and connections**

* Award nominations
* News articles
* Collaborators
* Mentors

**Make connections outside our institution /in the field**

* Connect faculty member with invited talks at other institutions or specialized conferences
* Introduce faculty member to grant program directors
* Support travel to conferences, research, trainings, or federal agencies
* Nominate faculty member for awards
* Introduce to potential mentors

**Possible COVID-related support ideas to spur your thinking**

**Harness virtual networking**

* Help with virtual networking—Connect to offer virtual seminars for greater strategic visibility - take advantage of no travel.
* Provide stipends for virtual conference participation

**Foster a culture of Humanity**

* Help especially Junior faculty make meaningful connections.
* Foster cultural shift toward wellness, not just "get your stuff done"
* Culture shift away from meetings—Harness technology to share information differently.

**Provide expertise, research and admin support**

* Support for undergrad researchers in summer
* TA lines to support graduate assistants
* Developmental and technical writers to help turn work into publications/grants
* Copy editors
* Shared administrative support

**Provide time-related support**

* Relief from teaching activities
* Targeted and expert child education support (e.g., support for ADHD children)
* Relief from service committee work
* Uninterrupted blocks for creative work/scholarship
  + Creative Scholarship Fridays
  + Extended writing retreats

**Anticipate: List of Possible Difficult Conversation Topics**

1. How identify/suggest possible resources beyond $$ on the fly?
2. How to handle faculty who are “stuck” or just dialing it in?
3. How to handle “asks” when have scarce departmental resources or not current departmental priority?
4. How to handle statements about fairness?
5. How to handle when teaching scores are really low, but person won’t take ownership or responsibility
6. How to handle faculty who won’t cooperate…
7. What if I have a large department?
8. How to balance pride and dream projects with need to address problems?
9. How do I talk through merit raises at same or different time?
10. How do I ask questions next year re; dream projects without seeming to be evaluative?

Picture 2by Fred Kofman

