Charting Your Path at Mid-Career: Choosing Your Future

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Mid-Career Needs Assessment

• Focus Groups for Women in STEM
  – Identified barriers to promotion
    • Barriers: Lack of clarity and transparency in promotion criteria; lack of performance feedback and mentoring from chairs; disproportionate service demands; gender bias; bias related to rank
  – Identified needs of mid-career faculty
    • Support for research; information/guidance on promotion criteria; regular performance feedback; informal networking with peers; and access to formal mentoring
Mid-Career Needs Assessment

• Survey of all Associate Professor Faculty (N=283)
• Survey Findings
  – Widespread perception that the criteria for promotion are not clear- for both genders but more pronounced for women
  – Fewer than one third of men and women reported receiving guidance on promotion from their chairs
  – A majority indicated they were not “intentional” about their career planning toward full- for both genders but more pronounced for women
  – A large majority of men and women indicated that having a mentor would be helpful in preparing for promotion
Mid-Career Mentoring Program

• Goal-
  – to provide information, development, and support that will facilitate the advancement of faculty from the rank of Associate to the rank of Full professor

• Target-
  – all Associate professor faculty, with some initiatives limited to female STEM faculty

• Approach-
  – a range of initiatives all focused on intentional career planning and support
Mid-Career Planning Process

• Step 1 Articulate your Career Goals
• Step 2 Seek understanding of the Promotion Criteria in your Department/unit and College
  » Faculty Forum
• Step 3 Conduct a Self-Assessment
• Step 4 Write a Mid-Career Development Plan
• Step 5 Discuss Plan with Mentor and Chair
• Step 6 Implement the Plan
• Planning Process has become cornerstone for three Mid-Career Mentoring Initiatives

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Mid-Career Mentoring Initiatives

• Vertical-dyad Mentoring
• Informal Horizontal Group Mentoring
• Formal Horizontal Group Mentoring
Formal Horizontal Group Mentoring

- Peer mentoring of Associates to Associates in small groups
- Groups can be within a department, unit, or interdisciplinary
- Initial training with Mid-Career Planning Process provided by ADVANCE; Subsequent monthly meetings facilitated by faculty volunteer “convener”
- Commitment to ongoing participation for a minimum of 1 semester and completion of Mid-Career Plan required
Ron: My Experience Thus Far

Step 1: Articulate Career Goal

• Full Professor (and stay there as long as possible)
• (for me) this is the “sweet spot”
Step 2: Seek Promotion Criteria

• Attending Faculty Forum
• Meeting with Chair
• Convocation provided some insight
• Eager to see how current candidates up for promotion fare
• Insight: institutional memory is not very helpful
Step 2 : Seek Promotion Criteria

Short-Term Goals:

• Graduate 1 – 3 PhD students
• Apply for federal grants at the “next level”
• Build my professional reputation
• Increase level of service
Step 3: Self-Assessment

• I have been consciously thinking about this because I joined the faculty as an Associate Professor

• Had these discussions with the Dean during interview
Step 3: Self-Assessment (cont’d)

Actions I was already doing...

- Serve as general chair for my main annual meeting
- Support peer-mentoring by being “convener”
Actions I need to change...

- Put senior students on a schedule
- Grant work – more team approach
- Increased travel (working groups, international)
- Submission strategy: perhaps fewer but “more important” papers
- Offer to teach more undergraduate classes
Step 4: Career Development Plan

- Challenge: psychologically it seems like busy-work
- As a convener, I felt I had to do it...
- CDP is currently in progress
- (one person suggested that this is my CDP)
Steps 5 & 6: Discuss & Implement

- Discussions with Department Chair
- Discussion with Dean
- Grant Proposals
- Had to resist the urge to submit!
Future Plans

For myself...

• I knew what I wanted, the CDP tool helped me quantify

• Progress – on track so far

• I am eager to help others
Anita: My Experience Thus Far

Step 1: Articulate Career Goal

• Career trajectory less traditional

Tenure ➔ Family Leaves ➔ Administration ➔ Full time Faculty
Step 2: Seek Promotion Criteria

- Faculty Forums
- Department Annual Reviews
- Discussions with Full Professors and Chair
Step 3: Self Assessment

• Decision to Leave Administrative Position

• Recharging Research Agenda
  ➢ Strategic in terms of substantive areas
  ➢ Multidisciplinary teams
  ➢ Pursuing ADVANCE Mid-Career Grant
  ➢ Balancing quality with quantity
Step 4: Career Development Plan

- Participated in various ADVANCE activities
- Sought Opportunities for Peer Mentoring
- Volunteered to start Peer Coaching program for Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Beginning to fully articulate my CDP
Changes I made in my strategy...

- Balance between teaching, research, and service
- More strategic linkages
- Learn to say “No”
- Be more assertive about seeking opportunities for professional recognition
Benefits of Career Coaching

• Peer mentoring → enhanced collaborations

• Increase accountability

• Informal discussions → reassessing departmental procedures
Lessons Learned

• Peer-mentoring does not work for everyone

• Challenges in participation
  ➢ Convincing colleagues this is not additional service work
  ➢ Finding mutual times to meet
  ➢ Getting right fit between faculty at different positions in career path
Questions?

• Thank you!
• For additional information, please contact Kim Buch, ADVANCE, UNC Charlotte, Charlotte, NC 28223, 704-687-4756, kkbuch@uncc.edu