Understanding Midcareer Faculty

The COACHE Approach

May 19, 2017
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Kiernan R. Mathews, Ed.D.
Think of one or two gratifying moments in your career as a professor. What at that moment made being a professor a great job?
bottom 30% of all universities

- top 30% of all universities
peer universities

Your university
What are they doing right?

Will they improve? How?

Identical means...

but widely different meanings...
My assumptions

Limitations can be transcended.
We are unfinished, incomplete beings.
Adults can grow.
Growing up, or in your working life:

a) What was the situation?
b) What enabled your growth?
c) What did that growth then enable in your life and/or work?
d) Who helped you?
e) How did they help you?

Your high-growth experiences
Adults can grow.

My assumptions:

Colleges thrive when faculty thrive.

... and suffer when faculty lack agency.
Trustee to President: “What if we don’t, and then they stay?”

President to Trustee: “What if we spend all of this time and money on faculty development, and then they leave?”

Trustee to President: “Then they leave?”

President to Trustee: “What if we don’t spend all of this time and money on faculty development?”
My assumptions.

- Adults can grow.
- Colleges thrive when faculty thrive.
- Tenure is granted on the expectation of a continuing trajectory, but obstacles arise.
- Promotion to full is the goal.
45% disagree

Q: My dept has a culture where associate professors are encouraged to work towards promotion to full.

Q: My dept has a culture where associate professors are encouraged to work towards promotion to full.
Q: When do you plan to submit your dossier for promotion to full professor?

40% have no plans

Q: When do you plan to submit your dossier for promotion to full professor?
My assumptions

Adults can grow.

Colleges thrive when faculty thrive.

Promotion to full is the goal.

It's just an unplanned outcome. Many are

Being a "senior" associate isn't "bad."

Many are succeeding in ways we can't see (or reward).
Wet Hot American Summer (2001)
“less than”?
The Three Classic Stages of a Faculty Member’s Career with the Proposed “Newly-Tenured” Stage of a Faculty Member’s Career
As with employees in other industries, overall workplace satisfaction among university faculty is U-shaped by age.
Assistant and associate professors appear to grow less satisfied with their institutions the longer they stay in rank.
Senior associates are less satisfied with their institutions as places to work.
Unhappy Associate Professors

July 18, 2012
By Audrey Williams

As annual raises lag, professors look substitutes at salaries for new hires

March 18, 2012
By Audrey Williams

The perks of professors continue to be

Pushes

The Associate Professor Blues

September 3, 2013, 11:00 pm
By Clinic Potter

Is the oldest academic professor the best female hire?

When Mary Beth Norton went

University in 1974, she was the

First Female, History; September 12
Book (perspectives on a topic)
Professor Edmunds Historical
American Historical

Professor Edmunds, History; September 2
Book (perspectives on a topic)

In supporting the

Andrea Ciancone

Seven years after earning tenure at the College of Wooster, Judith C. Aubrey-Peters is still

Lia DeAngelis for the Chronicle

Thrice associate professors at College of Wooster (from left, Amy DeGraeve, Judith Aubrey-Peters, and Susan

By Robin Wilson

Lia DeAngelis for the Chronicle
Post Tenure Stress Disorder?
Not improving teaching
Longing for the good old days
Complainer
No-show
Angry
Stymied career
Discouraged
Abandoned
Bored
Misunderstood
Lazy, passive
Unaccountable
Marginalized
Isolated
Old white male
Cynical
What keeps associates from promotion?

Best moments and high-growth experiences

Being a “senior” associate isn’t “bad.”

Promotion to full is the goal.

Colleges thrive when faculty thrive.

Adults can grow.
Weary Citizen
Synergistic Citizen
Independent Agent
Discouraged Isolate

High Career Satisfaction

Strong Institutional Connection

Post-Tenure Pathways

Model


makes case-support-after-tenure.
Some categories of action:

• Midcareer awareness/info resources
• Programs for career planning, development, and renewal
• Teaching support beyond classical models
• Mentoring and networking
• Research support
• Awards and recognition

Support available at consortia, national orgs.
When all else fails...

There's no such thing as "the Faculty".
Invest in chairs.
Mentor across all ranks.
Reform tenure and promotion.
Encourage rebalancing / renegotiation.
Make orientation an authentic eye-opener.
Start a "contested topics" conversation.
Use a stump speech.
Engage allies.
Get data-wise.

Get data-wise...
Debate the "Contested Topics"

• "They get less, and they deserve less."

• "At a research university, research productivity should be the primary criterion for promotion." and institutional needs?"

• "Can we ask them to align/redirect research to department, college, institutional needs?"

• "Are annual reviews too much at this stage?"

• "Should we tell them they barely made tenure?"

• "Are specific criteria clear and fair, or narrow and inflexible?"

Kiernan R. Mathews, Ed.D.
Harvard Graduate School of Education
The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Kiernan R. Mathews, Ed.D.

May 19, 2017
University of North Carolina at Charlotte