Mid-Career Faculty Support:

The Middle Years of the Academic Profession

Anne Marie Canale

Cheryl Herdklotz

Lynn Wild

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INTRODUCTION

In an effort to explore the current state of national programs that support faculty at mid-career, the Faculty Career Development Services team researched benchmark institutions and related literature. The ensuing report includes an overview of the literature, an analysis of benchmark schools, current trends in supporting mid-career faculty, and recommendations that could improve the professional lives of faculty in all aspects of their academic work. The report recommendations focus on aiding faculty success, which in turn enriches the lives of our students and contributes to their success.

Before proceeding, it will be helpful to define *mid-career faculty*. For this report, mid-career faculty includes those who have achieved tenure status and have been at rank for at least five years post-tenure. Mid-career faculty are typically a heterogeneous group, ranging from single females in their early 30s, to males over 50 years of age, to dual career couples with children from across all disciplines. As of February 2013, 76% (601 out of 794) of RIT tenured faculty potentially fall into this middle-career group (see Table 1).

Table 1 RIT Human Resources Faculty List*

Tenured Assistant Professors	35
Tenured Associate Professors	292
Tenured Professors	274
Total Tenured Faculty at RIT	**601**

*Generated 2/19/13; does not include Lecturers/Senior Lecturers

Faculty vitality is another term often raised in development support for midcareer faculty. As defined by Maher, vitality focuses on "the capacity of the college or university to create and sustain the organizational strategies that support the continuing investment of energy by faculty and staff both in their own career and in the realization of the institution's mission" (Clark and Lewis, 1985; Maher). Faculty vitality and institutional productivity are co-dependent and enrich each other exponentially.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research shows faculty need different kinds of support and opportunities at different career stages. Many associate professors across the country are now struggling through the long years of mid-career, which can be marked by exhaustion, doubt and even depression. Mid-career faculty can easily reach a plateau where professional goals are less clear, even while an array of attractive personal and professional options may be available. According to a study at Michigan State University, "The absence of motivating professional goals can cause professors to settle into a dull routine or begin to invest their energies in activities outside of their professional lives" (Baldwin, et al., 2008). Vague expectations, including less than explicit requirements for promotion to full professor can be demotivating and lead to disengagement. In addition, mid-career faculty often feel lack of attention and even neglect as resources are often channeled to new junior faculty.

In academe, the path to tenure can be so demanding that there is bound to be a letdown in the associate professor years that follow, says Cathy Trower, research director at the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) at Harvard University. "Life as an associate professor with tenure can be even more isolating and overwhelming than being an assistant professor on the tenure track … once a professor earns tenure … associate professors are often left to figure out how to manage the varying demands of the job—and fit in time for their research on their own" (Wilson, R., 2012).

Adding to this, mid-career faculty are typically at their life stage where they must balance the responsibilities of home and work, facing challenges such as child care, elder care, and often must choose between working on career advancement (e.g., working on research, presenting at a conference) vs. managing a household (e.g., securing reliable child care, attending children's school activities). Special challenges abound for women and faculty of color in their mid-career years. These two groups, by their very nature, have additional demands on their time due to continuous invitations to sit on committees, requests to take additional mentees due to their gender and/or color, and personal conflicts with their roles.

Often described as *mid-career malaise*, the rank-specific issues for mid-career faculty are fundamentally different than they are for pre-tenure faculty. The latter are primarily concerned with winning tenure and that is the linear focus of their energy, attention and behavior during the probationary years. Once faculty reach tenure, a different set of issues set in that are about deeper questions of meaning, identity, leadership, power and legacy. Because of this, they need as much (if not more) mentoring than early career faculty, but in completely different ways (Rockquemore, K., 2011).

METHODOLOGY

The FCDS team reviewed 39 institutions from three sources: RIT's Human Resources department[1], the list of "Near Peer" schools from the *RIT 2012 Faculty & Staff Engagement & Climate Survey*[2], and a list of Comparative Schools from Provost Jeremy Haefner's presentation on COACHE to Academic Senate[3], October 2013 (see Appendix A for a table showing the final list of benchmark schools). Each college's website was investigated, searching for evidence of support specific to mid-career faculty.

BENCHMARK STUDY FINDINGS

While almost all of the schools researched have some form of faculty support, it is frequently not explicitly stated that they have any type of support *specific* to mid-career faculty. Most have robust programs, workshops and funds available for their new tenure-track faculty, and plenty of programming that is assumed available to all tenured and tenure-track faculty at the institution.

From the 39 schools examined, 21 had no evidence at all of specific mid-career faculty support. Often, the target faculty for support programs is implied, e.g., leadership development programs generally assume that tenured faculty/faculty-at-rank are those intended for the support, and are those encouraged to pursue academic leadership positions. The majority of the mid-career support programs found in the remaining 18 schools were in the form of leadership development, support for women faculty, mentoring (both mentor and protégé), grants and awards, sabbaticals, fellowships or some other stipend or financial remuneration (e.g., travel), and general development opportunities. Few benchmark schools researched explicitly state their support programs for mid-career faculty. Many of the schools state that they support faculty "throughout their career," but information on how they do so does not exist, or is not readily available. For example, Harvard University states that they "are committed to developing scholars at all stages of the academic career ladder in order to maintain and build its academic excellence," but upon closer look, most of the support they offer is for "new ladder faculty" (see Appendix B for a summary of findings).

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[1] http://www.rit.edu/fa/humanresources/content/benchmark-schools, 2012
[2] https://www.rit.edu/~w-drupal/sites/rit.edu.provost/files/presentations/2012_university-level_engagement_and_climate_survey_results.pdf, September 2013
[3] https://www.rit.edu/~w-drupal/sites/rit.edu.provost/files/presentations/as_coache_presentation_final.pdf, October 2013

PROMISING PRACTICES IN MID-CAREER FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the findings from the benchmark schools studied and previously discussed, Table 2 represents findings on exemplar models and promising practices in mid-career faculty development from institutions outside of the benchmark list.

Table 2 Exemplar Models & Promising Practices

School	Mid-Career Faculty Support	Ownership
Michigan State University	Instituted faculty orientation to mid-career and started workshops to help associate professors develop leadership and managerial skills since so much of the job is about directing and serving on committees. In addition to workshops specific to leadership and academic life, offers an annual program*, From Associate Professor to Professor: Productive Decision-making at Mid-Career* for associate professors in the tenure	Office of the Provost, Faculty & Organizational Development
Ohio State University	Created alternative paths for associate professors to be promoted to full professor, e.g., giving faculty credit for directing research centers that get grants rather than strictly for landing individual research grants and producing publications. Publishes a promotion guide for associate professors, *Moving Forward in your Academic Caree*r.	Vice Provost for Academic Policy and Faculty Resources
University of Illinois-Urbana	Implemented annual workshops that focus on providing tools and information relevant to a successful progression from associate to full professor, including a *Mid-Career Faculty Symposium*. *Mid-Career Faculty Release Time Program* (MFRP)- Designed to provide support to tenured associate professors who would benefit from concentrated time to advance their research or creative work.	Academic Affairs, Office of the Provost, Faculty Development
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	*Academic Leadership Program* - Designed to develop the leadership and managerial skills of faculty who have demonstrated exceptional ability and promise.	Academic Affairs, Faculty Development

School	Mid-Career Faculty Support	Ownership
	Faculty Development Fellowship-Created for post-tenure faculty providing full pay in order to engage in scholarly research, artistic activity, or study of teaching or professional innovations which will improve the faculty member's ability to contribute to the academic programs of the university.	
University of North Carolina-Charlotte	*Mid-career faculty mentoring program*-Supports the transition of faculty to rank of full professor offering sessions to support and help plan their progress through peer input and strategic coaching. *Faculty Forum*-Deans and the Provost address the topic of "Pathways to Promotion" with associate professors in an effort to provide more clarity regarding the criteria for Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure decisions from Associate Professor to Full Professor.	Academic Affairs, Faculty Affairs
University of Wyoming	*Promotion to Full Professor: Philosophy, Standards, Strategies, and Best Practices for Candidates*-Provides assistant and associate professors with a thorough discussion of the path to full professor including tips on developing a successful research portfolio, creating a strong record of teaching, and diversifying one's service (i.e., to the discipline, institution, and state). (p. 6)	Academic Affairs, Faculty Career Resources

FRAMEWORK FOR MID-CAREER FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

While the COACHE and Climate findings typically focus around four key areas of faculty "life" (tenure/promotion, work/life integration, support for research/teaching, collegiality/culture) (Trower, 2012), the recommendations in this report follow a more simplistic framework based on the work of Bataille and Brown (2006) who argue for an approach to faculty vitality that includes *organizational, personal,* and *functional* development strategies (p. 112). Their framework has been adapted for use in this study to systematically organize support for mid-career faculty and is illustrated in Figure 1 below. In order to ensure faculty vitality for mid-career faculty, institutions need to ensure that opportunities in all three categories are available, recognizing that some may overlap (for example, mentoring may cover personal development as well as organizational development).

Figure 1

Organizational Development	Functional Development	Personal Development
• Leadership opportunities (or paths to leadership) • Involvement in governance • Opportunities for fellowships, sabbaticals, etc. • Mentoring opportunities	• Opportunities for technology training • Teaching strategies • Peer review/assessment • Curriculum design • Instructional skills • Interdisciplinary opportunities	• Professional/career advancement • Unique programs for women, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and AALANA faculty • Programs for well-being and work/life balance • Family friendly policies such as dual career

Faculty are primarily responsible for the advancement of their own careers and their own professional growth, but department chairs/unit heads, deans, and campus leadership all play a pivotal role. The challenge is for faculty to be responsible for their professional growth and development as an ongoing, career-long quest. Department chairs have significant responsibility in that they need to provide personal support, motivation and guidance to align faculty goals with the department, college, and institution ("Mapping the Terrain," p. 53). Since advancing the careers and ensuring faculty vitality is crucial to the progress of the university, Deans must also be supportive and ensure strategies meet the institution's overall mission and vision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A strong commitment to faculty development, particularly for the middle years that span 15 to 25 years of a career, is a crucial priority for any successful university. Thus, the following recommendations are being provided with the goal of a satisfied and productive workforce, leading toward faculty and ultimately student success. They are organized under three categories: institute level, college/department level, and faculty level.

INSTITUTE-LEVEL

- Provide clear policies and procedures related to promotion from associate to full professor.
- Design a comprehensive program to meet the needs specific to mid-career faculty for development and renewal.
  - o Workshops, sessions, guest speakers geared toward mid- career faculty will be implemented into FCDS Plan of Work going forward, to include organizational, functional, and personal development strategies. For example, FCDS has scheduled a panel series for spring 2014 designed specifically for mid-career faculty on mentoring and the promotion process.
- FCDS will create a website repository that provides resources, services, and support available for mid-career faculty (mid-career awareness building).
- Communicate mid-career support opportunities (e.g., teaching and research support, awards and recognition) campus-wide via the Provost's E-zine, newsletters, and e-mail blasts.
- FCDS will collaborate NSF ADVANCE team with development activities for mid-career faculty, especially women, deaf/hard-of-hearing, and AALANA faculty.
- FCDS will monitor and assess whatever is implemented for effectiveness.

COLLEGE/DEPARTMENT LEVEL

- Department chairs/unit heads should design policies, processes, and programming that will provide support for mid-career faculty.
- Chairs should educate themselves about faculty resources available on campus, practices in other colleges, as well as academic leadership development opportunities.
- Provide mentoring for mid-career faculty on career development including promotion.
  - o Mid-career faculty choosing to take the leadership path need to be given opportunities to do so such as release time, professional development opportunities, funding, and mentoring.

- Support mid-career faculty work-life balance (e.g., child/elder care, flexible schedules). Adjustment of teaching/scholarship requirements might be considered in the faculty's annual Plan of Work.
- Share with the rest of the university models and documentation of successful mid-career practices (e.g., share documentation and dossiers from faculty who successfully navigated middle career teaching, scholarship, and service loads and have been promoted to full professor).
- Explore ways to value new and innovative research or teaching practice as alternative ways to successful promotion (i.e., non-traditional standards).

FACULTY-LEVEL

- Faculty are primarily responsible for the advancement of their own careers and professional growth, thus, plans for development should be included in their Plan of Work and annual performance reviews.
- Obtain endorsement for their career plan annually.
- Use of an individual development plan that accentuates goals to improve as well as goals to deepen (personal, functional, or organizational).
- Develop a network of mentors and support within and external to the university.

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APPENDIX A: MID-CAREER FACULTY SUPPORT STUDY, BENCHMARK SCHOOLS, OCTOBER 2013

Benchmark Schools studied included 39 institutions from three sources:
1. RIT's Human Resources department: http://www.rit.edu/fa/humanresources/content/benchmark-schools, 2012
2. Near Peer" schools from the *RIT 2012 Faculty & Staff Engagement & Climate Survey, University-Level Results:* https://www.rit.edu/~w-drupal/sites/rit.edu.provost/files/presentations/2012_university-level_engagement_and_climate_survey_results.pdf, September 2013
3. "Comparative Schools" from Provost Haefner's presentation to Academic Senate on COACHE findings: https://www.rit.edu/~w-drupal/sites/rit.edu.provost/files/presentations/as_coache_presentation_final.pdf, October 2013

COLLEGE	SOURCE		
	Human Resources	**Near Peer**	**Comparative Schools**
1. Carnegie Mellon	X		
2. Case Western Reserve University	X	X	
3. Clarkson University	X		
4. Cornell University	X	X	
5. Drexel University	X		
6. Drury University		X	
7. Gallaudet University	X		
8. Harvard University		X	
9. Illinois Institute of Technology	X		
10. Kettering University	X		
11. Lehigh University	X		
12. Loyola University		X	
13. Massachusetts Institute of Technology	X		
14. New York University	X		
15. Northeastern University	X		
16. Ohio State University		X	
17. Pace University	X		
18. Polytechnic University of New York	X		
19. Purdue University	X	X	X
20. Renssalaer Polytechnic University	X		
21. Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology	X		
22. Stevens Institute of Technology	X		

APPENDIX A: MID-CAREER FACULTY SUPPORT STUDY, BENCHMARK SCHOOLS, OCTOBER 2013

COLLEGE	Human Resources	Near Peer	Comparative Schools
23. Stanford University		X	
24. SUNY Binghamton			X
25. SUNY Buffalo	X		X
26. Syracuse University	X		
27. Temple University		X	
28. University of Alabama-Birmingham		X	
29. University of California-Davis		X	
30. University of Miami		X	
31. University of Michigan		X	
32. University of Pennsylvania		X	
33. University of Pittsburgh		X	
34. University of Rochester			X
35. Valparaiso University		X	
36. Virginia Polytechnic Institute	X		X
37. Wake Forest University		X	
38. West Virginia University		X	
39. Worcester Polytechnic Institute	X		

APPENDIX B: MID-CAREER FACULTY SUPPORT STUDY, SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

BENCHMARK SCHOOLS - NO EVIDENCE OF MID-CAREER FACULTY SUPPORT

1. Carnegie Mellon
2. Clarkson University
3. Drury University
4. Gallaudet University
5. Illinois Institute of Technology
6. Kettering University
7. Loyola University
8. Massachusetts Institute of Technology
9. New York University
10. Polytechnic University of New York
11. Renssalaer Polytechnic University
12. Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
13. Stevens Institute of Technology
14. SUNY Binghamton
15. Temple University
16. University of Alabama-Birmingham
17. University of Miami
18. University of Pittsburgh
19. Valparaiso University
20. West Virginia University
21. Worcester Polytechnic Institute

BENCHMARK SCHOOLS - EVIDENCE FOUND OF MID-CAREER FACULTY SUPPORT

COLLEGE	FINDINGS	RESPONSIBILITY
1. **Case Western Reserve University**	• Strong focus on leadership development and women mid-career faculty. • *Institutions Developing Excellence in Academic Leadership* (IDEAL) - Originating from an NSF grant, this is a leadership development program for department chairs and emerging leaders; includes series on *Gender Issues in the Path to Academic Leadership* and *To Tenure and Beyond*, and executive leadership coaching.	Office of the Provost, Faculty Development
2. **Cornell University**	*Good Practices for Retention of Faculty* document, originating from CU-ADVANCE initiatives states: • Include faculty development opportunities in annual review conversations. • Encourage mid-career professional development to support faculty as they work toward promotion to full professorship. • Develop and maintain objective criteria for granting tenure and promotions and inform faculty of these expectations. • Foster a supportive environment by engaging senior faculty in discussions about their role as mentors, encouraging peer mentoring networks.	CU-Advance Team (Provost is Principal Investigator)
3. **Drexel University**	• *Drexel Career Development Awards* - provides funding for Drexel faculty to develop networks, nationally or internationally, with colleagues whose work complements activities at Drexel, "invaluable for junior faculty or mid-career faculty moving in a more collaborative direction or beginning a new research area."	Office of the Provost, Faculty Development and Equity

		• Comprehensive set of web-based resources on work/life balance, diversity, mentoring, and much more.	
4.	**Harvard University**	• *Talking About Teaching* seminar explores pedagogical connections across disciplines and Schools. Designed "by faculty for faculty," this seminar series showcases the work of Harvard master teachers (post tenure) through demonstrations of their pedagogy and discussions of its broader applications.	Office of the Senior Vice Provost, Faculty Development and Diversity
5.	**Lehigh University**	• Strong women and leadership focus. • Support in the post-tenure phase for associate professors who are developing a leadership portfolio for the practical purposes of providing evidence for promotion and for the fulfillment of helping develop the skills and identifying opportunities and experiences that will allow for continued development of leadership capacity.	ADVANCE and Faculty Development

6.	**Northeastern University**	• Support begins with New Faculty Orientation and continues throughout a faculty member's academic career to retirement; includes workshops specifically for associate professors.
		• *NU Leadership Academy* - series of workshops designed to introduce administrative career paths to tenured faculty.
		• *Mentor Circles*: associate professors invited to participate in a lunch discussion with full professors who act as leaders and facilitators on selected topics of interest such as:
		    ○ strategies for increasing paper publication;
		    ○ how to engage colleagues with a new book;
		    ○ looking for new funding sources;
		    ○ diversifying paper publication routes and others.
			Office of the Provost, Faculty Development ADVANCE (reports to Provost)

7.	**Ohio State University**	• Leadership focus • Comprehensive report on mid-career support authored in 2005. • *Faculty Toolkit* includes support for all faculty including mid-career support (Promotion Guide: *Moving Forward in your Career*), work-life balance, etc.	Academic Affairs, Faculty Development
8.	**Pace University**	Some services offered including workshops on Academic Portfolio preparation, Tenure and Promotion to Full Professor, and dossier preparation.	Academic Affairs, Center for Faculty Development
9.	**Purdue University**	• ADVANCE Initiatives include: Faculty Advancement, Success and Tenure (FAST) development series, diversity programs, and workplace violence programs, among others. • Offers several leadership programs, fellowships, travel grants, sabbaticals and many other opportunities for mid-career faculty.	Center for Faculty Success
10.	**Stanford University**	*Development Programs for Stanford Leaders* organizes a number of programs for chairs and other aspiring members among the faculty who show potential and capacity for leadership. Includes:	Vice Provost for Faculty Development and

	• Stanford Fellows • Stanford Leadership Academy • Voice and Influence Program • Mid-Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar	Diversity
11. SUNY Buffalo	Mentoring for associate professors within first five years of tenure is granted; those with beyond five years and for full professors mentoring is optional at request of faculty member.	Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
12. Syracuse University	ADVANCE grant from 2010; day-long conference*: The Peak Performing Professor at Mid-career and Beyond*, 2010	Academic Affairs, Faculty Development
13. University of California-Davis	*Mid-Career Leadership Program* (MCLP) - a series of workshops designed to engage primarily associate-level faculty in learning core competencies necessary for effective department and/or section/division leadership. A certificate of completion will be provided to all faculty who attend a minimum of 80 % of the courses.	Faculty Development
14. University of Michigan	Huge wiki resource for leadership, coaching, mentoring, publishing, research, categorized by rank.	Faculty Career Development
15. University of Pennsylvania	• *Penn Fellows Program* provides leadership training to a small group of outstanding mid-career faculty, while building a cross-campus, interdisciplinary network to help support and advance their development • Mentoring faculty does not end with tenure; extending mentoring programs to include mid-career faculty and offering additional mentoring opportunities for faculty of color and women in STEM fields, where their small numbers can lead to a sense of isolation. Mentoring must count as valuable University service and will be recognized as such in annual reviews and in considerations of promotion to full professor. Mentoring should be incorporated into faculty work plans and discussed and evaluated in the annual reviews of departments and schools.	Faculty Affairs & Professional Development
16. University of Rochester	*Dean's Teaching Fellow (DTF) Program* is an endowed program at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry which provides a rigorous curriculum to further the development of 6-8 highly qualified faculty members per year based on their commitment to careers in medical education; junior and mid-career faculty are eligible.	Faculty Development
17. Virginia Polytechnic Institute	• "The provost's office supports career development and success of faculty members," that includes occasional workshops to provide information for associate professors preparing for promotion (co-hosted with *AdvanceVT.* • *ADVANCEing* Faculty Executive Coaching Program assists faculty with professional and personal growth, academic and career guidance, and	Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost

	leadership development. Designed to be a mentoring program for mid-career faculty. The coach provides performance- and career-related guidance, together with resources and feedback on how best to accomplish an identified vision, goals, plans and actions.	
18. Wake Forest University	Does not specifically mention mid-career faculty. Extensive list of workshops for all faculty; work-life balance apparent. Mid-Career Faculty Support in the form of Grants/Awards – a select few are specifically for this faculty group: • Provost's Fund for Faculty Travel • Reynolds Research Leaves for Senior Faculty • Science Research Fund • Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Research Fund	Office of the Provost, Faculty Development-Professional Development Center