

MANAGING ACADEMIC VITALITY

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ABSTRACT

Describing the stages of a faculty member's career, Baldwin uses the metaphor of seasons [1]. They engage in different tasks by seasons. An institution should orient its strategic initiatives accordingly. Early in the spring of their career, they explore their discipline. They acquire professional vocabulary and code, teaching skills, and a research agenda, while also managing a personal life. A research agenda is formulated and assessed for prospects of yielding tenure. Also they develop a teaching philosophy and style, in spite of the woeful record of teacher training at graduating institutions. While doctoral programs emphasize the development of research skills, they generally neglect teaching skills. Yet, their stated mission is to educate university teachers. In the mid stage, faculty members seek to contribute to their discipline and establish a reputation through leadership roles, while remaining professionally engaged and enthused. With maturity, one seeks new strategies to maintain the established momentum. Search for balance between one's professional life and personal life continues. With high productivity their career prospers through the late summer and early fall of their professional life. Otherwise, they might end their career pre-maturely. Succeeding, they enter late fall and winter, taking stock of their life's work, maintaining currency, mentoring junior colleagues, preparing for retirement, and leaving a legacy.

Hall's career development model [3] may be adapted to apply to the developmental stages described above. An institution may influence a faculty member in the early stages through (a) *support* (morale, resources), (b) *feedback* (mentoring, peer review), and (c) *information* (opportunities, facilities). This would normally facilitate faculty member's adaptability. With further success and a heightened sense of empowerment, the mid-career individual is ready to exploit opportunities. With continued support, feedback and information, the individual grows into leadership positions within and beyond the institution. Changes in the environment both within and beyond the institution (a change in the technology critical to the discipline or a change in assigned responsibility) offer developmental opportunities. Opportunities arise from changes in the faculty member's personal life, too. Through the pre-tenure phase, the institution may develop practices with initiatives pertaining to orientation, mentoring by veterans, development of professional networks, and management of time. To promote the vitality of a faculty member through the post-tenure phase, the institution may develop practices with initiatives pertaining to career planning, flexible policies, growth opportunities, and access to resources. Group assessment may provide effective basis for individual assessment. The assessment of individual academic productivity could be integrated into that of the assessment of groups, committees and departments. The criteria for such assessment could be derived from the mission statements and from goals assigned to the respective groups. The task of developing criteria for the assessment of individual productivity may be assigned to faculty members at common stages of the career.

REFERENCES

- [1] Roger Baldwin. Stages in Academic Life: Promoting Vitality Pre-and Post-Tenure. Presentation at *Workshop on Vital Faculty: Issues after Tenure*. At Furman University, March 5-7, 2004. Council on Undergraduate Research Institute, Washington, DC.
- [2] D.T. Hall. *Careers in Organizations*. Goodyear, Santa Monica, CA, 1976.
- [3] D.T. Hall. *Career Development in Organizations*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 1986.