The Role of Academic Affairs in Stewardship of the Learning Environment

Lesley Fellows
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Overview

• Academic Affairs: Position in the ecosystem...
• Supporting excellence in the learning environment
  • Individual Faculty Members
  • Departments & Schools
  • Faculty-wide
• Reactive & Proactive Roles
• Strong points
• Areas for improvement
An Academic Affairs & Faculty Development Office Co-Production

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Connect with other new Faculty members

Figure out:

where you are
where you are going
how to get there

Overview of academic milestones

Drawing your own roadmap

Are you on the right track?

Performance Review

Reappointment

Promotion

Resources

Information

Mentorship

AD UGME

AD PGME

WELL Office

FacDev

AA

Chairs & Directors

DPS

learners

faculty members

WELL Office

AD UGME

AD PGME
Individual Faculty Members

- **Recruit** people with the expertise and attitudes to be excellent teachers
  - advertising, searches, vetting all emphasize teaching
- **Expectations**
  - Academic duties, time commitment
    - excellence in teaching is a core expectation of the University, the Faculty, and individual Departments
    - time commitment and specific duties customizable
- **Resources & Support**
  - Orientation (in-person; online)
  - Material resources
  - Mentorship
Individual Faculty Members

• **Recognition & Feedback**
  - Annual performance review (merit)
  - Re-appointments (3, 6 years) and tenure (6 y)
  - Promotions

• **Addressing Problems: fair, timely, respecting confidentiality**
  - Protocols for clarity and consistency
  - Support to Chairs (advice, Toolkit)
  - Informal interventions
  - Formal investigations re: University discipline
    - temporary removal from learning environment
    - reprimand, suspension or dismissal
    - coaching and remediation
Towards a culture of a healthier learning environment

- Organizational Culture:
  - Faculty Values and Expectations
    - Orientation
    - Mentorship
    - Spoken and unspoken priorities
      - revision of annual review and promotion criteria
- Departmental or School Cultures
  - Support to Chairs & Directors
  - Selecting and Reviewing Chairs
  - Efforts to provide data at the Unit level
Towards a culture of a healthier learning environment

- Recognizing and addressing systemic learning environment issues
  - Data
  - Potential solutions
- Learning environment without borders
  - Many actors in the learning environment
  - A need to work together
    - communication
    - timely responses and adjustments
    - follow-up
Strengths & successes

- Shared vision across the Faculty leadership
- Progress towards better communication leading to more consistent responses to problems
- Implementation of improved faculty orientation and mentorship (ongoing)
- Excellent support from the central University (Associate Provost, Legal Counsel) for difficult cases
Persistent challenges

- Communication across the many actors involved
- Reactive (e.g. disciplinary) response is inherently slow, stressful, and opaque to the community
- Very imperfect data make it challenging to monitor progress
- Under-developed “proactive” strategies
  - Early detection and intervention
  - Prevention
- The learning environment is our work environment
  - many variables outside the scope of the Faculty...