

Interdisciplinary Networking Committees Lehigh University Faculty Mentoring Program Highlights of the September 20, 2011 Seminar for Mentors.

Dr. Vincent Munley, Deputy Provost for Faculty Affairs, introduced the new program for mentoring new faculty "Interdisciplinary Networking Committees" as a way to better provide early career mentoring to faculty who need assistance learning the institution and enhanced access to ways to answer a wide variety of questions to become successful at Lehigh. Some of the motivation for retooling the existing faculty-mentoring program came from results of research by the ADVANCE grant. While the ADVANCE grant surveyed STEM faculty, Dr. Diane Hyland, Associate Dean for Faculty and Staff, College of Arts and Sciences, Professor of Psychology, and co-PI on the ADVANCE grant explained it is likely that some of the perceptions can be broadly generalizable. An in-depth report will soon be available on the Lehigh ADVANCE website.

Dr. Hyland described the structure of the research team and that both internal climate-type questions as well as interdisciplinary research questions have been asked and analyzed. Major areas of concern of Lehigh STEM faculty dealt with the work environment (including teaching, distribution of resources, and feelings of isolation), negotiating work-life balance, and research career mentoring. In the area of work-life balance issues, it is important to note that the pre-tenure male faculty had similar concerns as the women, including: lack of communication about and/or support of work-life balance policies, child care options are not adequate, and the stress associated with finding a balance is related to lower overall satisfaction and more consideration of leaving Lehigh. Dr. Jacqueline Krasas, co-PI, Director of Women's Studies, and Associate Professor Sociology and Anthropology, also related that at Lehigh, 60% of respondents collaborate either within their discipline or across disciplines; however there are gendered perceptions about the value of collaboration. Related to mentoring, women report having been mentored more than men, but a significantly higher percentage of women than men report believing men are more likely to get helpful career advice.

Understanding that all new faculty likely share some of the reported concerns of STEM faculty or will experience such perceptions from those around them is helpful for how the networking team members can approach mentoring. The program concluded with discussions about the expectations of this type of structure compared to various approaches used by other universities and the concrete steps members of the networking group might consider as they embark on the new networked-relationship. The networking teams are envisioned to remain engaged at least through the tenure decision, and hopefully most of the interactions can be with the entire group. This individualized, non-prescriptive approach combined with a sense of purpose can yield the best outcomes. For example, lunch or a cup of coffee with the new faculty member can be a relaxed way to talk over issues or ideas important to the new faculty member (the Provost's Office will reimburse costs for food and drink from INC discussions such as these). Some other things to do or talk about include introducing faculty members to other colleagues (on or off campus)-especially those who could be helpful in areas of research or teaching, giving insights into living in the Lehigh Valley region, providing feedback on grant proposals, introducing various funding opportunities available on campus, particularly the newer ones available through ADVANCE, giving input on how to build a promotion and tenure portfolio, share your experiences with networking in various settings, and most importantly listening- listening to the goals or challenges of new faculty to better help them find their path to success without evaluating or breaching the trust inherent in the relationship.

Dr. Munley, DPFA, will invite the four-member interdisciplinary networking groups to meet together soon. Interdisciplinary Networking Committees should keep his office informed of what works and what doesn't. The slides from the session are available from the mentoring section at www.lehigh.edu/luadvance.