

ABSTRACT: 2018 ELAM Institutional Action Project

Project Title: A Mid-Career Faculty Development Program

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Collaborators and Mentors: Yvonne Michael, Erin Horvat, Ellonda Green

Topic Category: Faculty Development

Background, Significance of project: Many sources indicate that faculty at mid-career, typically defined as faculty at the rank of Associate Professor, are most likely to experience higher levels of career dissatisfaction, with higher expectations for research success and increasing service burdens. Faculty in mid-career comprise the largest component of academic profession, including at the Dornsife School of Public Health (DSPH) where 49% of faculty are Associate Professor. However, mid-career faculty spend the least amount of time considering career growth and professional development. Drexel has a series of early career faculty development programs, as well as a program for Department Chairs, but currently does not have any mid-career programs.

Purpose/Objectives: The goal of this project is to (1) develop a series of faculty development workshops for mid-career faculty (Associate Professors) at Drexel, which will provide opportunities to learn about a variety of topics; (2) evaluate the utility of the program through session evaluations; and (3) assess whether the program increases faculty satisfaction as determined through changes in faculty satisfaction surveys.

Methods/Approach/Evaluation Strategy: To accomplish the objectives of the project, meetings were held with key stakeholders, including: Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs in the DSPH (Yvonne Michael), Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (Erin Horvat), Director of Faculty Development & Diversity (Ellonda Green), and the DSPH Department Chairs, to discuss the needs of each and to obtain buy-in. Meetings with mid-career faculty were held to assess their needs and desire to participate in a program such as this. Procedures for ascertaining which faculty will be invited to participate were determined, and a plan and timeline for development of evaluations and assessments drafted. Implementation of the program will occur at the DSPH during the 2018-19 academic year. Revisions will be made based on feedback from participants, with a goal of rolling it out to the Drexel community at large during the 2019-20 academic year.

Outcomes/Results: To date, positive meetings with key stakeholders have occurred, including receiving support from the Associate Dean, Vice Provost, and Department Chairs. Four session topics have been determined: (1) goal setting; (2) leadership in mid-career; (3) service, research, and teaching at mid-career; and (4) effective sabbaticals. Identification of assessments (outcomes and metrics) and session evaluations tools is on-going. Short-term results to be collected include faculty satisfaction (such as the COACHE survey) and session evaluation. Further, this program could help mid-career faculty provide peer mentoring to each other. Long term results to be assessed include: faculty satisfaction over time and faculty retention.

Discussion/Conclusion with Statement of Impact/Potential Impact: Mid-career is a challenging time for many faculty, when faculty experience high stress and lower satisfaction. Implementing measures to help faculty navigate this difficult time in their career could have positive impact on their job satisfaction and success, and ultimately lead to higher levels of faculty retention.