

## **ABSTRACT: 2014 ELAM Institutional Action Project Poster Symposium**

**Project Title:** “Day 1”: Aligning Expectations to Improve Junior Faculty Retention

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**Mentors:** Bronwyn Wilson, MD, MS Ed, MPH; Thomas Williams, MD; Leslie Morrison, MD; Richard Larson, MD, PhD

**Background Challenge or Opportunity:** The human, operational, and financial costs of faculty turnover at medical schools inspires a focus on effective retention strategies. At the UNM SOM, the average rate of junior faculty attrition in years 2010-2011 was 6% compared to 10.8% in years 2012-2013, a relative difference of 56% with the greatest impact on clinician educators and flex track faculty. A 2014 study cited misaligned expectations as a reason for early junior faculty loss (Bucklin, Valley, Welch et al., 2014). Exit interview excerpts from the UNM SOM suggest that misaligned expectations provide a plausible explanation for junior faculty attrition. Alignment can be thought of as the degree to which component parts work cohesively (Reece, Chrencik, & Miller, 2012). Thus, faculty/institution expectations alignment supports retention and perhaps better overall institutional alignment (economic, governance, strategic, and management) and performance (ibid).

**Purpose/Objectives:** This initiative aims to improve junior faculty retention by activating a systems approach to the alignment of faculty/institution expectations. Adopting a quadrant-based method as depicted in the Figure acknowledges the “vulnerable” early years of junior faculty life. The purposes of the initiative are to:

- Identify and document mutual expectations (Day 1),
- Ensure multi-level integration of expectations (Y1),
- Review progress in achieving mutual expectations (Y2), and
- Celebrate and promote achieved alignment (Ys 3-5).

**Methods/Approach:** The “Day 1” model is based on systematic review of the scientific and gray literature on topics such as “onboarding”, faculty retention, faculty attrition, Faculty Forward, alignment/expectations, exit interview, and faculty satisfaction. Early and repeated dialogue with executive leadership, HSC/SOM Offices of Academic Affairs faculty and staff, department administrators, and ELAM Winter Session and learning community feedback led to model iterations. Going forward, the utility of the model will be enhanced by its flexibility to accommodate future iterations based on changes arising from first wave implementation.

**Outcomes and Evaluation Strategy:** Outcomes include faculty responsiveness to monitoring, faculty retention quality and quantity, increase in % of junior faculty that persist to year 5, sustained leader engagement. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) will be used to develop the “Day 1” evaluation framework. AI philosophy builds from a place of organizational strengths and encompasses both qualitative and quantitative methods and is compatible with other evaluation methods. Process and outcomes evaluation will be utilized for each model quadrant.

# “Day 1”: Aligning Expectations to Improve Junior Faculty Retention

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## Background

The human, operational, and financial costs of faculty turnover at medical schools inspires a focus on effective retention strategies. At the UNM SOM, the average rate of junior faculty attrition in years 2010-2011 was 6% compared to 10.8% in years 2012-2013, a relative difference of 56% (Chart), with most impact on clinician educators and flex track faculty. A 2014 study cited misaligned expectations as a reason for early junior faculty loss (1). UNM SOM exit interview excerpts suggest that misaligned expectations provides a plausible explanation for junior faculty attrition. Alignment can be thought of as the degree to which component parts work cohesively (2). Thus, faculty/institution expectations alignment supports retention and perhaps better overall institutional alignment (economic, governance, strategic, and management) and performance (2).

## Purpose

This initiative aims to improve junior faculty retention by activating a systems approach to the alignment of faculty/institution expectations. Adopting a quadrant-based method as depicted in the Figure acknowledges the “vulnerable” early years of junior faculty life. The purposes of the initiative are to:

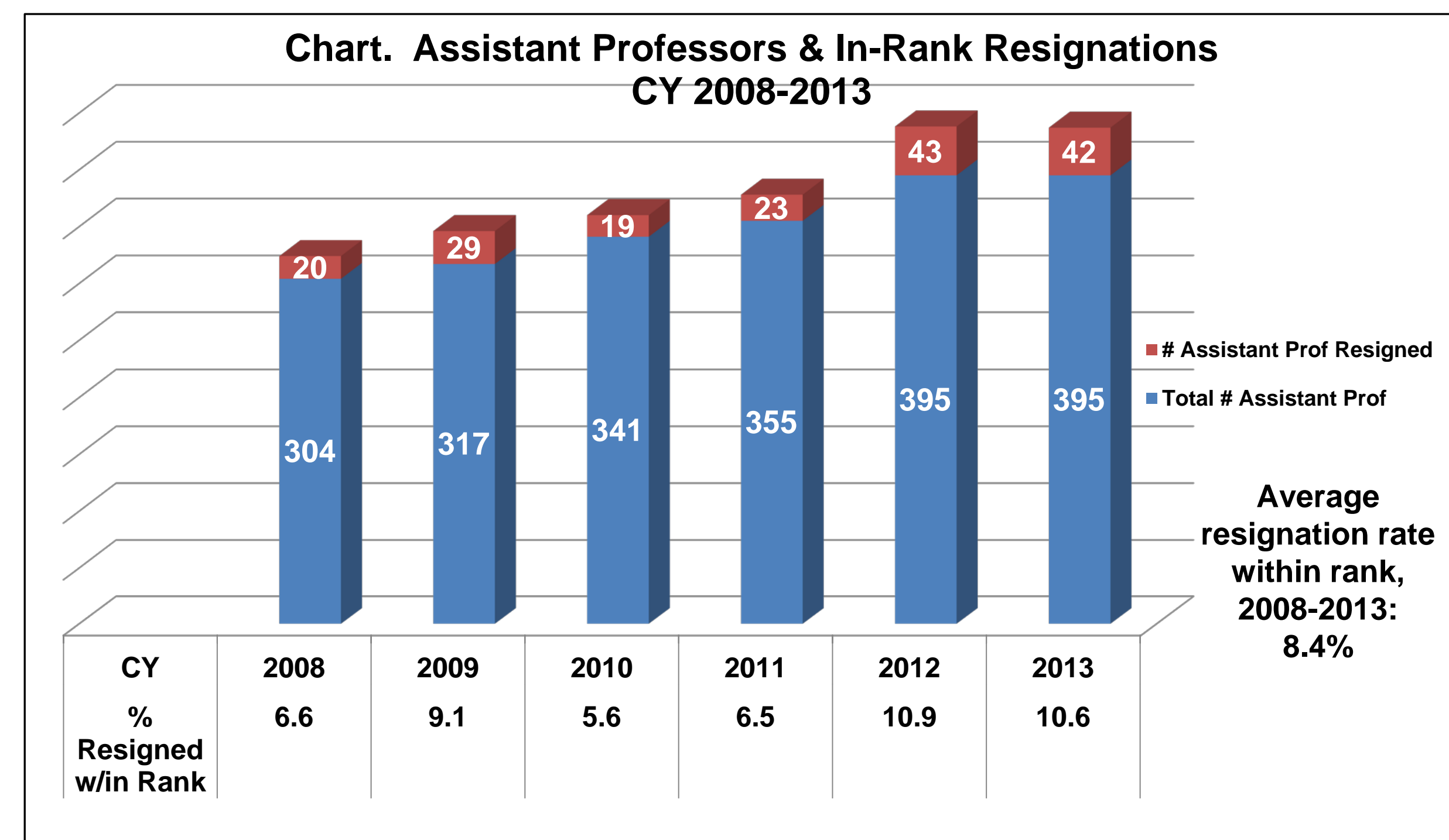
- Identify and document mutual expectations (Day 1),
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## Methods

The “Day 1” model is based on systematic review of the scientific and gray literature on topics such as “onboarding”, faculty retention, faculty attrition, Faculty Forward, alignment/expectations, exit interview, and faculty satisfaction. Early and repeated dialogue with executive leadership, HSC/SOM Offices of Academic Affairs faculty and staff, department administrators, and ELAM Winter Session and learning community feedback, led to model iterations.

## Outcomes & Evaluation Strategy

Outcomes: faculty responsiveness to monitoring, faculty retention quality and quantity, increase in % of junior faculty persisting to year 5, sustained leader engagement. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) will be used to develop the “Day 1” evaluation framework. AI builds from a place of organizational strengths.



## Discussion

“Day 1” proposes the alignment of expectations as a strategy for junior faculty retention at the UNM SOM. It is a holistic approach combining current and new monitoring activities. “Day 1” promotes innovation. It will forge an expressly stated partnership between junior faculty and the UNM SOM and considers the totality of a junior faculty member’s professional lifecycle from Day 1 through Year 5. Keys to successful implementation include: executive leadership support, collaboration and cooperation within and across departments and with the Office of Academic Affairs, quality data collection and database management, early and effective intervention strategies, and documentation and dissemination of retention statistics in a longitudinal format. The anticipated impact of “Day 1” is improved retention of junior faculty at the UNM SOM. Interpretation of results will include achievement of positive outcomes in each quadrant as noted by key stakeholders.

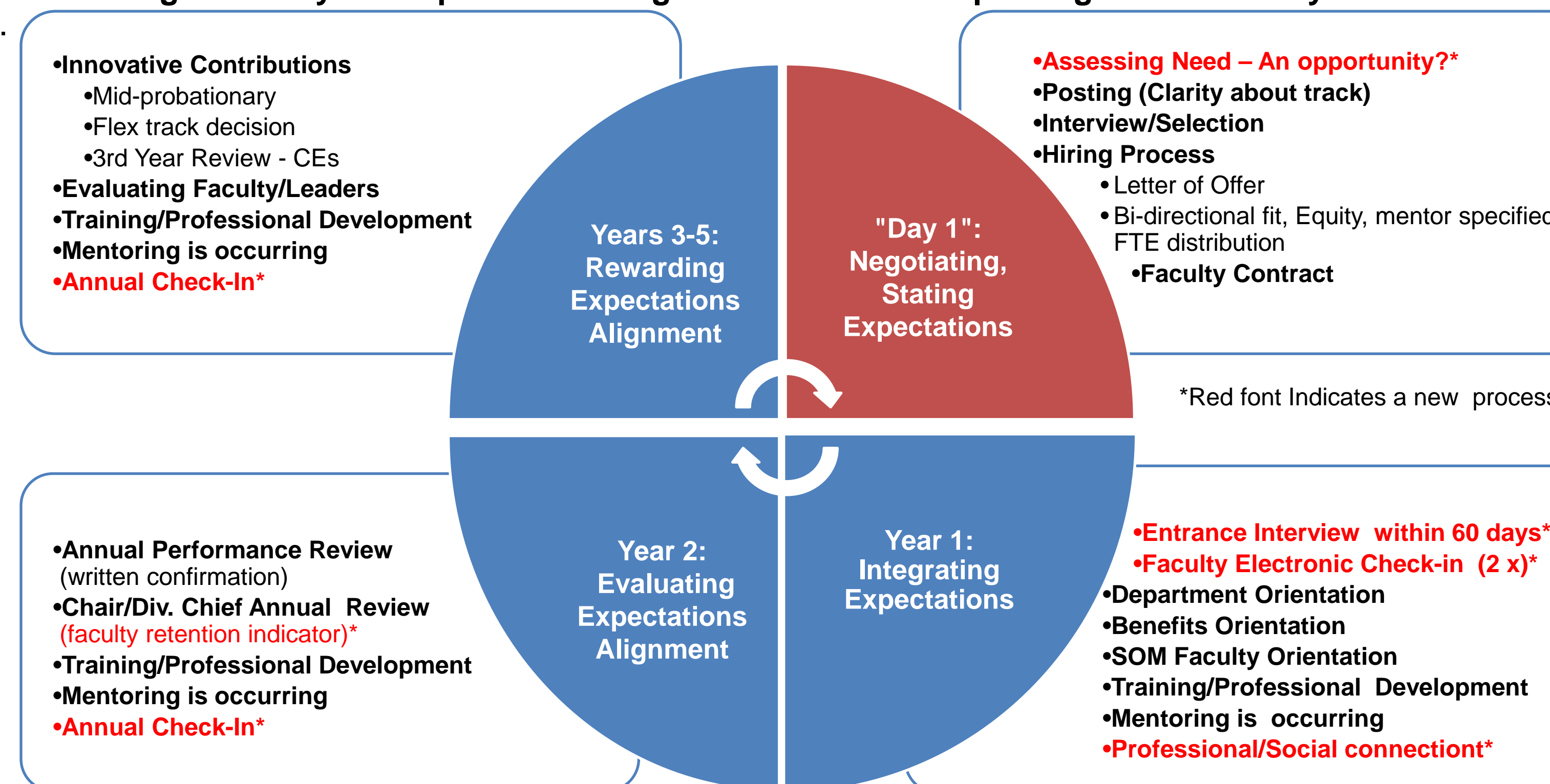
**Exit Interview Excerpts from UNM SOM Assistant Professors**

*I was hired to develop a subspecialty but was assigned other work from day one. (CE track)*

*I’m a clinician educator but I’m now expected to conduct research with no FTE assigned for it.*

*I expected more time and supportive infrastructure for research. (Flex track)*

**Figure. “Day 1”: Expectations Alignment Model for Improving Junior Faculty Retention**



## Summary

Next steps for the “Day 1” initiative include refining the benchmarks and metrics currently in draft form, ensuring that documentation across quadrants is consistently measuring common metrics. Revision of existing monitoring documents such as the exit interview form is needed to ensure compatibility with newly created entrance interview and check-in documents in order to determine concordance between expectations at various time points.

## References

- 1) Bucklin BA, Valley M, Welch C, Tran ZV, & Lowenstein SR. (2014). Predictors of early faculty attrition at one Academic Medical Center. *BMC Medical Education*. 14, 27.
- 2) Reece EA, Chrencik RA, & Miller ED. (2012). Fully aligned academic health centers: a model for 21st-century job creation and sustainable economic growth. *Academic Medicine : Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*. 87(7), 982-7.

## Acknowledgments

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