

FACULTY STRATEGIC PLAN PROPOSAL

The Dean of the Faculty's Office is firmly committed to the holistic development of our faculty. This includes the provision of resources and opportunities to enhance our faculty's scholarly and creative endeavors, promote effective leadership and service, and nurture pedagogical competencies that provide our students with high quality teaching and a first-rate educational experience for which Skidmore is known.

The deployment of faculty development resources is most effective and efficient when opportunities are driven by well elucidated goals and objectives of individual faculty members in the context of institutional and departmental priorities. As faculty progress through their academic careers and the professorial ranks, development of an individual faculty professional strategic plan can assist in focusing one's work, illuminating needs for targeted faculty development resources, providing a specific context for evaluation, and meeting institutional priorities. Therefore, as part of a multi-faceted approach to faculty development and evaluation, the DOF Office proposes that faculty collaboratively engage in an individual faculty strategic planning process that will function as a guide for professional growth and development in scholarship/creative work, teaching, and service.

While the implementation of such a collaborative planning process can be beneficial for all faculty regardless of rank or tenure status, it can be especially valuable for pre-tenure faculty. Such a plan could facilitate a successful tenure process through helping faculty clarify their scholarship/creative goals in the context of departmental and institutional tenure expectations and illuminate what resources may be needed to support scholarship and creative work as one progresses toward assembling the tenure file. In terms of teaching, newer faculty can better plan for new course preps and deploy specific and tailored strategies such as peer observation to enhance their classroom performance. In terms of service, faculty can think about where their talents are best utilized in the governance and service system and target their efforts in those areas. Such mindful planning across the three areas of performance may allow for synergy in which scholarship/creative work, teaching, and service complement and energize each other allowing for better work/life balance and increased job satisfaction.

Finally, the development of individual faculty strategic plans can provide a context for more targeted and meaningful feedback and evaluation particularly as one works toward tenure. The plan, developed primarily by the individual faculty member in consultation with the department chair(s)/program director(s) (or designees), could provide a benchmark for feedback in annual letters, at third-year reappointment, and at tenure. The plan would be developed collaboratively in the context of the department clarifying expectations for pre-tenure faculty and those charged with shepherding these faculty through the reappointment and tenure processes. The plans could also allow for continuity in expectations under probable departmental leadership changes. Such plans could also be helpful for Associate Professors working towards promotion, as well as faculty in non-tenure track positions trying to advance in rank. These plans are not contracts, but are documents to help faculty focus their work within departmental and institutional priorities. Fulfilling such plans does not guarantee tenure or promotion, and not completing all aspects of a plan does not necessarily mean one will not be granted tenure. Again, they are planning documents only.

Faculty Strategic Plan (FSP): Timing and Structure

In consultation with the faculty member's department chair(s) and/or program director(s) (CPDs), pre-tenure faculty will be expected to develop a FSP by the end of their first academic year that will cover years 2 and 3, and upon reappointment, years 4-6. The candidate will keep a copy of the most current plan and share it with CPDs. To the extent that plans include needed faculty development resources, candidates and CPDs will communicate these resource needs to a representative from the Dean of the Faculty Office (CLTL Director or ADOF). Any changes to the plan are expected to be discussed with CPDs. Plans can include but are not limited to the following components:

- Teaching
 - o What courses will likely be offered by the faculty member over the time of the plan? (It is understood that departmental needs may result in a change to the plan due to staffing or enrollment pattern changes, etc.)
 - o What is the plan for developmental peer observation that meets the needs of the faculty member vis-à-vis their current skills and competencies as teachers? (This should be as specific as possible.)
 - o What is the plan for evaluative peer observation? (This should be in accordance with the College's Peer Observation Policy.)
 - o What are faculty development needs (mentoring, pedagogical workshops, course development, etc.) related to teaching? What resources are needed to meet these needs? What is the plan for obtaining these resources?
- Scholarship/Creative Work
 - o What are the faculty member's scholarship/creative work goals for this period? (These goals should be reasonable, attainable, and help move the candidate toward successful reappointment, tenure and/or promotion.)
 - o What conferences or other professional development opportunities will the faculty member engage?
 - o Will the faculty member seek internal or external funding to support scholarship/creative work? What is the plan to apply for these funds?
 - o What sorts of support/mentoring (both internal/external to the institution) does the faculty member need to help realize these goals? What is the plan to obtain this support?
- Service
 - o When does the faculty member plan to complete their governance cycle? When does this service best fit with the other components of the plan?
 - o What sorts of service complements the faculty member's teaching and scholarship/creative work goals?
 - o What leadership opportunities exist and what leadership aspirations do the faculty member have? If applicable, what kind of leadership training would be useful to the faculty member to help meet these goals?

PEER OBSERVATION POLICY PROPOSAL

Rationale:

There are two goals of peer observations: developmental (intended to provide feedback for ongoing improvement, enhanced effectiveness, and innovation in classroom instruction) and evaluative (observations made for the purpose of personnel decisions). Developmental peer observation should be conducted in the context of a collaborative and trusting professional relationship with the outcomes of such observations meant for professional development only. While each form of observation complements one another, developmental observation is ongoing, and evaluative assessment occurs during specific windows during the reappointment, tenure, and promotion processes.

Skidmore College faculty have a wide variety of skill levels and approaches to the craft of teaching. Therefore, an individualized approach to developmental peer observation to best meet the needs of individual faculty is warranted. While all faculty can gain from regular feedback about their teaching, pre-tenure and newer non-tenure track faculty could potentially benefit the most from a structured plan of developmental peer observation.

In consultation with their CPDs, faculty should propose a developmental peer observation strategy that best meets their needs (could be part of the FSP). Depending on what faculty may want to learn about their teaching, developmental peer observers can come from the faculty member's home department (content-related issues) or outside of the department (process-related issues). To help observers provide the highest quality feedback, training is necessary and should be provided by the College.

Regardless of the purpose of the observation (developmental or evaluative), all peer observations should include a pre- and post-observation discussion between the teacher and the observer. The pre-observation discussion can provide the opportunity to discuss the content of the sessions to be visited in the broader course context, any specific feedback needs, and any other issues that can set the stage for a productive observation. Observers should be given a syllabus and access to course materials well before the observed session. If possible, at least two contiguous class sessions should be observed to provide the most comprehensive data. During the observation, it can be productive to use a tool or rubric to help focus and guide the observations. The data collected using the tool/rubric would then be the focus of the post-observation discussion. During this post-observation discussion, the faculty member who was observed would take notes and then write a reflection on the observation that summarizes the discussion and includes a plan to incorporate the relevant feedback into their ongoing teaching.

In order to provide the resources to implement this holistic approach to peer observation, it will be necessary to train a group of faculty who could conduct developmental observations and be called upon to provide this support to colleagues in different departments. By our calculations, a cohort of 3-5 faculty members in each disciplinary division would be sufficient. The group of trained observers who would visit colleagues' classes in other departments would be compensated. In addition, partnered/reciprocal developmental peer observations (two faculty agree to visit each other's courses) either intra- or inter-departmental is a model can also be an option to consider that would provide reciprocal partnership for developmental observation

purposes. Finally, department chairs and program directors should also be trained in peer observation methods. They are uniquely responsible for evaluative observations.

Some colleagues have expressed an inability to separate developmental from evaluative feedback if the candidate is in the same department. If this is the case, developmental peer observations should be conducted solely by faculty outside of the department. If a department feels it is necessary for all faculty in the department/program who are eligible to participate in the personnel process, the department could consider videotaping class sessions (capturing both professor and student contributions) that could be viewed by all faculty in the department. Ultimately, who conducts the developmental peer observations should be under the control of the candidate, so if the candidate and an observer from the same department agree to engage in such a process, that is up to the candidate.

Policy Proposal:

Pre-tenure faculty and AIRs and WIRs in their first six years:

- At a minimum, at least one evaluative observation process (i.e. pre-meeting, at least two sequential class visits, post-meeting, candidate write-up) should be conducted by the department chair and/or program director during the fall semester of the year prior to reappointment, and either during the fall or spring semesters of the year prior to tenure. No more than three evaluative observation processes should be conducted in the year before reappointment or the year before tenure.
- If the candidate is contractually obligated to teach in two or more departments/programs, the candidate should consult with the department chair(s) and/or program director(s) to develop a plan to meet the minimum and maximum number of observations, and if mutually agreed upon, a plan to engage in more evaluative observations depending on the professional development needs of the candidate and desires of the department(s) or program(s).
- These guidelines are suggested minimums and maximums, and an increase in a number of evaluative observations should not be seen as an indicator of poor teaching performance. It is possible that more observations are necessary to better inform the letters that must be written at 3rd year reappointment and tenure. The key is for each department to agree upon policies that are reasonable and appropriate.
- At a minimum, at least two developmental peer observation processes (can be inter-intra-departmental or paired) should occur before reappointment and one developmental process post-reappointment and prior to tenure. These guidelines are suggested minimums only, and faculty are encouraged to engage in more developmental peer observations to promote innovation and high quality teaching. The timing and number of developmental observations will be included in candidate's FSP.

Full-time non-tenure track faculty in their first 6 years at Skidmore (includes Lecturers, Visiting Assistant/Associate Professors, Instructors, and Teaching Professors):

- At least one evaluative observation process should occur at least a semester before an additional contract (or renewal) is awarded. No more than three evaluative observations should occur in that period.

- If the contract period is two years or more, at least one developmental peer observation process should occur sometime during the contract period and ideally prior to the evaluative observation. Full-time non-tenure track faculty will develop a plan for observations in consultation with the department chair(s) and/or program director(s).

Post-tenure faculty, full-time non-tenure track faculty in positions longer than 6 years, and part-time faculty:

- Full-time non-tenure track faculty who have been in their positions longer than six years and have never been formally observed should engage in at least one evaluative observation process before a new contract or renewal is issued. If the new contract period is two years or more, at least one developmental peer observation process should occur sometime during the contract period and ideally prior to the evaluative observation. No more than three evaluative observations should occur in a similar period. Full-time non-tenure track faculty will develop a plan for observations in consultation with the department chair(s) and/or program director(s).
- All full- and part-time faculty are encouraged to participate in developmental peer observation and can develop a plan with their department chair(s) and/or program directors.
- Associate Professors considering promotion should engage in at least one evaluative observation process and one or more developmental peer observation process prior to submitting their materials for promotion. Post-tenure faculty should engage in at least one developmental observation every six years. All faculty are encouraged to develop an FSP and incorporate observations into a holistic professional development plan.