

**[The final report will be published as a book.]**

## **SCFA/Administration Joint Working Group on Faculty Development**

**Final Report  
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### **Introduction**

I am delighted to give you the final report of the SCFA/Administration Working Group on faculty development. I will use my time today to give you background on the charge to the working group, the members of the working group, the activities we did to meet this charge, and the resultant product - a resource book - that emerged from our activities. A second product, an study of faculty who left the university, will be reported on at a latter meeting.

The SCFA/Administration Joint Working Group on Faculty Development was established by Richard Goldstein, then chair of SCFA, and Robert Jones, the Vice President for Student Affairs and Associate Provost. The impetus for the working group was a perceived need by both the senate and the administration to seek ways to support faculty success. The working group was comprised of 12 faculty members representing administration and faculty across the 25 colleges at the University of Minnesota. Here is a list of the working group members. The initial charge to the working group, as stated in a March 28, 2000 letter from Jones and Goldstein was to "...to recommend what new initiatives should be implemented by the University, or what actions should be taken to remove barriers, to help faculty be most productive (i.e., meet their individual goals and collectively the university's goals) and enjoy high morale."

The working group began its initial deliberations on this broad charge by reviewing 1) the work of past institutional task forces on faculty development, such as....., 2) past surveys of faculty, 3) information on indicators of faculty success, such as institutional ranking, trends in grant acquisitions, etc., and 4) current faculty development programs. These reviews identified that past recommendations had largely been implemented, such as increasing support for sabbaticals and establishing programs for facilitating faculty success in teaching such as the Center for Teaching and Learning and the No similar university-wide activities are in place to facilitate research productivity.

Based on this initial work and discussions with SCFA Chair Goldstein and Vice President Jones, in June 2000, our charge was narrowed to identifying strategies to increase research and scholarly productivity. By research/scholarly productivity we meant all scholarly or creative work that contributes new information or products. Today, over two years later, with increased demands on our university, and fewer resources, I believe there is an even greater need for information on *tangible ways in which departments and colleges can increase and maintain their faculty's long-term scholarly productivity*. Often, this task of facilitating productivity, rests most heavily on the shoulders of individual department leaders (heads or chairs).

### **Purpose and Method**

To meet this need, the working group decided to conduct an exit survey of faculty who have left the university for other academic institutions and to create a resource book to help department leaders facilitate research productivity. Today I am only talking about the resource book. At our next meeting there will be presentation on the exit survey.

The book was designed to provide department leaders with two intimately intertwined tool sets for facilitating research:

1. An overarching, literature-based framework for thinking about and attending to faculty research productivity.

2. A set of diverse, concretized strategies – best practices, if you will – for facilitating research excellence in their own institutions.

**Why a literature-based framework?** Given their limited (and shrinking) resources, department leaders simply cannot afford to make uninformed decisions about which research-facilitating strategies they should pursue. Fortunately, there is over 40 years of literature defining the many correlates/predictors of research productivity that we have summarized on this figure. Numerous studies outline the characteristics of successful individual researchers. They include such factors as: motivation, socialization, competence in their content area, well-developed research skills, committed involvement in both institutional and discipline-specific activities (orientation), scholarly work habits, and a balance between institutional commitment and individualism (autonomy).

But while these individual characteristics are essential, they are not sufficient in and of themselves. Of all the factors that affect an academic's productivity, none are as powerful as the environmental features of the work place. Studies reveal that productive academic organizations have a consistent set of features. These include: targeted recruitment and selection of driven faculty researchers; clear goals that serve a coordinating function; a research emphasis; a strong academic culture and a positive group climate; mentoring for junior faculty; frequent communication between faculty and their professional networks; the presence (and perception) of sufficient and accessible resources; substantial, uninterrupted time for research; a critical mass of faculty who have been together for a while and who bring different perspectives to the mix (diversity); adequate and fair salaries and other rewards; proactive brokering of opportunities for all faculty; and a decentralized organization, led by seasoned, participative, academic leadership.

Effective leadership is a particularly important characteristic of research productive organizations. It is the leader who influences the presence or absence of all other institutional characteristics. The overarching profile of the effective leader is one who facilitates group productivity through the pairing of common goals and some structure, with highly participative governance.

While this body of literature is not new to scholars of research productivity, it is typically not familiar to the busy department head. So,

- The first chapter in the resource book introduces readers to a comprehensive, literature-based model of “the research productive organization.”

- The subsequent 13 chapters are organized, such that each addresses a single feature on the model of the research productive organization. This allows readers to dig deeper into one characteristic, be that faculty recruitment, mentoring, reward systems, or issues of group culture and climate. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction summarizing prior literature on the characteristic, along with a reference list.

**Why a qualitative set of best practices?** Naming a characteristic is one thing; putting it into practice is quite another. For example, we know from prior literature that having clear organizational goals which guide members' work is an important environmental characteristic for facilitating research. But how, in practical terms, are an academic department's goals and research priorities established? How are they communicated and reinforced? Similarly, we also know that researchers need sufficient work time. But what specific strategies do highly research productive departments actually apply to maximize the time their faculty are engaged in research-related activities?

We sought answers to these pragmatic questions by interviewing the leaders (heads, chairs, deans) of 37 highly productive research departments or colleges at the University of Minnesota. These leaders were identified by asking each college dean to identify up to three highly research productive departments in his or her college. We then invited the chairs/heads of these identified departments to participate in our interview study. Our final cohort consisted of 37 departments, with at least one department from each of our 23 colleges, except Crookston. Where colleges did not have departments, a similar unit was identified, or the whole college served as the unit of analysis. The Crookston campus was not included in this study because it has relatively recently changed to a four year, baccalaureate degree granting college and is building its research capacity. The second part of each chapter in the book provides the concrete strategies offered up by these department heads. Here is a list of the department heads interviewed. This table provides demographic information on these departments.

Let me say just a bit more about the interviews. Each Department Head was interviewed by a member of the working group using a standard protocol based on the literature review. A research assistant also attended every interview. The interview began with the open ended question: “In your assessment of your department, what are the key factors that contribute to the research productivity of your faculty?” The inclusion and ordering of the remaining protocol questions was determined by (1) the answer to this question and (2) the individual’s responses to the survey, indicating on which characteristics they had strategies to share.

Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were sent to the working group interviewer for corrections and to the Department Head interviewed for corrections or changes. Each Department Head was advised that they would not be quoted, nor would identifiable information be used, without his or her permission. The interview data resulted in over 1,000 pages of double-spaced text. Within each transcript, responses were coded and assigned to a theme. NVivo Qualitative Research Software was used to sort the coded information across transcripts into the study themes. This qualitative data set of practical “lessons learned” constitutes the bulk of the book’s narrative.

Not surprisingly, since the interview was organized around the characteristics previously identified as being associated with high research productivity, most of the text clustered into these areas. However, a few new characteristics were revealed as well. These were: collaboration and teaching. The emergence of these new characteristics is interesting, because these have not previously been described as associated with research productivity in the literature.

Recall, these are the areas in which we coded all the information revealed in our interviews. This figure provides the macroscopic view of the broad characteristics of a research productive organization. What the interviews provided, however, was the microscopic view. In a few minutes, I will next zoom in on a characteristics to illustrate examples of the specific department practices we found that are included in the resource book.

First let me say again that we we asked participants to share their best practices related to all the individual, institutional, and leadership features predictive of research productivity, summarized in the model. But, the resultant resource book focuses most heavily on the environmental features. This is because:

1. First, as noted above in the literature review, institutional characteristics are the ones that most powerfully affect research productivity.
2. Second, institutional characteristics are the ones an institution can most readily influence.
3. Third, in a faculty exit survey study conducted by the working group that also developed this book, departmental features were found to be the greatest source of dissatisfaction for faculty who have left the University of Minnesota.
4. Finally, since most of the current faculty at the University of Minnesota are tenured, they likely already have the individual characteristics of a productive researcher. (Having a large proportion of tenured faculty is consistent with the majority of faculty in the United States being over 55 years of age.)<sup>5</sup>

Although the resource book focuses primarily on the environmental characteristics of research productive departments, it does not neglect the leadership and individual characteristics that also contribute to an organization’s success. A consistent theme throughout the resource book is the essential role department leaders play in building and sustaining a research productive environment (e.g., its goals which emphasize research, reward systems, opportunities for faculty’s career growth). Leadership and governance are also addressed separately (and quite extensively) in the final chapter of this book.

The individual characteristics predictive of research productivity are also addressed in other chapters, most substantially in Chapter 2 (Faculty Recruitment and Selection). Not surprisingly, the interviewed department chairs/ heads were consistent in reporting their desire to hire faculty candidates who already possess many – if not all – of the individual features previously identified in the literature as predictive of success.

## **Intended Audiences**

As mentioned earlier, we prepared this book primarily for deans, department heads or chairs, and others responsible for maintaining or increasing faculty research productivity in academic departments. Indeed, the many diverse voices readers will hear in the book are from this peer group. We expect, however, that the information will be of use to other audiences as well. These might include:

- current faculty looking for ways to increase their own research productivity;
- future faculty searching for the academic home that will, by virtue of having certain desirable environmental features, best facilitate their research careers;
- scholars investigating ways to develop and sustain research-conducive work environments;
- institutional leaders – whether administrators or faculty – wishing to improve their organization’s *overall* vitality (not just research vitality).

## **Product**

So far I have talked about why and how we developed a resource book in response to our charge to facilitate research productivity. Let me close by describing the content of the resource book and giving you a glimpse into the rich pool of practices each chapter contains.

The resource book is organized into chapters which mirror the characteristics found to be associated with research productivity. Each chapter is divided into three major sections:

1. *What Does the Literature Say?* This section serves the important purpose of placing our results from this one university into the broader context of what is already known from previous literature about research-facilitating practices across many institutions.
2. *Department Practices.* This section provides a detailed narrative of our qualitative findings. The text is organized thematically under topic questions, the answers to which include numerous illustrative responses from the interviewed department heads – wonderfully concrete examples of how these departments manifest all the characteristics of a research-productive organization.
3. *Overview.* This section is a bulleted abstract summarizing the core research-facilitating practices which emerged from our qualitative research.

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Chapter 8: Resources

Chapter 9: Teaching

Chapter 10: Sufficient Work Time

Chapter 11: Rewards

Chapter 12: Brokered Opportunity Structure

Chapter 13: Faculty Diversity: The Right Size, Mix of Expertise, and Continuity

Chapter 14: Leadership and Governance

Appendices:

A. Leaving the University of Minnesota: Results of an Exploratory Survey of Departed Faculty, 1997-2000 (In House Document–2002) James C. Hearn, Susan K. Jensen, and Karin L. Gustafson (Executive Summary)

B. Characteristics Associated with Research Productivity

- Individual Characteristics

- Departmental Characteristics

- Leadership Characteristics

C. Data Collection Instruments

- Department Head/Chair Pre-Interview Survey

- Interview Protocol

## **Recommendations**

Specifically, last year SCFA recommended that the university make this book available to all new department heads or heads and include in with the materials given to participants in the orientation for new department heads, chairs, and directors.