A Developmental Guide to Life as a New Faculty Member

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The concept for this resource came from “Getting Off to a Good Start at the University of Iowa,” retrieved September 10, 2014 (http://provost.uiowa.edu/faculty-development-new-faculty). Ideas and text have been borrowed freely from “Getting Off to a Good Start” with the permission to Judith Dilts by Diane Finnerty, Director of Faculty HR and Development, Office of the Provost, The University of Iowa (September 8, 2014).

Version 1.3
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Introduction

If the liberally-educated person can be described as: someone with a sure sense of self based on his or her experiences, accomplishments, values, and communities; as one able to make connections between that self to the world in which he or she lives and works, then we can see how such a person can creatively imagine a better future and intentionally commit to realizing that future. (Narum 2009)

New faculty are bombarded from multiple points as they begin their academic career – preparation for classes, setting up research, navigating service opportunities, learning the institution, meeting new people, etc. In addition, and importantly, they also are thinking about how to balance in a healthy way their work and home life and chart a career.

The intent of this guide is to provide resources for “…creatively imagin[ing] a better future and intentionally commit[ting] to realizing that future.” (Narum 2009)

The guide is designed to be used as you move through your first year. We would like to emphasize, however, that many of the resources are appropriate for a faculty member at any stage of her/his career.
Before Classes Begin

- Schedule an Office of Human Resources Onboard@JMU session.
  - Onboard@JMU helps new faculty integrate into the university environment. You will complete all university required hiring paperwork and receive a parking permit, a JACard, and an eID. Questions: JMU-HIRE (568-4473)

- Attend New Faculty Orientation.
  - Held the Monday before classes begin for all new and part-time faculty, New Faculty Orientation introduces you to all aspects of JMU.

- Read the New Faculty Resource Guide published by the Center for Faculty Innovation (CFI).

- Go to the Center for Faculty Innovation and the Center for Instructional Technology websites and peruse the workshops occurring throughout the semester and year. Put dates on your calendar now for the faculty development opportunities.

- If you are transferring a grant to JMU or plan to apply for a grant within the first three months as a faculty member, contact the Office of Sponsored Programs.

- See the College of Science and Mathematics website for listings of faculty, teaching, and student advising and mentoring resources. Look at the left column under For Faculty/Staff, then Resources.

- Introduce yourself to the faculty and staff in your department and college. Begin to develop collegial relationships and networks.
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During Your First Month

Career Development and Work Life

- Do what you were hired to do – teach, set up your lab, mentor students, become a faculty colleague.

- Take advantage of your department’s formal mentoring program now – check with your academic unit head (AUH) for details. However, begin to look seriously at a mutual mentoring network – a network of mentors from a number of different areas: peers in your department or other departments, librarians, department chairs and other administrators, etc. These are people who can help you in your professional growth. (See “Mutual Mentoring Guide” by Mary Deane Sorcinelli and Jung H. Yun, http://www.umass.edu/ctfd/mentoring/downloads/Mutual%20Mentoring%20Guide%20Final%2011_20.pdf [accessed 9/22/2014])

- Isolation is often noted as a problem for new faculty so meet and connect with others. Get out of your office. Invite a new faculty member you met during orientation to lunch or coffee, especially if it is someone from another department on campus – it’s a good way to get to know the university.

- Attend all social and departmental functions in your department. Integrating into the functions of the department will also provide information on leadership opportunities as you move through your career.

- If you are an international faculty member, learn about the support and resources provided by the Office of International Programs

- Attend the new faculty reception hosted by the president and provost as an opportunity to meet new people and share beginning of the year “war stories.

- Get to know the Harrisonburg and Shenandoah Valley area. Attend some of the many events in downtown Harrisonburg, the Forbes Center, and the various festivals around the area. The Valley is an amazing place for music, the arts, good beers, wines, recreation – set aside some of your life to enjoy your Place.

Teaching

- Schedule specific times for office hours and advising sessions with students. Check with your department to learn of specific requirements regarding office hours.
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- Become familiar with campus support services – access the CSM website for listing and links to such resources.

- Become familiar with FERPA and Title IX. Complete any required training.

- If you’ve not done so, go to the Center for Faculty Innovation and the Center for Instructional Technology websites and peruse the workshops occurring throughout the semester and year. Put dates on your calendar now for the faculty development opportunities.

Research

- Confirm with your AUH the research support and facilities that were part of your contract.

- Put time for research and scholarship on your calendar as appointments with yourself and keep them!

Service

- Do not make any commitments until you have become acclimated to your role as a new faculty member. Consult with your AUH on service expectations for new faculty.
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During Your First Semester

Career Development and Work Life

- Meet with your AUH to talk about your upcoming initial evaluation, which occurs at the beginning of the second semester, and the requirements for tenure and promotion. Information on university and departmental procedures and policies can be found on the CSM website.

- Set commitments for apportioning your time that will help you with your career. The following advice is from Robert Boice (2000) who studied factors that influenced faculty success:
  
  1. **By second semester, set a goal of limiting classroom preparation time based on whether or not the material is new to you** – most teachers spend about 2 hours for classes they have taught before and 3-4 hours for a new class. Boice found that one of the biggest mistakes of new faculty was over-preparing for lectures, which resulted in too much lecture material and too little time for student engagement with the material. The time spent also decreased the amount of time available for research and writing. Work in brief, regular sessions.
  2. **Spend at least 30-60 minutes a day on scholarly writing.** Research has shown that a set time of as little as 15 minutes a day leads to increased productivity and fewer feelings of anxiety over failure to meet scholarly expectations.
  3. **Spend at least 2 hours per week on discussions with colleagues focused on teaching and research.** Meet over lunch or even breakfast, or go for a coffee or coke, or start a teaching or research circle. Good contacts provide ideas and sometimes assistance in improving teaching success and getting a research program going or even establishing an interdisciplinary project.
  4. **Keep daily records of how you spend your time.** Look them over each week to see whether how you think you spend your time meets with reality. It also helps you monitor whether you are keeping Commitments 1-3.
  5. **Integrate research interests into lectures.** You’ll be more enthusiastic about your teaching and it will help in recruiting students for your research program.

- Set aside a drawer or file folder and a folder on your computer where you can keep items that represent what you have accomplished for the year: papers accepted for publication, published, workshops and meetings attended, awards and honors, posters, invited talks, off campus activities related to your profession, supportive letters and emails, etc. Be sure to put items in the drawer/folders as
you complete them. You will be compiling a Faculty Summary of Activities in May to submit to your AUH and the items you have kept will help you complete the summary.

- Maintain an academic teaching portfolio that contains all class materials, assignments, exams, syllabi, etc. Doug Harrison, Assistant Director of the CFI, is an excellent resource for academic portfolios (harri7dr@jmu.edu).

- This is a good time to begin working on a Faculty Development Plan (FDP). The purpose of developing a Faculty Development Plan is to plan your growth as a teacher/scholar and a productive member of a campus community. The plan is meant to be dynamic and responsive to new opportunities, changes in circumstances, new directions, etc. Thus, a useful plan is reviewed at least on a yearly basis and modified to reflect the changes in one's life.

- Begin to familiarize yourself with the Faculty Handbook and the University Policies.

- Reminder: get to know the Harrisonburg and Shenandoah Valley area. Attend some of the many events in downtown Harrisonburg, the Forbes Center, and the various festivals around the area. The Valley is an amazing place for music, the arts, good beers, wines, recreation – set aside some of your life to enjoy your Place.

Teaching

- Strengthen your teaching: Invite a faculty colleague and/or someone from CFI (Peer Consultations) to sit in on several sessions of one of your classes and comment on your teaching. Set up a Teaching Analysis Poll (TAP) through CFI. Ask a senior colleague known for her or his exceptional teaching if you can sit in on a classroom session.

- Remember the advice to set a goal of limiting classroom preparation time based on old or new material, and to work in brief, regular sessions. Seek out suggestions for developing teaching strategies that engage students in active learning. The CFI has Teaching Consultations that will be helpful. Also look at the CIT offerings for ways technology can enhance your teaching.

- As you prepare your classes for next semester, look at the Madison Collaborative: Ethical Reasoning in Action to see how that program might inform your class.

Research


Check the Office of Research and Scholarship website for resources to support your research agenda. The Office of Research Integrity has information about conducting human and other animal research and biosafety. For information on grant preparation, funding opportunities, developing proposal budgets, etc., see the Office of Sponsored Programs website.

The College of Science and Mathematics offers summer research and teaching assistance stipends. Talk with your AUH and mentors about how you might use this resource. The applications are due January 11 of each year.
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**During Your Second Semester**

**Career Development and Work Life**

- Anticipate the natural rhythms of the academic year. Prepare for increased work later in the spring – plan ahead and stay on track.

- Prepare for your compiling your faculty Summary of Activities. Check with your AUH to see when they are due, what is to be included, and in what form. Continue to keep your accomplishments and activities in that drawer/file folder and the folder on your computer – they will help with the summary.

- Attend a Faculty Senate meeting with your departmental representative to learn how faculty governance works at JMU.

- Look again at the CSM Resources page and refresh your memory of what resources are available to you for teaching, research, and service.

- Attend local events to balance your life. For on-campus events, look at the Events calendar on the JMU main page. Check out the Arts at JMU, JMU sports, the Visiting Scholars Program, the Madison Vision Series, and other campus events.

- Don’t forget to exercise and care for your physical and mental health. If you haven’t done it yet, commit yourself to your personal health and well-being. UREC is an excellent resource.

**Teaching**

- Keep your academic teaching portfolio up-to-date.

**Research**

- Revisit and revise your writing goals – are you meeting your goals? If not, why not? Talk with mentor(s) and/or AUH for ideas.

- Are you accomplishing your research goals? If not, why not? Talk with mentor(s) and/or AUH for ideas.

**Service**

- Learn about your department’s service expectations for new faculty in their second year. Talk with your mentor’s and AUH about possibilities that fit with your vision.
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- Underrepresented faculty in departments, colleges, and the university often are asked to do extra service in the interest of representing diverse viewpoints on committees, task forces, etc. Seek support from mentors and your AUH in prioritizing your pre-tenure service as they relate to mentoring students, “diversifying” committees, and supporting institutional change initiatives.

- Learn how to say “no,” and when to say “yes.”
Faculty Development Plan

"The most effective people are those who can 'hold' their vision while remaining committed to seeing current reality clearly." Peter Senge (The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization, 2006)

The purpose of developing a Faculty Development Plan (FDP) is to plan your growth as a teacher/scholar and a productive member of a campus community. The plan is meant to be dynamic and responsive to new opportunities, changes in circumstances, new directions, etc. Thus, a useful plan is reviewed at least on a yearly basis and modified to reflect the changes in one's life. Consult with your mentor(s), AUH, and others as you develop your plan.

The process for developing your FDP, as described below, is built around your mission statement, an analysis of your "current reality," and your vision of what you would envision your professional life to look like in 3-5 years. Once those are determined, your FDP will have a personal set of development goals and steps (strategies) you will take to achieve your vision.

The FDP answers the following questions: “Who am I?” “Who do I want to become?” “What do I want to accomplish?” You should begin the FDP by reflecting on the question “Who am I?” Answering that question begins with understanding your gifts, your character and temperament, your strengths and weaknesses, and your goals. Many people undertake the discipline of writing a personal mission statement that incorporates the result of their reflections. It addresses what is unbending in you—your touchstone, your values. All of the components of your FDP need to be in alignment with your mission statement. It should both represent and inspire you. Whether or not you produce a written statement, you should thoughtfully consider and keep in mind the essential elements of who you are.

The next questions—“Who do I want to become?” “What do I want to accomplish?”—lead to the design of a vision statement, the statement of who you want to be and accomplish in 3-5 years. Before you can craft the vision statement, however, you need to assess your “Current Reality,” where you are now. Completing a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is a good method for looking at your personal reality (S and W) and the external reality that may affect your vision (O and T).

The vision statement describes in detail how you see yourself in all aspects of your life in whatever time frame you have chosen. It should be in alignment with your mission statement and informed by your SWOT. One way to think about writing the vision
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statement is to include in your statement a vision of each of the following areas of your life: personal; teaching; scholarship; service; and, leadership. For each, be very specific, "paint" a picture, as it were, of what you will be or accomplish in each area of your life. Set a vision that is challenging and about areas for which you have a passion.

Unlike the mission statement, the vision statements will change over time, both within the 3-5 year frame and beyond. In fact, each year the vision statements should be adjusted to move the 3-5 years one year forward.

Work toward your vision is accomplished through a series of goals and strategies. Goals are specific activities that move you toward you vision with a specified time frame (Y). They are commitments (X) with yourself and others -- so a goal might be stated, "I plan to do X by Y." Goals may be things you will take on, things you might wish to change, activities in which you want to be involved, etc. All, however, move you toward your vision. Some examples: “By September 2015, I will have submitted a paper for publication.” “I will set aside an hour each day for exercise.” “Over the next year I will work on my listening skills.” “I will attend at least one teaching workshop a semester and try out the technique in a class the following semester.” “Next year I will become more active in my disciplinary society.” You should try to set three goals for each category in your vision statement.

Once you have set your goals you need to devise a plan for accomplishing them. Those plans consist of a set of strategies for each goal. Be specific. Who is involved? Where will it take place? What will be done? How will it be done? What will be the time frame? Etc.

Of course, it is important to evaluate whether you have achieved your goals. You are in a continuous growth cycle, assessing at each turn. The Summary of Activities (see below) is a good way of evaluating your progress.

Finally, you need to own your plan. Share it with family, friends, colleagues, your AUH or dean. Get feedback from them and ask them for help along the way. Make use of your networks of support.

Role of the Faculty Summary of Activities and Faculty Anticipated Activity Plan

Each year a faculty member at James Madison University must submit to her/his academic unit head a Summary of Activities (SA) and a Faculty Anticipated Activity Plan (FAAP). The Summary of Activities serves as an assessment document for your FDP, while the FAAP serves as a time each year to modify your FDP (vision, goals, strategies) based on your assessment (SA) and other information.

Work on a draft of your FAAP during the fall of your first year (Year 1). In the spring, after you have received your initial evaluation from your AUH, work with your mentor(s) and AUH to modify your plan as needed. This document becomes your first FAAP and is
assessed by your SA in June and in your evaluation meeting with your AUH in the fall. Following that meeting your FAAP/FDP can be modified as necessary given your conversation with your AUH, new opportunities, activities, etc. This document then becomes your Year 2 FAAP and a copy should be given to your AUH. This cycle continues each year thereafter.

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Bibliography

