

**Exit Interview Report**  
**College of Arts and Sciences Ombudscommittee**  
**2007/2008 Academic Year**

The Ombudscommittee is charged with conducting exit interviews with faculty who leave the school, and making recommendations as a result of those interviews. During the 2007/2008 academic year, four tenured or tenure-track faculty members left the College of Arts and Sciences. Three tenured faculty members retired and one untenured assistant professor left the university to take a position at another university. The Ombudscommittee members (Robert Gillespie, Craig Hill, and Carol Lawton) were able to interview only one of the four people who were leaving.

Because it would not be possible to protect the anonymity of the one individual who agreed to be interviewed, the findings of this interview will not be summarized. Moreover, it will not be possible to make recommendations based on a single interview.

**Summary of Issues from Past Exit Interview Reports**

1. Mentoring Issues

Lack of constructive feedback from mentors: criticisms are offered, but help is not. Feedback needs to be ongoing and supportive in all areas of responsibility and at all levels.

Lack of face-to-face meetings between the department faculty review committee or the department chair and the candidate whose case is being reviewed, or lack of opportunity to read the annual review provided to each faculty member in draft form so as to be able to respond.

Lack of discussion with other members of one's own department regarding teaching, necessitating the faculty member to seek out on their own the assistance of faculty from other departments for teaching support. Indeed, junior faculty should not have primary responsibility for seeking out feedback and advice. Mentoring needs to be proactive.

Lack of examination of the faculty member's entire portfolio of teaching materials for purposes of evaluating performance, although peer observations were provided for classroom teaching in some cases.

2. Research Issues

Lack of time to do research in the face of other demands, even when tasks such as service

were entered into knowingly, as in the case of the retirees.

Conflict between time spent on teaching and time to do research, especially for junior faculty.

Need for additional research support, especially for junior faculty.

3. Teaching Issues

Frustration with teaching unprepared and unmotivated students, as well as the increasing rudeness of students in introductory courses.

Other frustrations with teaching expressed by junior faculty:

Assignment to large sections of lower-level courses for most of the years at IPFW, resulting in an inequitable teaching load

As a result of teaching primarily lower-level courses, removal from teaching one's area of specialization, which can undermine the ability of junior faculty to conduct research or even to teach effectively

Lack of access to interesting, upper division, specialty courses because of a lack of flexibility in course scheduling.

4. Service Issues

Disappointment expressed by junior faculty when their service contributions were not valued; others said that their service was valued because it meant that others did not have to do it.

**Recommendations from Previous Years:**

1. It is the responsibility of the chair to oversee the mentoring of new faculty. If departmental mentors are also assigned, it is the chair's responsibility to oversee the process and to make sure that there is a clear set of expectations both for mentors and junior faculty about the process, with constructive feedback provided.

It is strongly recommended that departments train mentors and develop a system to ensure that mentors are, in fact, doing the mentoring they are being asked to do. Untrained and unknowledgeable mentors, who mentor in name only, are not serving junior faculty well. Teaching mentors from outside the department also have the potential to be of benefit. CELT is an additional resource but should not replace departmental mentoring. Virtually all past interviewees have identified mentoring (or the lack of it) as

a key factor affecting their professional outcome.

2. Departments should gear their mentoring to all three areas of endeavor. Much mentoring appears to focus on teaching only, and faculty have a clear need for research mentoring as well. If it is possible for senior faculty to assist their new colleagues by providing some sense of a research community, this is likely to aid faculty in adapting to the environment at IPFW.
3. If possible, junior faculty should be protected from heavy teaching loads and especially from a large number of new preparations in their early years here, but they also should not be assigned large freshman-type classes exclusively. This is important to permit them to focus on research, but also so that they can come to enjoy teaching.

One recommendation has been reiterated for several years now:

“It is important to provide faculty with the opportunity to have interesting and rewarding teaching experiences in their early years on campus. That may require a greater willingness of tenured and more senior faculty to take on teaching assignments that would permit junior faculty to have access to courses that they are especially qualified to teach or interested in teaching. To the extent possible, placing limits on teaching loads and the number of new preps for junior faculty is beneficial for many reasons – for their teaching, for their research, and for effectively socializing them into university life.”

4. Departments should do what they can to provide rewarding teaching experiences for new faculty in other ways as well. Some faculty come here with no teaching experience at all, and they develop as teachers in their early years here. Permitting interesting upper division classes, appropriate autonomy in choosing textbooks and pedagogical techniques, team teaching, and other teaching support is desirable.
5. Departments need to standardize third-year review procedures, standardize student evaluation instruments, procedures, and norms, and provide effective guidance and feedback for junior faculty in the pre-tenure years in all three areas: teaching, research, and service.

Arts & Sciences Ombudscommittee  
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