

## Summary

What can Mentors do to help Associate Professors on the path to Full Professor?

- Discuss the path to Full Professor early after promotion to Associate Professor
- Make the discussion about career path part of each annual review.
- Acknowledge the presence of “bumps” on the road and help identify solutions

## References and Resources

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## Resources for Chairs, Deans and Mentors

Actively mentoring Associate Professors on the path to Full Professors

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What issues confront Associate Professors on the path to Full Professor?

For many Associate Professors their research, teaching and professional practice paths are clear, and the major issue is finding time for the additional service commitments required of Associate Professors. However, for other faculty there may be bumps in the road and a supportive Mentor/Chair/Dean can help a faculty member stay on track for successful and timely promotion to Full Professor. These materials aim to provide discussion topics and guidance ideas that Mentors, Chairs and Deans may employ to help Associate Professors achieve promotion to Full Professor.



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What do we know about the path to promotion to Full Professor?

Evaluations of factors associated with successful and timely promotion to Full Professor have only received attention in recent years, because traditionally institutions have placed greater emphasis on promotion from assistant to Associate Professor. Further, much of the data available relates to mid-career faculty, a group that contains Associate and Full Professors<sup>1-5</sup>.



What bumps in the road can confront the scholarship of an Associate Professors?

- *Stagnation of a research area*
- *Increased interest in other areas of the Position Responsibility Statement*

## *Stagnation of a research area*

One challenge that faces some faculty is a dramatic change in the viability of their research area. This can occur for many reasons such as changes in funding agency priorities or program elimination. Some faculty may even be a victim of their own success, if their prior work resulted in solutions to prior research questions. Regardless of the cause, Mentors can help mentees by openly discussing this possibility.

The Mentor and mentee should work together to identify new areas of funding or new areas of retraining. Unfortunately, the current approach to a lagging research area may be to encourage the faculty member take on greater teaching or extension responsibilities. However, this approach potentially establishes a path that makes timely and successful promotion to Full Professor less likely. Further, this may not be the career goal of the faculty member who may want to remain in research.

There are many ways administrators can help faculty revitalize a lagging research area and enable the faculty member to reestablish themselves, such as facilitating a sabbatical visit, purchasing new equipment, or supporting travel to several critical labs or workshops. It may also be possible to apply for mid-career awards to facilitate revitalization of a research program.

What can Mentors do to help Associate Professors with an area of scholarship that has stagnated?

- If a faculty member appears to have an area of scholarship that is stagnating, make time in annual reviews to discuss the goals of the faculty member rather than assuming a shift in responsibilities is needed.
- Actively help faculty members make decisions about steps that can be taken to revitalize an area of scholarship.
- Actively discuss the impact that changes may have on time to promotion to Full Professor.

## *Increased interest in other areas of the Position Responsibilities Statement*

Another challenge that faces some faculty is a desire to change the focus of their position as their academic career matures. As faculty become more recognized for their expertise, they may wish to play a larger role in teaching, extension/professional practice or service to the institution.

Changing focus mid-career presents special challenges for timely and successful promotion to Full Professor as one basis for promotion to Full Professor is national or international reputation. It may be difficult to achieve the promotion standard in a new area in the same time period that would have been the case if a faculty member stayed in the same area of scholarship. Therefore, if a Mentor notices a change in focus of interest, the implications of the change and the possibility of an extended timeline to promotion to Full Professor should be openly discussed. Similarly, the faculty member may not be as familiar with how to document scholarship in the area of increased emphasis. It may even be necessary to seek out additional Mentors to provide guidance in the new focus area.

What can Mentors do to help Associate Professors who are interested in significantly changing the distribution of effort in their PRS?

If a faculty member discusses significant shifts in responsibility, take time to ensure this is the result of a genuine desire for refocusing, rather than a reaction to a stagnating scholarship area.

If a faculty member does make significant shifts in responsibility, ensure there is an open and realistic discussion about the impact this change may have on time to promotion to Full Professor.

Consider introducing the faculty member to new Mentors in the new focus area