Faculty Development Toolkit

To remain one of the top universities in the world, Michigan State University faculty members must continue to perform at a high level. To aid faculty in maintaining their ability to perform well, this Faculty Development toolkit will provide the resources necessary to create a process that is both fair and effective. To achieve this objective the toolkit is based on the following principles:

1. The protection of academic freedom;
2. Rigorous use of peer review in the creating and implementing the faculty development process;
3. Consistent and clear communication with faculty about their progress in meeting the goals and objectives of their Faculty Development Plan;
4. Sincere and committed engagement with faculty in creating and implementing a Faculty Development Plan that is consistent with the unit’s goals and objectives;
5. The plan should be considered as a team effort involving the faculty member, the unit head, the reappointment, promotion and tenure (RPT) committee, and the dean of the college.

The Implementation Process

1. A Faculty Development Plan can be requested by a faculty member, a unit administrator, or the dean of the college. The request must be in writing with all parties copied on the request. A sample copy of this letter is contained in Appendix A.
2. Once this formal request has been made, the faculty member and the unit administrator will create a Faculty Development Plan consistent with the assigned duties of the faculty member. A sample copy of a Faculty Development Plan is contained in Appendix B. The plan’s elements are also outlined below.
3. After this initial plan has been created, the unit administrator presents it to the relevant constituency of the unit’s peer review committee that sits for the RPT committee for its review. The RPT committee will then either approve the plan or propose revisions to it. If significant revisions are proposed, the unit administrator will work with the faculty member to resolve discrepancies and then resubmit the plan to the RPT committee for its review.
4. Upon approval of the plan, the unit administrator will submit it to the college dean for approval. The dean will then sign off on the plan. If the dean proposes
significant revisions to the plan, they must be negotiated between the unit administrator, the faculty member, and the relevant RPT committee.

5. Annually, the unit administrator will provide a letter to the faculty member indicating his/her assessment of the faculty member’s performance for the past year relative to the expectations in the development plan. This letter may serve as the required annual review letter. A sample letter is included in Appendix C. The letter must indicate:
   i. Satisfactory progress is being made and the development plan will continue for another twelve months, or
   ii. The development plan is being terminated because:
      1. The faculty member has made sufficient progress and is now able to resume his/her regular faculty responsibilities, or
      2. The faculty member has not made sufficient progress toward regular faculty responsibilities and is unlikely to successfully complete the development plan as created.

Content of the Development Plan

The development plan should be robust, yet reasonable in helping the faculty member to achieve performance levels that meet expectations. The plan should address research, teaching and service expectations, even though it is likely that a faculty member in need of a development plan is performing at a satisfactory or greater level in one or more performance areas. Among many possible strategies to be considered are:

- Enhancing instructional effectiveness through workshops, one-on-one consulting, etc.
- Improved or more intensive mentoring,
- Training and support for developing new research skills and funding sources,
- Rebalancing the assignment consistent with unit needs and priorities and the faculty member’s interests and strengths.

It is expected that, by the end of the first year, the faculty member will be actively engaged in completing the development program, with evidence of substantial progress in meeting agreed upon performance expectations on all assigned duties.
By the end of the second year, the faculty member’s performance should be at or above the unit’s standards and criteria for acceptable faculty performance.

During the term of the development plan, the unit administrator will share a copy of each annual faculty review letter with the Dean.

(Terry: I am inclined not to add the following language to the toolkit. If the Development Plan is not successful, then the evaluation letters will reflect that and the unit administrator and the dean can take whatever actions they feel are appropriate.)

If the faculty member has not improved his/her performance level so that it meets or exceeds unit expectations after two years, the unit administrator, after consultation with the dean and Office of the Provost (Associate Provost for Academic Human Resources) may impose sanctions under the terms of the “Policy for Implementing Disciplinary Action where Dismissal is Not Sought.” That policy states that:

A faculty member may be disciplined for cause including but not limited to (1) intellectual dishonesty; (2) acts of discrimination, including harassment, prohibited by law or University policy; (3) acts of moral turpitude; (4) theft or misuse of University property; (5) incompetence; (6) refusal to perform reasonable assigned duties; (7) use of professional authority to exploit others; (8) violation of University policy substantially related to performance of faculty responsibilities; and (9) violation of law(s) substantially related to the fitness of faculty members to engage in teaching, research, service/outreach and/or administration. Discipline or the threat of discipline may not be used to restrain faculty members in their exercise of academic freedom.

Disciplinary action may include but is not limited to reprimand, suspension with or without pay, reassignment of duties, foregoing salary increase and/or benefit improvements, and mandatory counseling and/or monitoring of behavior and performance. Suspension without pay may not exceed six months.

As used in the University policy on Dismissal of Tenured Faculty for Cause, the term "incompetence" refers to faculty performance of assigned duties and responsibilities. Faculty members may be found to be incompetent if:

- their performance is judged to be substantially below their relevant unit’s(s’) standards and criteria for acceptable faculty performance;
- they have been offered a meaningful development opportunity, the goal of which is to improve their performance to meet their relevant unit’s(s’) standards and criteria for acceptable faculty performance; and
• they have not improved their performance to meet the relevant unit's(s') standards and criteria as a result of development activities within a reasonable time period.¹

The “Dismissal of Tenured Faculty for Cause” policy may be initiated in the most serious cases.

The Office of the Provost will hold colleges accountable for the fair, consistent, and effective implementation of this post tenure development and review policy.

¹http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/facacadhandbooks/facultyhandbook/incompetence.htm