

# FOREST SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

## Charter for the Research Support Faculty Committee September 28, 2007

### BACKGROUND

Faculty Research Assistants, Senior Faculty Research Assistants, Research Associates and Professional Faculty are recognized collectively as Research Support Faculty (RSF) in the Department of Forest Science. The number of RSF in the Department has grown rapidly over the last 15 years to the point that they comprise the majority of Departmental faculty. A support infrastructure for this group has not developed in parallel, so many opportunities for participation and development have been missed. In addition, no formal structure exists to represent these ranks within the College of Forestry. The duties and activities of RSF cover a broad spectrum in applied and basic research, project and program development and management, administration, and service to the Department, College and University. Tenure of employment among these ranks ranges from less than a year to more than 20 years.

Recent program reviews (2006–2007) as well as Department- and College-level discussions have underscored the need for better communication and connection among employees. More specifically, RSF in the Department and College have expressed a need for more guidance on topics such as navigating the university system, career development, and where to get answers for work-related questions. A committee representing RSF can address these needs.

### MISSION AND GOALS

The RSF Committee's mission is to assess and respond to the needs of the RSF community and interact with the Department to enrich the RSF experience. Its goals are as follows:

1. Foster a welcoming and supportive work environment for RSF.
2. Provide information, insight and guidance on career development and advancement.
3. Facilitate opportunities for RSF to expand and enhance their capacity and skill set.
4. Facilitate effective representation of RSF in the Department and College.
5. Enhance communication and networking among RSF, other faculty and staff.

Pursuit of these goals will complement existing efforts in the Department and are consistent with recent initiatives proposed in the Dean's Plan of Action (2006) and the College of Forestry's Diversity Action Plan (2007).

The RSF Committee will accomplish its goals through the following functions and services:

- Act as liaison with Department administration including formal representation with an elected representative
- Facilitate professional development
- Peer mentoring: a formal, optional service provided to RSF
- On-line resources via the Department web site
- Outreach

## RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate open communication among RSF and between RSF and the Department:
  - Hold periodic meetings with RSF to discuss issues, interests and concerns.
  - Serve as a point of contact for communicating issues and concerns of RSF to the Department administration, and vice versa.
  - Assist Department Head with assignment of RSF to other committees.
  - Inform RSF about relevant Departmental policies.
  - Encourage RSF to participate in activities of the Department and this Committee.
- Oversee other Committee functions and subcommittees
  - Facilitate opportunities for professional development via workshops, seminars.
  - Mentoring
    - Align RSF seeking mentoring with a mentor or mentoring subcommittee.
    - Facilitate mentor training and evaluation.
    - Establish and maintain a database of volunteer mentors and their expertise.
    - Recruit new volunteer mentors from RSF community.
  - On-line resources
    - Recruit RSF to develop and maintain a web page on the Departmental web site that includes:
      - Answers to frequently asked questions about the Department, College and University;
      - List of RSF and their areas of expertise;
      - When appropriate, availability of RSF for employment (e.g., when an individual's appointment is less than 1.0 FTE or when their current position is ending)
  - Outreach
    - Recruit RSF to assist the Department with orientation of new RSF and in updating orientation materials.
    - Recruit RSF to organize social gatherings and a Departmental event.
    - Organize an annual retreat for RSF (e.g., half-day, on campus).
    - Recruit RSF for involvement on this Committee.

## SERVICE AND COMPOSITION

Committee membership is open to all RSF in the Department. The Committee will be comprised of five RSF elected from and by the RSF population in mid-October each year. The term of service is two years, with terms of two Committee members staggered from the other three to ensure continuity. A Committee member can serve two consecutive terms. In the event of unfilled vacancies, Committee members will recruit and nominate RSF to fill the openings. Each year the Committee will elect one member to serve as Chair and another as Vice-Chair. The Chair will serve as liaison between the Department administration and RSF constituency and will represent RSF at faculty meetings. The Vice-Chair will organize and facilitate Committee meetings, and coordinate with other Committee members on Committee functions. In the Vice-Chair's absence, the Chair will preside over Committee meetings. Committee members will be responsible for oversight of subcommittees of RSF volunteers or coordination of other activities. Committee meetings will be open to all members of the Department.