

# Research Support Faculty Forum

**Forestry Executive Committee meeting  
July 22, 2008**

<http://www.forestry.oregonstate.edu/cof/fs/RSF/index.htm>

## Research support faculty (RSF) include:

- Faculty Research Assistants (FRA)
- Senior FRAs
- Research Associates
- Professional Faculty supporting research
  
- Committee representing RSF in Forest Science was officially recognized with the adoption of a policy statement in September 2007

## Mission and goals of the RSF committee:

- ▣ Mission: to assess and respond to the needs of the RSF community, and interact with the department
- ▣ Goals:
  - ▣ Foster a welcoming, supportive work environment for RSF
  - ▣ Provide information, insight, and guidance on career development and advancement
  - ▣ Facilitate opportunities for RSF to expand and enhance their capacity and skill set
  - ▣ Facilitate effective representation of RSF in the Dept., College
  - ▣ Enhance communication and networking among RSF, other faculty, and staff

## RSF Committee:

- ▣ Rob Pabst, chair
- ▣ Kathy Maas-Hebner, vice-chair
- ▣ Marilyn Cherry
- ▣ Jay Sexton
- ▣ Ken Vance-Borland
  
- ▣ Today's presentation is a joint effort of the Committee

## RSF Forum on February 20, 2008

- Rationale:
  - Tom Adams requested input from RSFs on the performance review (PR) process, prior to the 2008 cycle
- Open forum was held to:
  - discuss professional development opportunities
  - discuss job expectations
  - annual PR process and expectations

## RSF Forum on February 20, 2008

- ~ 25 RSF attendees
- Follow-up meeting held on June 3, 2008 to discuss performance review process for 2008
- Following is a summary of the main points discussed at both meetings, and subsequent outcomes

## Forum feedback and outcomes: professional development

- Wide range of experience among RSF
  - in general, experiences have been positive
  - soft money hires felt that professional development was not covered by their grant funds; therefore they were not in a position to request professional development opportunities

## Forum feedback and outcomes: professional development

- Availability of professional development opportunities:
  - interpersonal / management opportunities are widely available
  - technical opportunities are at times not widely available at either the department, College, or university level

## Forum feedback and outcomes: job expectations

- Some uncertainty about short and long term expectations regarding an employee's position
  - participants identified ways in which communication could be facilitated, e.g. :
    - periodic check-in meetings with supervisors
    - mutually agreeable annual work plans

## Forum feedback and outcomes: job expectations

- Some uncertainty regarding expectations for university service (department, College, university, community levels)
  - department strongly encourages service
  - soft money grants do not budget for time allocated to service; these employees do not feel that service is an acceptable use of their grant-funded time
- RSFs desire guidance from the College on this

## Forum feedback and outcomes: annual performance reviews

- ▣ ½ of attendees felt the PR was helpful
- ▣ ½ felt that it was just a “rubber stamp” process
- ▣ Wide variation in ways that PRs were conducted
- ▣ Key elements for constructive PRs were suggested

## Forum feedback and outcomes: annual performance reviews

- ▣ Employee to prepare a work assessment ahead of time
  - ▣ document accomplishments beyond publications, e.g.:
    - ▣ feedback from clients
    - ▣ website, software development
    - ▣ impact on profession / College etc.
- ▣ Examination and revision if appropriate of employee’s position description

## Forum feedback and outcomes: annual performance reviews

- Request candid feedback on employees' strengths and weaknesses; link these to:
  - goals, benchmarks for upcoming year, promotion, career
  - periodically scheduled meetings throughout year to check progress
- Awareness by supervisor of employee's promotional track and career goals
  - RSF should ensure that this gets discussed

## 2008 performance review process

- Tom Adams used our suggestions to partially revise the PR process for 2008
  - RSFs were generally pleased with their PR for 2008
  - the PR process seemed improved over former years
  - communication between supervisors and employees seemed more positive

## 2008 performance review process

- Some questions remain about OSU and non-OSU (e.g. FSL) supervisors and the PR process
  - non-OSU supervisor sees day to day activities, but OSU supervisor charged with conducting the employee's PR
- Consistency among CoF departments is desirable
- RSFs are appreciative of Tom's efforts in bringing issues to forefront