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
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

~ 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.
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

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
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

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

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
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