

November 13, 2012

College of Forestry
Research Support Faculty meeting
(Lunch meeting for all RSF)

Present: Peder Nelson, Travis Woolley, Heather Roberts, Camille Freitag, Scott Kolpak, Ken West, Blair Banks, Thom Whittier, Matt Trappe, Harold Zald, Jason Schindler, Connie Love, Caryn Davis, Jerry Mohr, Frank Schnekenburger, Brett Morrissette, Eric Dinger, Kari O'Connell, Matt Gregory, Amy Klocko, Jian Huang, Lina DiGregorio, Kelly Vining, Keith Olsen, Keith Jaywickrama, Chad Hanson, Kerry Grimm

Agenda

- Introduce the RSF committee
 - We are working to create a better working environment for our ranks and make sure RSF get credit for their work.
 - We provide orientation resources for new RSF and have a mentorship program.
- Show slides from All-College meeting to highlight with emphasis on discussion aimed at setting some near-term strategies that, if implemented, will drive progress toward accomplishing a few key priorities that merit attention and were called out by Thomas as he was competing to be the next Dean. Research was one.
- Discuss how new promotion rank for FRAs factors into these opportunities.

Discussion

- Dean Maness is looking for engagement so if we actively engage in the reorganization process we'll likely get much more out of it.
- We should think about and describe the tangible contributions we provide for the College and University through research and outreach.
- Changes will occur but require effort to succeed by not just Professors but RSF as well. The roles of RSF may expand in the process and we want to be involved in defining new roles and also make sure the expanding roles are acknowledged institutionally. How we are viewed by the labs we work and the College often differs substantially.
- A new level for FRAs (titled Senior II) was approved by the Faculty Senate but still needs to be approved by OUS. The new level was designed to be comparable to Professors who range from Assistant to Associate to Full. There is discussion of moving some language from the promotion to Senior I to Senior II (e.g. exceptional) but we're not sure yet the details about the new level. The RSF committee is pushing for Senior II FRAs to be able to be sole PIs on grants.
- We would like our ranks to be recognized as a career path rather than a temporary stepping stone to a PHD or something else.
- We wonder if it would be possible to get financial support from the College to serve on committees or conduct short-courses on technical skills or computer programs that we

have mastered. We can feel pressured to provide service to the College but this is difficult since we are funded through grants for specific projects.

- The RSF committee should create some concrete goals about what we want and match these goals to one of the Dean's five priorities, we may be able to get some of funding to pursue these goals.
- Dean Maness stated that he values our careers and supports us.
- The dean holds office hours for specific groups of faculty (e.g. Professional Faculty), so a small group of us could go to him during the times he specified to explain what we do and how we see ourselves fitting into the structure (and ask how he thinks we fit).
- If people are not valued and recognized, that is a severe limitation for recruiting good people.
- Professional faculty have no advancement opportunities but Dean Maness expressed interest in providing advancement. There is a lot of variation within the Professional faculty rank.

Conclusions/Actions

- We should come up with a platform for discretionary funding for RSF and provide specific examples of how it fits into the dean's priorities. For example, "we want to improve our mentoring program since it will foster better collaboration between separate research groups and ease the transition for new employees, which will meet #? of the dean's objectives". In addition to peer to peer mentoring, graduate and undergraduate students need better mentoring but mentoring is not written into position descriptions in our ranks.
- There will be many teaching opportunities for RSF coming up, especially if the FES department offers an undergraduate degree. RSF could also give seminars and teach technical short courses which would benefit students and other RSF.
- We will create a web forum with a few topics to generate ongoing discussion on these topics and keep the forward momentum going.

Post-meeting discussion with Dean Maness

- We should aim to get the new Research Director to be our advocate to the FEC (position scheduled to be filled January 2013).
- We should pick a short list of high priorities to discuss with the Dean who will then bring the issues to the PIs.