Roles of CoF Research Support Faculty

presented by
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College of Forestry
Research Support Faculty Committee

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RSF Committee Origins

• Founded in 2007 by five SFRA’s in the Forest Science Department in recognition of need for support structure for grant-funded researchers
  – Rob Pabst, Kathy Maas-Hebner, Ken Vance-Borland, Jay Sexton, Marilyn Cherry

• Expanded to college-wide committee in 2012
Objectives

• Who are we and what do we do?
  – How do we currently contribute to success of the college’s research, teaching, outreach and extension missions?

• What’s working well and what could be improved?

• How do we fit into the college’s vision for the future?
Who are we?
What do we do?
Research Support Faculty Positions

• Faculty Research Assistant/Senior FRA: perform skilled technical work for (typically) grant-supported research.
• Research Associate: fill gaps that can’t be filled by tenured faculty; including research, teaching, and outreach.
• Research Professional Faculty: coordinate field, outreach and research services
• Postdoctoral scholar: training for tenure track
What do we do?

Research support faculty are responsible for critical behind the scenes tasks in support of research, teaching, outreach and extension.
In the Lab...

- Use and maintain scientific equipment
- Hire, train and supervise employees
- Develop procedures for processing samples
- Enforce safety compliance and other management functions
In the Office…

• Perform data analysis
• Manage large, complex databases
• Develop and maintain web pages
• Write grant proposals, including budgeting
• Prepare manuscripts
• Provide consulting on
  – Statistical analysis
  – Data management and analysis
  – Computer programming and modeling
In the field...
Doug Mainwaring
SFRA, FERM
12 years
Liz Cole
SFRA, FERM
31 years
Harold Zald
RA, FERM
1 (+3) years
Leadership
Jay Sexton mentoring a student on down wood measurement
How do we contribute to the college’s teaching and research missions?
RSF Contributions

• Free up time for Professorial Faculty to teach
• Mentor grad students one on one
• Serve on committees (e.g. grad and promotion)
• Facilitate collaborations between stakeholders
  – Many RSF serve as Associate Directors of Co-ops
• Work independently to achieve broad objectives
• Serve as co-investigators and initiate research projects
• Communicate scientific results
Benefits of Interagency teams

• Ability to build cohesive research teams of highly skilled individuals with complementary skills and personalities

• RSF serve as links for sustaining lasting partnerships between OSU and other agencies

• RSF free up time for senior scientists to mentor grad students

• Exposure for OSU in the form of publications, presentations, and websites

• These agreements add significant amounts of research dollars flowing through the college
What’s working well and what could be improved?

2013 OSU-AAUP university-wide survey of Non-Tenure Track Faculty
What’s working well?

“They generally report good relationships based on respect and collegiality with their co-workers and supervisors.”

“They enjoy the work that they do as teachers, researchers, and support staff”

“It is clear that NTT faculty members are proud of their contributions to OSU and value their association with the university”
What could be improved?

“Terms like “contingent” contribute to the myth that NTT faculty are temporary workers without long-term commitment to the institution. NTT faculty, while treated as part of a flexible workforce, in fact often have deeper ties with the institution built over years of service:

while they are peripheral to OSU, OSU is at the center of their professional lives.”

From 2013 OSU AAUP Survey of NTT Faculty
What could be improved?

“We lose talented people every year because they can't stand the job security situation. A world-class research institution needs mid-level managers, mentors, and research coordinators who choose to make it their career.”

From 2013 OSU AAUP Survey of NTT Faculty
What could be improved?

“The dissatisfaction expressed in this survey stems primarily, and to varying degrees, from the feeling shared by many NTT faculty that they are not fully appreciated at OSU, a university that they value and to which they have committed themselves”

From 2013 OSU AAUP Survey of NTT Faculty
Recommendations

• Reward service
• Support professional development
• Support promotions of NTT faculty members
• Provide bridge funding to NTT research faculty
• Integrate NTT faculty into governance process

From 2013 OSU AAUP Survey of NTT Faculty
How do we fit into the college’s vision for the future?
Future Goals of RSF Committee

• Provide institutional support for non-teaching career positions in research to attract and retain world-class research associates and assistants

• Provide institutional support for orientation, mentoring and professional development for all research support faculty

• View research support faculty as assets for recruiting top-tier tenured faculty and ensuring student success
Everyone has a unique set of talents, skills and strengths. Further, when individuals have tools to develop those talents, their ability to give back is enhanced and we all benefit.
How do we fit into the college’s vision for the future?

Let’s talk...