Considering Employment in a Faculty Position

Objectives

1. Explore areas for consideration when interviewing for a faculty position.
2. Develop an understanding of common factors that may impact a faculty member's employment experience.

Factors to Consider for Faculty Positions

When considering employment within any field, it is important to consider various factors that may impact your experience working for an organization. When seeking employment as a faculty member in an educational institution, there are special factors to review and consider in the decision-making process. Below are some questions to help you learn about and explore these special factors:

General

- How are faculty members' responsibilities divided among the different areas of teaching, research, and service? Are these valued differently outside the department? Outside the college?
- How are the expectations for teaching, research, and service different for faculty at different ranks?
- What are the indicators of successful performance in these areas? How are they evaluated or measured? For example, how much weight is given to peer-reviewed journal articles versus presentations at professional meetings?

Instruction

- What courses will you be expected to teach? How many new course preparations, if any, will you need to make in the first year or two?
- Is there a minimum class size in the department? What are you expected to do if a class doesn't meet? Are you given some other assignment?
- Is there support available for instruction? What is the availability of institutional consultation and mentoring regarding instruction?
- Which courses are taught in the summer? How is assignment for these courses handled? Can you offer a special course? How is that handled, (e.g., through regular departmental offerings or continuing education curriculum)?
- How much emphasis is there on distance education or online course delivery?
- Is overload available for extra teaching assignments? How is pay handled for this?
- What are the expectations regarding office hours?

How are writing and research time protected, if at all?

Research

- What support is available for research activities? What is the nature of that support (e.g., help with data analysis and finding subjects, budget preparation and management, computer resources)? Are there funds for summer research appointments?
- Is the higher priority for submission of grant proposals or refereed publications?
- Do current faculty members help new faculty members get started?

Office Support

- What is the nature of technical support in the office or for working from remote locations, e.g., from home?
- What is the availability of student assistants and graduate assistants to support faculty? How are graduate assistants assigned?
- What is the level of funding available to purchase office supplies and equipment?
- What type of clerical support is available?

Departmental Administration

- How is the day-to-day business of the department handled? How are these decisions made?
- What is the availability of discretionary money for faculty projects? How is it distributed?
- What is the governance structure of the unit? Are there departmental committees? What types? How do they function? Can they make decisions or do they simply make recommendations?
- What departmental service requirements exist, e.g., number of committees, attending graduation, etc.?
- Are there course releases for administrative duties, e.g., program coordination?

Professional Development

- What kinds of faculty development resources and programs exist? What is the recent history of faculty participation?
- Are there special programs for new faculty (e.g., summer research grants)?
- What is the availability of travel money for presentations and attending professional meetings?

Promotion and Tenure

- What is the department's recent history in this area? What kind of "evidence" is required to support one's case? What criteria are used for promotion and tenure? What have past faculty folders looked like for those who have been successful in this process? (e.g., How many articles? Where are they published? Are they data-based or not? Book chapters versus articles?)
- Are the criteria for promotion different from the criteria for tenure?
- Is there a third-year review for new faculty?
- Is there an annual review to see if you're on target with respect to progress towards promotion and tenure? Who does this? How is it conducted?
- What is the main hurdle (if any) for promotion and tenure — at the department level? College level? Do criteria vary by level (i.e., at certain levels, are some criteria valued more than others)? Where do people tend to get stalled in the process?

Salary/Benefits

- What are the procedures for salary review? Who does salary reviews? What performance characteristics or metrics are associated with favorable salary reviews?
- What has the annual percentage salary increase (if any) been in past years? How many faculty get the average? How many get above or below the average?
- What is the nature and financial value of the benefits program? How flexible is it? Does it meet your needs?

Other Factors

- Regarding the specific position for which you're interviewing, what are the procedures for filling this position? Timelines? Persons involved? If an offer is extended, what roles will the search committee chair, department head, dean, provost, or other administrators play?
- What is the level of involvement of faculty in activities outside the department and elsewhere in the institution, e.g., committees, faculty?

- Where are other faculty in terms of their career progression? Is there a range — some senior faculty, some mid-career, some new? What is the availability of experienced faculty to mentor newer faculty?
- Do faculty members socialize outside the department?
- Is there a faculty union? What areas are governed by faculty contract? Is there a bargaining agreement, and how does that affect the assignment of faculty duties?
- How is this department/college viewed by other segments of the institution? Is it viewed as a priority program for the institution?
- Are there rules about how much outside employment and consulting is allowed?
- How diverse is the faculty? What is the availability of support groups and/or mentoring for diverse faculty members (at the college level and university level)?

Summary

When considering employment in a faculty position, there are several important factors to evaluate as you make your decision. Thinking carefully about these factors may enable you to interview more effectively and make more satisfying career choices.

Additional Career Center Resources

Looking for more information on your job search? Visit The Career Center Library for books on job searching with an advanced degree.

"Finding and Using Graduate Student Resources" Guide — available at: www.career.fsu.edu/Resources/Career-Guides

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