



New Faculty Member Career Development in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, The Ohio State University

Issue

Faculty members are the basis for university success. They facilitate student learning, make discoveries, create knowledge, and engage stakeholders to solve problems. To support these efforts faculty members generate resources through contracts and grants, transfer intellectual property to the private sector, and attract like-minded faculty, staff, and students as a result of excellence and reputation. In short, faculty members are the lifeblood of universities. Consequently, nurturing their development is critical to insure long and successful careers beginning with the early stages of tenure and promotion. The purpose of this project was to initiate a faculty career development program (*First Mondays*) in Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) with special emphasis on pre-tenure assistant professors. The goal of *First Mondays* is to facilitate and foster personal and programmatic success in assistant professors (APs). As a result of taking part in this program participants will:

- Have an enhanced awareness of factors that contribute to personal and career success.
- Be aware of and have interacted with key programs, services, and facilities that can positively impact and accelerate personal, professional, and career development.
- Have a network of colleagues for collaboration, coaching, information sharing, and community building.

What's Been Done

First Mondays was developed in two phases with Phase 1 having monthly meetings January to May 2013 (five sessions) and Phase 2 September 2013 to May 2014 (nine sessions). Meeting topics were determined as a result of an Internet survey of existing programs and by soliciting direct input from APs. Phase 1 included:

- January 7, 2013 - Introduction, networking, and topic selection.
- February 4, 2013 - What is the College?
- March 4, 2013 - Leadership and Career Development.
- April 1, 2013 - Grant Development.
- May 6, 2013 - Industry Engagement and Commercialization.

More detailed information and supplemental materials are provided in the *First Mondays* web site at: <http://oardc.osu.edu/firstmondays/default.html>.

Out of the 62 APs in the CFAES, 37 had less than four years in track and were projected to be the most likely audience for *First Mondays*. One week prior to each session an invitation was sent via e-mail to each AP and follow-up calls were made to those individuals who did not respond to the invitation. This resulted in an average attendance of 15 participants per session. Of the 37 APs with less than four years in track, 13 were based in Ohio county Extension units and found it difficult or impossible to attend. Thus, 22 APs were most able to attend *First Mondays* and of those 12-18 participated.

Impacts/New Partnerships

Following Phase 1 participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire to gain feedback regarding the effectiveness of the program; 19 participants responded and the results are described as follows. *First Mondays* sessions were held in a central location during the lunch

hour. As such, survey respondents said that the location (89%), time (72%), and length (89%) of *First Mondays* sessions were “somewhat to very convenient”. Session content was well received with all but one respondent deeming all sessions “somewhat to very useful” with the most popular session being the “Grant Development” session. Over 80% said that they would “most likely” continue to attend Phase 2 beginning September 2013. Overall the program was well received and participants supported continuing the effort.

Outcome of Project (societal impact/ measure of increased quality of life)

First Mondays provided a short-term platform to initiate and experiment with a faculty career development program. It introduced APs to issues that they had limited knowledge of or had not previously considered. Several issues associated with grant development, program management, commercialization, and leadership style were new topics to many and will be expanded in the future. APs consider these issues critical to career success.

First Mondays started a college-wide discussion on career development, planning, and mentoring that has been done to varying degrees at the department level but had not surfaced as an overt college-wide topic. Similarly, peer-to-peer discussions were initiated to voice common concerns, discuss non-technical issues, and to be introduced to college and university programs that will impact careers. The opportunity to meet monthly encourages and enhances these discussions.

How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?

FSLI provided a platform to address non-technical challenges faced by APs and provided tools to encourage a college-wide discourse on career development. Issues associated with organizational and individual leadership, how new faculty members can better assimilate into complex organizations, and interdisciplinary communication and interaction are all keys to success and were clearly part of the FSLI experience.

Contact information:

Bill Ravlin, Professor and Associate Director
College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, Ohio Agricultural Research and
Development Center, The Ohio State University
1680 Madison Ave, 209 Research Services Bldg., Wooster, OH 44691
Ph: 330-263-3705; e-mail: ravlin.1@osu.edu