

## Post-tenure Review Through Post-tenure Development: What Linking Senior Faculty and Technology Taught Us

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**ABSTRACT:** This article highlights a faculty development program designed to allow mid-career and senior faculty to effectively apply the capacities of technology to teaching and learning. It provides a profile of senior faculty and their work satisfactions and stresses; describes a senior teaching fellows program, TEACHnology, as one mechanism for senior faculty revitalization; and suggests the kinds of practices that seem to best support senior faculty in terms of career development. It concludes with implications of such faculty development processes for meeting some of the challenges of post-tenure review.

Two fundamental purposes—one summative and one formative—drive the development of post-tenure review policies. The summative framework suggests that post-tenure review yields information that can be used to make personnel decisions, while the formative approach suggests a review process that is developmental in nature. Post-tenure review offers a leverage for professional and career vitality; and, in fact, most campuses with new policies emphasize faculty development as a goal (Licata, 1998). Nonetheless, faculty resistance remains high because post-tenure review is seen more as a tool to weaken tenure or root out poor performers than as a career opportunity. We have yet to resolve whether and in what ways post-tenure review processes can be designed to encourage and support ongoing career planning and faculty development for midcareer and senior faculty.

Faculty and professional staff who work in faculty development units on campuses might be tapped as valuable resources for both faculty and administrators as they debate principles, policies, and practices for post-tenure review. After all, faculty growth and development are the core values and stated goals of most faculty development centers. Centers have long promoted a developmental perspective on faculty

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assessment, implying a process in which colleagues work, discuss, think and reflect together in a supportive and constructive manner. Further, the way in which faculty developers carry out assessment—appraising needs, setting expectations, collecting and analyzing evidence, generating a plan for development, and providing ongoing feedback and support—is precisely the model that researchers and practitioners suggest as most useful for fostering the career development both of individual faculty and their institutions (Brascamp & Ory, 1994; Keig & Waggoner, 1994; Paulsen & Feldman, 1995).

This article highlights a faculty development program designed to involve tenured faculty in learning about teaching technologies. I will begin with a brief profile of senior faculty and an overview of changes in higher education over the last decade that have especially impacted older faculty members. Then I will describe a senior teaching fellows program, the TEACHnology Fellowship, as one mechanism for senior faculty revitalization and development in teaching. This program and others like it suggest the kinds of policies and practices that seem to best support senior faculty in terms of their career development. I will conclude with some reflections on the implications of such faculty development processes for meeting some of the challenges of post-tenure review.

### **A Profile of Senior Faculty**

While post-tenure review is the topic of much discussion, there is less attention given to understanding who the “post-tenure” faculty are and what their work lives are like. Yet it is important to move beyond the stereotype of senior faculty who have abandoned undergraduate teaching and are “deadwood.” Several researchers have noted the discrepancies in national survey data on tenured faculty in American higher education (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1997; Finkelstein & LaCelle-Peterson, 1993). One of the reasons for the discrepancies is that there are no commonly accepted definitions of *full-time faculty* or *senior faculty*. Another difficulty is that there are no certification requirements for faculty (as there are for lawyers or doctors), so researchers are simply unable to count the number of faculty accurately. If we use the term *senior faculty* to refer to tenured, full-time faculty at the rank of associate or full professor, the data presented here is accurate enough to sketch out a general portrait.

In terms of the overall faculty profile, some changes over time are more dramatic than are others. As a group, faculty are still mostly

white (89 percent) and male (81 percent). Professorial age distribution, however, has changed over the past two decades. There was a dramatic downshift in younger faculty from 1969 to 1980. The proportion of faculty aged 35 or younger fell from 32 percent of the workforce to 7 percent. Also, by 1988, approximately a quarter of the faculty were over the age of 55, and more than 60 percent were older than 45. One can also discern the graying of the professorate by looking at career age (length of time in a faculty career). According to national surveys, 90 percent of faculty have been in an academic career more than 6 years and some 73% have spent seven or more years at their current institution. (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1997). The profile of senior faculty, then, is one that is “settled in” until retirement in terms of career, institution, rank, and work responsibilities (Rice & Finkelstein, 1993).

### **Dramatic Changes in Higher Education**

While senior faculty have been “settling in,” dramatic change has been occurring within and outside of their institutions. Most long-time faculty members were hired during an era when being in an academic position carried high status if not high salary. Many were hired expressly to teach, advise students, and improve the life of their institution. Today, a wide range of critics—from observers of higher education to state legislators to parents—are questioning faculty members’ commitment to teaching, interest in students, and workload. In universities, in fact, research and publishing have replaced teaching as the principal faculty role and have become an increasingly important criterion for promotion and tenure in four-year colleges as well (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1997).

While faculty express more interest in research now than 25 years ago and institutions continue to increase expectations for research and publications, there is evidence that senior faculty are spending less time engaged in such activities. Bentley and Blackburn (1991) have demonstrated that younger faculty—those of lower rank and lower career age—publish at a higher rate than senior faculty. In turn, senior faculty report a higher interest in teaching.

A second related change, of course, is the dramatic shift in the student body in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, social class, and academic preparation and skills. While diversity presents exciting challenges, it also brings more underprepared students into college classrooms and challenges senior faculty abilities to teach. The environment for undergraduate teaching is different as well. Senior faculty are encountering

new teaching methods such as computer-based, collaborative, and experiential learning. The crucial questions for senior faculty trying any of these methods are how to use these new pedagogies, how to experiment with the new teaching roles that such methods will increasingly require, and how best to promote learning through new teaching practices. Little in the traditional training of most senior faculty has prepared them to use the range of instructional practices currently available or under development.

Also, as Rice and Finkelstein (1993) have noted, many of the disciplines have experienced significant paradigmatic shifts, leaving some senior faculty marginalized. For example, deconstruction and postmodernism have changed the fields of humanities and social sciences. Science departments have moved botany and zoology out and molecular and cellular biology in. It may be more difficult for senior faculty members to serve as wise mentors to newcomers, either in teaching or research. How can they guide junior faculty progress when there is little consensus on what constitutes high-quality scholarship? "Increasingly, senior faculty may find themselves out of step with the currents of theory in their own fields, and they may feel a genuine loss in their professional identification" (Rice & Finkelstein, 1993, p. 13).

Finally, society is increasingly demanding that faculty demonstrate greater accountability to both their institutions and the larger community. Institutions are being asked to reexamine their expectations regarding faculty roles, work responsibilities, and rewards. The traditional evaluation methods for tenure, promotion, and merit seem insufficient. The call is for a systematic, comprehensive procedure with the inclusion of peer review, long term professional development goals, and provision for appropriate action if performance is below standard—put simply, post-tenure review (Licata, 1998). Ironically, the request comes at a time when resources to support the work of faculty are declining. Of course, it is the tenured, senior faculty who feel they are the primary targets of an "outcomes-oriented" post-tenure review movement.

Despite all of these shifts and changes in their career and work environments, the level of job satisfaction among senior faculty is high. Studies consistently report older, tenured, full professors are the most satisfied faculty—with their institutions, their careers, and their jobs (Carnegie Foundation, 1989; Finkelstein & LaCelle-Peterson, 1993). Key to their well-being is the sense of personal autonomy and independence with which they pursue their work. Stresses decline over the career, although senior faculty still report a desire for more time and better relations with colleagues and students (Sorcinelli & Near, 1989).

What we know about senior faculty suggests that institutions need to create environments that encourage their interest in teaching and new ways of teaching; provide resources for taking on new roles in and outside of the classroom; and foster a climate that encourages ongoing, collegial feedback for improvement.

### **TEACHnology: A Senior Faculty Development Program**

Since 1986, the Center For Teaching (CFT) and the Provost's Office at the University of Massachusetts Amherst have sponsored a Lilly Teaching Fellows Program, a highly successful faculty development program for promising junior faculty members. After initial funding of a three-year grant from the Lilly Endowment, the University committed the necessary resources to continue the program over the past decade. Former teaching fellows report a number of benefits derived from a year in the program and in their ensuing academic careers—new teaching skills and attitudes, collegial contacts, greater understanding of institutional expectations, and professional confidence.

From its inception, the Teaching Fellows Program was limited to pre-tenure faculty. Over the years, however, there have been many tenured faculty who felt that they too could gain from a similar experience. As noted earlier, teaching in the 1990s has presented unique challenges that were not present in the past. The student body, the collegial environment for teaching, and pedagogical methods themselves have significantly changed. We felt that senior faculty would benefit from a forum in which they could share information, discuss classroom experiences, and learn from each other.

Several recent campus initiatives allowed us to move our vision of a senior faculty fellowship closer to reality. Our Chancellor's multi-year strategic planning process included, from the start, a significant information technology initiative. This spearheaded the development and renovation of facilities; the installation of state-of-the-art equipment in lecture halls, classrooms, and computer labs; and a modest laptop computer loan program. The next step seemed to be to increase the "human infrastructure" of resources on campus. The University had focused on hardware and software; it was time to focus on "peopleware."

In 1997–98, we proposed and launched the TEACHnology Senior Fellowship Program, building upon the goals and framework of the Lilly Teaching Fellows Program. Why focus on providing senior faculty with increased opportunities and support for integrating teaching

technologies? We found lots of evidence that it was our tenured faculty who were particularly interested in developing new computer-based paradigms for teaching and learning. Based on CFT interviews and surveys, University faculty who were identified as “early adapters” were nearly all tenured (Butcher, 1997). Rogers (1995) offers an explanation of faculty adoption of new technologies. He proposes that “innovators” and “early adapters” constitute 15 percent, traditional faculty “the majority or mainstream” constitute 70 percent, and “nonadopters” form the last 15 percent of the total faculty. Rogers emphasizes that the majority of faculty need assistance in “crossing the chasm” from the mainstream to the adapters. We found that tenured faculty at our institution included both a small group of “early adapters” and an enormous group of “mainstream” faculty seeking assistance in “crossing the chasm.”

#### *Goals of the Program*

The major goals of the TEACHnology fellowship are to help senior faculty apply the capacities of technology to teaching and learning, particularly at the undergraduate level; to foster teaching innovations through technology; to increase communication and collaboration among users of technology; and to provide a special opportunity for renewal to senior faculty.

#### *Selection of Fellows*

The TEACHnology fellowship includes ten tenured fellows who are selected from across the nine schools and colleges on campus. The award is competitive; nominations are made by department chairs and reviewed by a selection committee. (During the first year, the program attracted senior faculty who are both outstanding teachers and scholars). The program seeks tenured faculty who are teaching undergraduates and who are interested in assuming a variety of new roles related to teaching, learning, and technology within their home departments. Fellows are awarded a state-of-the-art laptop computer with instructional software, funded by the deans of the schools and colleges.

#### *Program Elements*

The structure of the TEACHnology fellowship is a simple one. Each fellow chooses one course to work on and the goal is to integrate relevant

teaching technologies and other teaching innovations into the course. Regular interaction among the fellows is a key ingredient. They launch the fellowship year at a one-day retreat in the fall where they meet each other, learn about the project's goals and activities, and identify personal plans. Throughout the year, fellows participate in a seminar that meets every other week. Here fellows are introduced to instructional concepts that broaden their perspectives both as teachers and users of technology. They also share experiences, work on projects and examples, and practice implementation of course materials. Topics for such sessions include enhancing traditional teaching through technology (e.g., presentation tools such as PowerPoint); changing pedagogy with technology (e.g., collaborative learning, computer-assisted instruction); accommodating individual differences with technology; and connecting in- and out-of-class learning with technology (e.g., e-mail, World Wide Web). At the end of the academic year the Fellows should have an integrated course designed, developed, and evaluated. They also offer demonstrations of instructional materials to other colleagues through a "capstone" campus-wide conference.

### **What We Learned About Senior Faculty Development**

The benefits of the TEACHnology senior faculty fellowship have been many. Individual faculty have learned to use computers and interactive media to make their teaching more effective. They have realized more communication and collegiality around their instructional role, especially in terms of incorporating new technologies into the classroom. Finally, TEACHnology fellows have begun to emerge as "exemplars" who are eager to take risks in order to continue to grow and learn throughout their careers.

We continue to work at figuring out the best options for learning about teaching technologies. But along the way, we have gleaned some ideas about what really works in terms of supporting the development of senior faculty, especially in their role as teachers.

#### *Provide Formal, Structured Opportunities*

Studies of teaching development services indicate that senior faculty are somewhat less likely than junior faculty to seek out individual consultation or partake in teaching development workshops on their own (Chism & Szabo, 1996; Dale, 1998). Our senior fellows much preferred

being part of a formal program in which they could help set and steer the agenda while our Center provided the organization and coordination of activities. Within this context, senior fellows invited us into their classrooms to observe and provide feedback and generated topics for campus-wide forums that they attended. The ideal structure seems one in which senior faculty are involved in program initiatives and feel ownership but are freed from the burdens of managing the process.

#### *Offer a Range of Individual Support Services*

Universities need more and varied incentives for long-time faculty members. Our senior fellows reported that one attraction to the TEACHnology fellowship was that the grant required a simple application and provided a concrete award—a high performance Pentium laptop computer installed with software such as Windows 95, MSOffice and Claris Home Page. Equally important, the grant provided a range of training options—one-to-one informal support from a trained teaching technology consultant in the Center, an ongoing seminar with peers, and access to other service providers on campus who could offer specific training. This structured yet flexible design was successful because senior fellows wanted training targeted directly to their individual needs. They clearly signaled that they would not engage in activities that wasted time or were not related to their specific instructional situation.

#### *Create Collegial Structures that Facilitate Dialogue*

There is a desire for collegiality among senior faculty and there is ample evidence that faculty development programs have a favorable effect on participants' sense of collegiality and community (Eble and McKeachie, 1985; Sorcinelli, 1995; Sorcinelli and Aitken, 1995). Fellows in the TEACHnology program reported that the fellowship encouraged them to help each other by providing opportunities for peer learning during the bi-weekly seminars and by creating networks across disciplines for research and teaching. In exchange, the fellows volunteered to go back to their departments and offer training to their colleagues and to present at campus-wide programs.

#### *Focus On Acquiring New Skills*

A key satisfaction in an academic career is the opportunity for continued learning throughout the career. The TEACHnology fellowship is

an ideal avenue for faculty development because it focuses on an area in which many faculty are novices (sometimes knowing less than their students) and are challenged as learners. At the same time, many senior faculty are eager and intrinsically motivated to learn the applications necessary for their teaching and scholarship. Like most adult learners, our senior fellows responded best to lots of “hands-on” practice rather than listening to presentations.

#### *Create Measures of Reward and Recognition*

Beyond modest financial support, our senior fellows expressed a need for something often vaguely described as respect or recognition. Senior faculty who have been “good citizens” and have put considerable time into developing as teachers often remark that they receive little acknowledgment for such efforts. As noted earlier, the TEACHnology fellowship is designed so that it is an honor to be selected as a participant. Beyond resources provided through the program, fellows are recognized in campus publications; awarded plaques; and acknowledged at our annual Celebration of Teaching Dinner, which draws several hundred students, staff, faculty and administrators.

### **Reflections and Implications for Post-tenure Review**

A number of suggestions for enhancing the environment for faculty development emerged from our work with the TEACHnology fellows. These recommendations carry implications for both faculty development and the development of post-tenure review processes.

#### *Develop a Streamlined, Aerodynamic Process*

In all of our work with senior faculty, there was agreement upon the need for time (within the program and in faculty careers in general) as an incentive for faculty self-improvement. Despite the success of the TEACHnology fellowship, senior faculty reported that they actively struggled to carve out the time to develop new skills in teaching and technology. We already know that the additional time and effort required to carry out post-tenure review is a major concern (Licata, 1998). Lest post-tenure review further trigger the key academic stress of “not enough time to do my work,” the process will need to be streamlined so as not to overburden faculty with tasks and paperwork.

*Emphasize Formative, Developmental Models*

Even the most open-minded and genial faculty members can be tremendously skittish on the matter of reviews with an evaluative or summative outcome. Campuses should be very cautious in installing peer review that leads to summative review. Institutions could benefit tremendously from some form of that, but only if the groundwork has been laid. A colleague tells me that he came away from a period of years visiting and living in Cyprus with a lot of respect for the “confidence-building measures” employed by the United Nations: low level activities that build trust before moving on to more threatening topics (personal e-mail, Tompkins, 1997). Institutions that really want to make peer review work might want to consider ways to insure that faculty are ready for serious review by establishing trust on multiple levels first. The first step would seem to be the shaping of programs with an explicit career planning and faculty development emphasis.

*Expand Flexibility Among Teaching, Scholarly, Service Responsibilities*

We need to think broadly about faculty careers. Countless studies show that faculty have different needs at different stages of their careers. Senior faculty, in particular, express an increased interest in teaching and governance (Finkelstein & LaCelle-Peterson, 1993). Rather than using post-tenure review to “get” faculty to produce more research, publications, and grants, it might be more profitable to allow faculty to move past unproductive research to plans that allow them to pursue interests in and be rewarded for being good teachers and citizens.

*Include Significant, Collegial, Peer Involvement*

Faculty have long supported the notion of peer review, particularly in their role as scholars. Recently, a strand of work with respect to faculty development in the teaching role has been provided by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) through the teaching portfolio and other mechanisms for peer collaboration and peer review. The goal of such projects is to contradict the conception of teaching as an isolated activity and rethink the endeavor of teaching as “community property,” worthy of reading, inquiry and conversation (Hutchings, 1996). In the

same way, peer review can play a positive role in post-tenure review, but not if it becomes the vehicle for faculty rivalry or for administrative oppression. At several sites where peers played a significant role in the process, participants reported that the greatest benefits of post-tenure review were interpersonal contact with colleagues and improved peer relationships (Galm, 1985; Johnson, 1993). Those of us involved in faculty development work need to play a role in assuring that post-tenure review succeeds as a formative process led and supported by the faculty.

### *Provide Incentives, Resources for Development*

Critics of post-tenure review worry that institutions that require a work-improvement or professional development plan may not have the resources to support the plan agreed upon by both faculty and administration. Research and practice strongly suggest that post-tenure reviews should be tied to faculty development resources such as funds for travel, research assistance, extended study, special projects, equipment, or release time. Licata and Morreale ask, "What constitutes reasonable support for professional development when the onus is on the individual faculty member to improve? Should support be given to development plans of poor performers if the result is fewer development resources for strong performers? (1997, p. 22)." While each institution must decide on the appropriate level of support, our experience indicates that relatively small grants—for conference registration, travel, books, or software are motivating and affect positive change.

The overall message of this article is positive. Faculty development programs like TEACHnology can have a positive effect upon senior faculty in terms of improved teaching, collegiality, and morale. Admittedly, our experience with a senior faculty development initiative cannot fully answer the question of how to actually build a bridge between faculty development and post-tenure review. It does, however, point to ways to engage senior faculty in ongoing development as teachers and scholars. It also suggests ways in which institutions can encourage and support them throughout their careers.

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