

Rheumatology Division Retention Strategies

This is key to the forward momentum of your academic mission. Turnover is inevitable but cannot be a major detriment to your program. Retention is a daily process and should be approached with a long-term view. By the time a faculty member states that he/she is ready to leave, it is usually beyond the tipping point. An increase in salary and benefits may address some unhappiness; however, a more global approach to academic culture, outward appreciation, space, stability and equity in administrative resources and responsibilities are more likely to provide key elements toward faculty satisfaction. Each faculty should be considered as needing “re-recruitment” and review at least once a year.

Maintaining a culture of success:

Each member of the faculty was hired based on her/his ability to contribute as a star to part of the Division’s mission. However, these contributions are not always lauded by external recognition. In addition, the push toward academic independence can also lead to “silos” and isolation as new faculty develop their own niches. If faculty become disengaged from the division, it may be because they no longer feel part of an intellectual community. Informal and formal input geared to demonstrate active appreciation may convey a feeling of belonging, cooperativity and enhance productivity through team approaches.

Demonstration of faculty appreciation can include:

- In the first year frequent (monthly) contact with a new recruit can identify structural, procedural and cultural issues. This early period can be conducive to creating an atmosphere of inclusion and to promoting individual and cooperative success.
- New faculty need to be integrated into the group so that he/she feels like part of the team.
- Meet up with faculty in their offices rather than the Division office; Understanding that the Division Chief has a personal interest in faculty can reduce feelings of isolation.
- Assure faculty that their departmental and institutional service contributions are appreciated both in public and private forums (i.e., faculty meetings, face to face conversations)
- Extending praise and attention beyond research accomplishments or funding successes.
- Creation of divisional awards/commendation letters for outstanding teaching or service contributions.

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Social networks within the professional setting can create a sense of community. Ideas can include:

- Regular Division chief or senior faculty member hosted events such as monthly journal clubs (these are necessary in divisions that have fellowships)
- Division-sponsored quarterly lunches for faculty members; invitees could vary each quarter so that the faculty have a chance to interact with different groups of colleagues.
- Internal networking at weekly division conferences.
- Annual retreat with a formal organizing committee that rotates membership within the division annually

Building relationships in an informal capacity can lead to stronger relationships and better understanding when it comes to formal decision-making interactions.

Monitoring for Division Equity:

Review annually for disparities in resources, space, workload and salaries. An annual state of the division assessment can be used to assess for inequities and can be used to provide transparency. Areas to review can include:

- start-up packages,
- salary-levels,
- merit raises,
- promotions,
- allocation of office and lab space,
- teaching load,
- committee assignments,
- service commitments,
- leadership opportunities (directorships, etc.)

A database of your faculty including promotions, salary, committee assignments, committee chairs, awards, course assignments and teaching loads allows the Division leadership to identify outstanding faculty and to reallocate assignments/resources if inequities become apparent.

A data driven process can:

- Uncover unintended bias and enable a proactive strategy.
- Ensure all areas of academic excellence are being appropriately recognized
- Avoid a reactive strategy of waiting for faculty to bring outside offers before acting

Monitoring for Individual Faculty Development:

An annual review with each individual faculty member ensures face time at least once a year. A frank discussion that extends beyond the financial aspects of income generation and service to the institution facilitates engagement of the faculty. Topics of discussion can include:

- Current clinical or research interest, direction and progress
- Merit review status and tenure clock assessment
- Plans for the upcoming year
- Faculty/leadership development
- Hurdles to accomplishing goals
- Course and committee assignment requests

DIVISION DIRECTORS' TOOLKIT

- Feedback from the faculty member and the faculty member's personal assessment
- Ideas to improve the faculty experience and the division
- Any anticipated events that might necessitate a tenure clock extension or a leave of absence

Support Career Development of Junior Faculty

Mentors–

- A senior faculty member within the division should be appointed as an initial mentor for the first year to provide guidance beyond the institutional orientation in the initial processes.
- Once the orientation stage is completed, new and junior faculty can still benefit from interval checks and additional efforts to ensure that they feel welcome and are integrating into the Division and academic community.
- Each faculty can benefit from multiple mentors with different perspectives. Some mentors are from similar research fields. Emeritus and/or recently retired faculty should not be overlooked and can also provide guidance and assist in developing contacts and career strategies.

Policies and Procedures–

- New and junior faculty should be clearly informed as to the Departments expectations for tenure and promotion. In addition, new faculty need information about available resources and university policies on hiring staff, postdocs etc.
- While faculty orientation is a starting point, the programs often contain an overwhelming amount of information and some of which may not appear relevant at the time.
- As faculty begin to establish their program and working groups they will need to be directed to key resource people from around campus to help develop the new faculty member's awareness of the institutions policies and procedures.
- In addition, junior faculty can benefit from travel funds or other support programs that may be available through the institution.

Facilitating national recognition–

- To help new faculty establish their reputations, identify ways in which they can increase their research and scholarly exposure.
- Engaging junior faculty by involving them in group proposals will only provide them with a sense of community but can broaden research contacts and collaboration. These group interactions may also serve to introduce them into new areas of investigation that will further establish their independence from prior mentored research experience.
- Encourage them to write review papers on the topics of their major research areas to establish a presence as an expert and to provide the background for their research proposals.
- Senior faculty who serve on organizing committees can provide opportunities for junior faculty to present their research at national meetings and network with colleagues.
- Facilitating introductions should assist them establishing research relationships outside the university.

DIVISION DIRECTORS' TOOLKIT

- The Division chief and other senior faculty should consider nominating junior faculty for university and national awards and societies (e.g. ASCI).

Support Transparency in Policies and Procedures

The Division leadership should be familiar and knowledgeable in the institution's academic personnel policies and be a resource for referrals to the appropriate services or committees.

In your annual meeting review with faculty expectations for tenure (particularly the relative weight of service, teaching, research and clinical activity) should be communicated and the faculty should be referred to the appropriate institutional policy. Often the institution has workshops/seminars on promotion packets and expectations. As part of the institutional leadership the Division Chief may be in a position to advocate flexible and accommodating policies and practices that can improve the experience of faculty and help with retention.

Provide awareness of and make use of accommodating practices and policies that impact faculty and their families:

- Family/Medical Leave
- Personal Leave
- Sabbatical Leave
- Childcare
- Tuition Remission/Assistance
- Faculty Housing
- Domestic Partner Benefits
- Tenure Clock Extension
- Spousal/Partner Dual Career Hires

Websites with articles and approaches to faculty retention that were incorporated above:

- www.nais.org/articles/pages/faculty-retention-3a-best-practices-144731.aspx
- <https://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/retention-guidelines>
- www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/01/06/how-retain-diverse-faculty-essay
- <http://bit.ly/2n2HpVE>