VirginiaTech

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Dr. Alice Hogan
Advance Program Director
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington VA 22230

Dear Dr. Hogan,

In response to your request for a detailed plan for our department climate initiative, use of college-level data analyses, and programs for department heads, a summary of our current and planned activities follows.

Departmental Climate Initiative and Use of College-Level Data Analyses:

AdvanceVT has launched a department climate initiative this fall, chaired by Dr. Jack Finney, Associate Dean, Administrative and Faculty Affairs, College of Science, and former head of the Psychology department. The steering committee for this initiative includes Dr. Joe Merola, professor and department head, Chemistry; Dr. Ishwar Puri, professor and department head, Engineering Science and Mechanics; Dr. Eileen Van Aken, associate professor and assistant department head, Industrial and Systems Engineering; and Dr. Carla Finkelstein, assistant professor, Biological Sciences.

The committee has already held several meetings and is pursuing the following plan of action:

1. Reviewed college and department level analyses of responses to spring 2005 *AdvanceVT* faculty survey to identify departments that appear to have more positive than average and less positive than average responses.
2. Presented college and department level data to college deans on November 9. Discussed with deans the best way to share information with department heads.
3. Present college and department level data to department heads at college-level meetings, November through February. (Meetings of heads in College of Science and College of Engineering both occurring week of November 13.)
4. Interview faculty and department heads in departments with more positive responses to identify practices that contribute to a positive climate.
5. Collect “successful strategies” that contribute to positive climate
6. Share “successful strategies” with department heads and faculty at annual Advancing Women at Virginia Tech workshop on January 9.
7. Work more intensively with selected departments during the spring semester 2007.

8. Collaborate with the Graduate School to engage graduate students and graduate programs in the Department Climate Initiative.

In addition to the departmental climate work group effort described above, the Provost has made several presentations this fall to introduce the initiative to new department heads and Board members, and referred to the initiative on a variety of public settings/events.

Department Head Development:

1. New Department Head/Academic Leader Orientation:

   The Provost's Office holds a two-day New Department Head/Academic Leader orientation each August. In 2004 (the first year for this program), there were 24 participants; in 2005, there were 33 participants; in 2006, there were 44 participants. Participants include new department heads, new deans and members of the deans' staffs, members of the *AdvanceVT* leadership development program cohort group, and assistant and associate heads (invited in 2006 for the first time). The program covers a wide variety of topics, many presented by current heads, and introduces them to many institutional resources available to assist them in their leadership roles. Issues of importance to Advance are always addressed.

2. Department Heads Roundtable

   Roundtable programs are built on the idea of peer learning in which new and continuing department heads can benefit from the experiences and perspective of other department heads at Virginia Tech. Typically, a small panel does brief presentations on the topic of the day. This is followed by discussion at the tables. The meeting concludes with brief summary presentations of each table's discussion. The organizing committee regularly polls heads to determine topics of the most interest. Each academic year the provost is invited to the first roundtable for a brief presentation followed by a question and answer session. The breakfast sessions are typically attended by 35 or more department heads. The Roundtable has been in place for a number of years.

   Schedule for 2006-07:

   - Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006: Provost Mark McNamee will share his perspective on academic issues for the year ahead and his vision for the future academic direction of Virginia Tech.
   - Tuesday, October 10, 2006: *How to Deal with Difficult Personnel Situations in the Department*
   - Thursday, November 16, 2006: *The Development Campaign Public Phase—What This Means to Department Heads* (Ken Ball, Department Head, Mechanical Engineering will be the facilitator.)
   - Thursday, February 15, 2007: *Mentoring New Faculty* (Anne McNabb, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Professor of Biology will be the facilitator.)

- Wednesday, March 14, 2007: *Creative Approaches to Program Review/Assessment/Learning Outcomes* (Ron Daniel, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education will be the facilitator.)
- April meeting date to be determined: *Ethics in the Learning, Discovery, and Engagement Domains* (David Ford, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will be the facilitator.)

3. Department Head Leadership Development:

The Office of University Leadership Development at Virginia Tech has recently been revitalized after loss of a key position during budget reductions several years ago. The new director has developed and piloted a 2-day leadership development program that focuses on increasing self-awareness, employee selection/issues of right fit, managing expectations, coaching and feedback, and employee engagement and motivation. Some results from the Advance survey will be used to provide local evidence of national trends. A second pilot directed to academic leaders will be offered in January with appropriate adaptations for faculty, with plans to offer the program monthly to various audiences thereafter. Academic department heads are one of the targeted audiences; plans are to coordinate their attendance so that issues and examples used in the session will address issues of faculty concern.

4. Special Topic Sessions for Department Heads and others

- Promotion and Tenure: Session held September 22, 2006. Deans, department heads, and chairs of promotion and tenure committees (departmental and college level) were invited to review changes in promotion and tenure guidelines, new or revised policies such as stop-the-clock and modified duties, and to respond to questions. More than 100 heads, deans, and committee chairs attended.
- College and department-based meetings: Special session was held for the College of Natural Resources, the School of Education, and the Department of Engineering Science and Mechanics to discuss promotion and tenure processes and the new/revised policies on stop-the-clock and modified duties (fall 2006). Other similar sessions anticipated. (In past years, visits were made to department head meetings in all eight colleges to introduce new policy changes such as dual career guidelines and stop the clock – so all heads were informed.)
- Faculty Recruitment: The faculty recruitment initiative anticipates developing a special session on recruitment for spring 2007.

Faculty Leadership Development Academy:

This is a new initiative launched in spring 2006 by the Provost to provide opportunities for leadership and professional development for faculty broadly conceived, not just those in formal roles as department heads. (This complements extensive professional development opportunities related to use of technology in teaching and research

activities, and programs offered by the Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, which focus on teaching and curriculum.)

The academy provides faculty members with multiple opportunities for career enhancement (leadership skills) and career advancement (leadership roles including but not limited to administrative positions) at Virginia Tech. Recent sessions included "Effective Lab Management," "Leading Diversity Efforts with Faculty and Staff—Recruitment and Retention," and "Myers Briggs Personality/Leadership Assessment and Development."

Sessions in 2006-2007 may include topics in human resource leadership/management, resource management, public relations/fundraising, and personal skills/competencies development. The first session this fall focused on mentoring others; it was well attended and received. A "leadership café/dialogue" continues the conversations in an informal setting. There are plans to create a cohort program as part of the Academy, however, this has not occurred yet. The academy is the likely framework for institutionalization of the *AdvanceVT* leadership cohort program, and Advance Professor Roseanne Foti is on the steering committee for the academy.

Conflict Resolution and Mediation Services

This is a related new initiative at Virginia Tech that we believe may also have a positive impact on climate. The initiative was launched and coordinated by the Office of Equal Opportunity, with many campus partners involved. A 5-day training program was offered in summer 2006 to train selected faculty and staff peer mediators in a mediation model derived from a social justice framework. Mediation services are now available to the campus community and coordinated by the EO Office.

In addition to these activities, Dr. Lisa Frehill and Dr. Barbara Bogue visited Virginia Tech on November 7-8 to conduct an external evaluation of the *AdvanceVT* program. They provided us with valuable feedback and advice, and we expect a final report from them in the next few weeks. If you would like additional information on these or any other of our *AdvanceVT* activities, please let me know.

Regards,

Mark McNamee
Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs
AdvanceVT Principal Investigator