BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR CAREER
LONG FACULTY DEVELOPMENT
AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY

A REPORT ON
POST-TENURE REVIEW
AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

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POST-TENURE REVIEW AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP PROJECT REPORT
Introduction

There is little question that over the years the issue of post-tenure faculty review in higher education has sparked lively debate both inside and outside academe. The upshot of these nearly two decade-long discussions is a steady growth in the number of post-tenure review policies adopted in one form or another across the nation. Post-tenure faculty review activity is reported to be underway or planned in public institutions or systems in 37 states. A recent Harvard University study claims that such review policies exist in approximately 48% of the private higher education institutions as well.

According to the New England Resources Center for Higher Education, there are two driving forces behind the growth of post-tenure faculty review policies in these institutions or systems. One impetus is to assist the university, the school, and the departments to improve overall accountability to various stakeholders in carrying out their educational missions. A second impetus is to provide an opportunity for individual faculty members to systematically develop and enhance their career paths over their entire professional life. Less public, is a third impetus. On occasion post-tenure review has been defended as a means for educational institutions to downsize faculty numbers in times of financial exigency.

Whichever impetus obtains, however, it is also the case that the number of higher education institutions voluntarily choosing to develop a post-tenure review policy is in the minority; in other words, most colleges and universities that so adopt such policies are under external pressure of one kind or another to do so. For instance, in one impact study currently being carried out by the American Association for Higher Education, out of nine institutions with existing post-tenure review processes, seven reported that their review process was externally mandated, and only two reported that the reviews were self-imposed.

The Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) of the Purdue University Senate has intermittently studied the issue of post-tenure review for a number of years. There has been a consistent belief within this committee that whatever policy with regard to peer review of post-tenure faculty performance is considered, that such policy should be faculty driven if it is to be undertaken at Purdue at all. True to this belief, in 1995 the FAC brought a document to the floor of the Senate entitled Periodic Peer Review: A Faculty Development Opportunity (USD 95-2). The FAC had studied the issue for more than two years and in 95-2 they requested the Senate to endorse a policy assuring periodic peer review of all faculty members. More specifically, the proposal itself consisted of a one sentence resolution: “The University Senate recommends that all academic Departments of Purdue University assure periodic review of all faculty members throughout all four stages of their careers.” (The four stages as defined in the document were: being hired, probation/assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor—sometimes called “from hire to retire.”) After considerable debate on the pros and cons of the resolution in two successive meetings, a motion was made to refer the document back to FAC. The motion carried by a voice vote (with a handful of senators voting nay) and 95-2 was
essentially tabled and sent back to FAC where it disappeared as a formal Senate document.

In the fall of 1997 the FAC discussed the need to gather more information about the faculty review process in general by way of surveying Purdue Department Heads. These discussions resulted in a Department Head survey conducted in early 1998 concerning the annual merit review policies and practices. The survey response was 81%, and ultimately the FAC reported to the Senate that based on the information it gathered there needed to be more faculty participation in the merit raise process and more campus wide consistency in the procedures followed. Recommended guidelines were sent to then Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Robert Ringle, for his consideration. The guidelines included six specific recommendations that essentially suggested faculty participation in developing evaluation criteria and in conducting the annual reviews. It was also suggested that faculty should both submit a written annual activity report to the Department Head and receive a written evaluation back from the Department Head. Personal meetings between Heads and faculty were encouraged. (See University Senate Report 98-2.) Subsequently, Lee Weith (FAC Chair at the time) was invited by the EVPAA to make a presentation of the survey results to the Presidential Forum of Deans and Department Heads in February 1999—which he did. Since then, of course, there has been considerable turnover within the Presidential Forum, not to mention the arrival of an entirely new administrative leadership team.

The issue of post-tenure review surfaced again when a question regarding peer review of full professors was included in the 2001 Purdue University Faculty Survey: First Assessment of the Purdue Faculty Culture. According to the results of this online faculty survey, over three-fourths (76%) of the responding faculty believed that full professors should undergo performance reviews by their peers. Agreement with the survey statement reported by rank was as follows: 66% of the fulls, 80% of the associates, and 93% of the assistants. It was also reported that women were more likely than men to support such reviews; and underrepresented minorities were more likely than Caucasians to support these reviews. This faculty survey overall response rate was 51%.

As a follow-up to these somewhat surprising faculty survey results—especially given the position the University Senate took on the periodic review document in 1995—a subcommittee of the Faculty Affairs Committee (now formally established as the Faculty Informetrics Committee, a permanent standing committee that reports to the FAC, University Senate Document 02-03, Approved 27 January, 2003) was charged with looking further into the 2001 survey results regarding post-tenure review and faculty development. The 2002-2003 ad hoc subcommittee membership included: Janet Ayres (Agricultural Economics), Paul Brown (Forestry and Natural Resources), Otto Doering (Agricultural Economics and Purdue Chapter of American Association of University Professors), William Harper (Health and Kinesiology), John Larson (History), Shirley Rose (English), and Cynthia Stauffacher (Biology).

In April of 2002, this subcommittee hosted an open forum entitled “Post-Tenure Faculty: Review and Renewal.” The forum was jointly sponsored by the University Senate, the
local chapter of the AAUP, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of the Vice-President for Human Relations. The featured speaker was Dr. Christine M. Licata, a Senior Associate with the American Association for Higher Education and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Licata has studied career development and post-tenure review since 1984 and authored one of the first national reports in the country on this topic. She is presently working with the New Pathways Project and she leads a team of investigators who are studying the outcomes and impact of post-tenure review policies. Her most recent publication is *Post-Tenure Faculty Review and Renewal: Experienced Voices*, with Joseph Morreale (2002). In addition to the open forum, Chris also spent time consulting with the subcommittee itself on possible follow-up steps to the open forum.

It was clear from the discussions with Licata that while the responses to the 2001 faculty survey question on the subject of post-tenure review were both interesting and potentially revealing, the quantitative results were not particularly useful or meaningful. Without further inquiry into the various interpretations faculty might have given the question itself, assessing the Purdue faculty mindset with regard to post-tenure review by way of responses to this particular question was virtually impossible. Furthermore, when reviewing the few 2001 survey qualitative responses submitted by the faculty on the issue of post-tenure review, it was evident that the responding faculty interpreted this question in vastly different ways. Given the comfortable position of not being under any internal or external mandate to adopt post-tenure review at this time, Licata recommended that the committee go back to the faculty to clarify the opinions and concerns of the tenure-track and tenured faculty on the issue. Although somewhat difficult, time consuming, and cumbersome, Licata suggested that the committee consider using focus group discussions to collect additional information on the good sense or nonsense of post-tenure review at Purdue University.

**National Context**

As part of our preparation for these focus group discussions, our committee made every effort to review the existing and voluminous literature on the issue of post-tenure review. This review included the discussions and positions when taken on the issue by such associations as the American Association of University Professors, the American Federation of Teachers, and the American Association of Higher Education. We also read review papers on the pros and cons of existing post-tenure review policies. Further, we collected a large number of sample post-tenure review policies and procedures from either higher education systems or particular higher education institutions. Particularly helpful were the summary documents associated with the AAHE New Pathways Project.

In particular, we attempted to compare and contrast the dizzying array of existing faculty review models. According to Chris Licata, our original consultant and the author of many of the comparative research studies for AAHE, there are four principal post-tenure review models:

- Annual Review
All faculty reviewed
Usually covers a 12-month period only
Review for salary increment
Administratively conducted
May or may not include feedback
Based on annual activity form
May or may not include faculty member’s annual, short term goals
Institutional examples: University of Pittsburgh, Michigan State University, Penn State University, Purdue University

- Comprehensive Periodic Review

All faculty reviewed
Uses periodic cycle (5 to 7 years)
Administrative and peer involvement
Faculty development, career planning and resiliency are primary goals
Development emphasis can be in individual development
Development can be on department needs and strategic plans
Assesses retrospective and prospective contributions and goals
May result in reward or development opportunities
Usually includes required improvement plan, if needed
Institutional examples: State systems in Wisconsin, Georgia, California, Florida, Hawaii, North Dakota, Texas, and individual institutions such as, Ithaca College, Coastal Carolina University, Davidson College, Elon College, Mankato State, Olivet College, King College

- Triggered Consequential Review

Only selected faculty reviewed
Event triggered if two consecutive unsatisfactory annual reviews
Peer involvement varies
Administrative and peer involvement
Threshold is satisfactory performance
Improvement plan developed, as appropriate
Support provided, as appropriate
Progress assessed
Sanctions applied when progress in unsatisfactory
Institutional examples: State systems in Arizona, Virginia (most), Colorado, Texas (most), and individual institutions such as, University of Minnesota, Kansas State University, IUPUI, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and University of Washington

- Combination: Periodic and Triggered

Periodic review for all faculty
When two consecutive annual reviews are unsatisfactory, review is triggered at that time.

Institutional Examples: State system of Maryland, and individual institutions such as, University of Colorado, William & Mary

Focus Group Project Procedures

In the summer and early fall of 2002, the committee prepared itself for conducting a series of focus groups with tenured and tenure-track faculty at Purdue University on the subject of post-tenure review and professional development. With the guidance of Professor Janet Ayres, the committee schooled itself on how to conduct credible focus groups. Janet was a committee member and an experienced focus group facilitator.

It was the committee’s decision to randomly sample approximately 10% of the Purdue University tenured and tenure-track faculty over the 2002-2003 academic year. It was also decided that the sampling ought to represent at least 10% of each professorial rank: fulls, associates, and assistants. Based on the fall 2002 faculty headcount by rank (excluding Deans, associate Deans, assistant Deans, and Department Heads) there were: 735 full professors, 506 associate professors, and 360 assistant professors. The random sampling in all ranks reflected the population as a whole on such factors as gender, age, and time in rank. The letters of invitation offered one session for women-only and one session for minorities-only in all three ranks. In the assistant professor and full professor ranks, the women-only focus groups were selected frequently enough to create a meaningful focus group in both ranks, but not frequently enough in the associate professor rank to create a women-only focus group. In all three ranks, the minority-only groups were not so selected and therefore it was not possible to provide any distinct minority-only focus groups.

In October 2002 letters of invitation were sent to 150 randomly selected full professors. Seven different focus group days and times were offered for the full professors to select from between November 4 and November 14, 2002. The seven focus groups filled and were held with approximately 10 to 12 in each group. The total number of full professors who elected to participate in our project and who were able to fit themselves into our defined schedule was 79. In January 2003 letters of invitation were sent to 125 associate professors. Six focus group day and time options were offered between February 17 and March 6, 2003. There were 63 associates who accepted the invitation and who could schedule within our time frame. In March of 2003 letters of invitation were sent to 100 assistant professors and 49 were scheduled between April 1 and April 10. Altogether, 18 focus groups were held with 191 Purdue University faculty members. This enabled us to comfortably meet our goal of 10% of the whole. Approximately 50% of each ranks’ invitees accepted the randomly generated invitation. This number represents about 12% of the entire clinical, tenured and tenure-track positions, excluding Deans, associate Deans, assistant Deans, and Department Heads. However, as with any study that employs a voluntary population, bias may be introduced as a function of the self-selection process. It should also be pointed out that six of the seven faculty members who
composed the ad hoc subcommittee on post-tenure review and faculty development were full professors, the seventh an associate professor.

Each focus group session was scheduled for 90 minutes. All sessions except three were held in STEW 326, the meeting room of the Board of Trustees. The other three sessions were held in Stewart Center rooms on the third floor. Light refreshments were served to all groups. The basic prefatory sequence for each of the 18 groups was identical: introduction of the committee, a brief overview of the project background and its purpose, a reminder that this entire focus group project was faculty driven and not a result of any internal or external pressure, a statement on non-attribution for any comments made by anyone in the course of these discussions, and a promise to distribute the results of the focus groups to all participants at the time the report is delivered to the FAC in the fall of 2003.

As to the actual sequence of discussion, the facilitator, Janet Ayres, consistently and evenly asked the same five questions in each of the 18 focus groups. Appropriately, she also conducted the sessions so as to insure that all focus group participants were given the opportunity to comment on each of the five questions asked. Other members of the subcommittee were recorders/note takers during the sessions. In every instance except one, there were two or more subcommittee members present during the entire 90 minutes of each focus group. In the exception, both Janet and the other subcommittee member present took the notes.

The five questions were selected and designed to be as neutral as possible and they were not intended to elicit either positive or negative responses. The questions were modified appropriately between the three different ranks when reference was being made to their particular rank’s 2001 survey response percentages on the question regarding post-tenure review. Focus group participants were given paper copy of each question as the question was asked. This was intended to help the participant focus on the question at hand as well as provide a white sheet for their comments and/or notes. The five questions were:

1. How is your performance as a (full, associate, assistant) professor at Purdue evaluated at the present time?

2. How effectively does this evaluation cover all aspects of your contributions to the university?

3. In the original faculty survey, (66% of fulls, 80% associates, 93% assistants) agreed with the statement “All full professors should undergo regular performance reviews by their peers.” What do you think the respondents were thinking about when they answered “yes”?

4. Shifting now from performance reviews to professional development, what motivates you, or could motivate you, to continue your professional development?

5. What can Purdue do to enhance your professional development?
A bit of time at the end of each session was given over to any other comments, perceptions, or advice the participants might want to share with the committee. Additionally, all participants were invited to send along additional thoughts to the committee after the conclusion of the focus group. Immediately following each of the focus groups, the facilitator and the note-takers met for 30 minutes to summarize collectively what they heard. At the conclusion of each of the three ranks’ entire focus groups sessions, the entire subcommittee met again and summarized the collective impressions of that particular rank on all five questions. Letters of thanks were sent to all participants at the conclusion of each of the three waves of focus groups.

Descriptive Summary of Focus Group Responses Question By Question

What follows is a summary report of the focus group responses, with selected quoted comments, question by question. Where there was similarity or redundancy of comment between ranks, no particular rank is cited. Where it appeared that different ranks were responding differently or when rank figured into the context of the response, the rank is noted.

1. How is your performance as a (full, associate, assistant) professor at Purdue evaluated at the present time?

- Most focus group participants described the annual merit review process as the primary across-the-ranks pre-tenure and post-tenure performance evaluation at Purdue.

- However, promotion and tenure reviews are mostly annual as well for assistant professors. Associate professors report that some Departments also annually review them for promotion, but others report that they are only reviewed for promotion when they are somehow deemed ready for promotion or when they ask to be reviewed for promotion.

- When our assistant professors were asked this question, most of the participants spent time talking about the promotion and tenure reviews rather than their annual merit reviews.

- Although there are a few exceptions, the vast majority of the annual merit reviews are carried out by the Department Head. The primary committees (full professors) handle the annual promotion and tenure reviews at the Department level.

- The manner in which these annual reviews—whether merit or promotion and tenure—are conducted is quite variable between Departments and Schools.
Regarding the annual merit reviews, and no matter the rank, most faculty report that it is rare to receive much written or oral feedback from their Department Head. On the other hand, a few faculty report that their Departments Head personally visits with their entire faculty individually regarding annual reviews and merit considerations. Still others report that their Department Head will only visit with faculty members who request a personal visit. It should be noted that the size of the Department is a factor in whether or not personal meetings are easily effectuated. “When feedback is given,” one associate professor said, “it is obviously hurried.” And another, responding to the lack of feedback in her own department said, “I talked to faculty in other Departments who helped me to make my career make sense.” Yet another: “I have no idea how my work relates to what others are doing.”

Internal peer reviews are rarely used for the annual merit review. Only a few Departments represented by our faculty focus groups were reported to use a merit committee or an executive committee composed of faculty members to make recommendations to the Department Head for annual merit salary adjustments. When employed, such peer review committee processes get mixed reviews. While the committee approach can result in a more public and perhaps balanced annual review, Departmental collegiality can be compromised.

When a Department Head does inform their faculty members in writing regarding their annual merit performance, our focus groups reported that useful feedback was minimal. In some Departments, the Head will use a quantitative comparative instrument complete with grids, percentages, weightings, formulas, points, point spreads, and even letter grades (one faculty member mentioned that their in-house annual merit evaluation report was based on a scale with 18,000 points at the top end). One full professor said, “We fill out forms that go into a black box and out the other end pops a salary raise.”

In other Departments, a written qualitative narrative is included but it is usually composed of generalities such as “Keep up the good work.” Such generalities, one associate professor said, “Just don’t cut it.” One other associate professor said, “How can you judge me by information on two pieces of paper?” A number of our participants mentioned that the one and only measure of annual merit value in their Department was the amount of external funding dollars they brought in, one associate professor repeating what he was told: “If you bring in the money, we know that your research is good.”

On the other hand, there are Department Heads who give this review responsibility the time it deserves. One assistant professor said, “Our new
Head actually read all my materials—took time to read them and understand them and I was flabbergasted.”

- Short-term goals and objectives, when they are required or invited to be stated, dominate the annual merit reviews; that is, when faculty members are invited to submit their goals against which the merit raises are distributed, in most all of the Departments represented by the focus groups the written documents emphasize what the faculty member expects to accomplish for the academic year in question only.

- A common observation regarding the annual merit reviews was that the amount of time and energy the reviews take are incommensurate with the amount of money available for merit. “The annual merit reviews,” said one associate professor, “are a huge waste of time.”

- Nonetheless, and even if the salary pool is shallow, faculty report that they often feel compelled to submit modest annual goals—in some cases even goals they know they have already accomplished—in order to improve their chances for highly meritorious recognition.

- Another practice used to improve the likelihood of a bigger merit raise, is to encourage a rumor that you might be leaving. Better yet, it seems, is to actually and actively pursue another academic position elsewhere even though you have no intention of moving—test the market so to speak—and then use the market to engineer a bigger raise at home.

- But it should also be noted that these self-promoting tactics were generally viewed as undesirable but sometimes necessary tactics in order to make up for an annual review process that is, if not seriously flawed, almost always mysterious. “If we have to become sales men and women, and if what we are expected to sell is ourselves, then we prostitute ourselves and the annual review process is bankrupt.”

- While most all of our faculty focus groups acknowledged that it is the Department Head’s responsibility to make annual merit decisions, it was also acknowledged that this approach could introduce Department Head bias. A negative or a positive bias can appear, for example, when a faculty member’s individual goals and objectives conflict or comply with the general Departmental goals and objectives; or perhaps when a Department Head and an individual faculty member differ or align on personal, professional, or philosophical grounds.

- At least with regard to the annual merit review—both process and product—there is a consensus view among all ranks that most Department Heads could benefit greatly if there were institutional efforts to provide them with first-rate training in this most difficult art of personnel
management. Lack of “people skills” was the most frequent negative remark about the less successful Department Heads at Purdue. And contrariwise, bountiful “people skills” was the most often positive trait mentioned for successful Department Heads.

- Regarding the promotion and tenure reviews, it should be noted that the focus groups questions were only tangential to the promotion and tenure process. When such issues did come up as part of the conversations, the information discussed was noted. Overall it is clear to the focus group committee that promotion and tenure issues are of considerable concern to our Purdue faculty. As would be expected, these concerns are especially important to our assistant and associate professors.

- For both the assistant and associate ranks, the central concern was that the promotion and tenure criteria are constantly moving targets. There appears to be a considerable disconnect between what our assistant and associate professors are told to aim for and what specific actions are necessary to hit the target(s).

- While most of our assistant professors report that there are good intentions within their Departments to explain the ins and outs of the process of advancing toward promotion and tenure, there is still much confusion about the on-track or off-track signals they receive. One assistant professor’s review committee “said nothing substantive, just counted beans. I would have liked to hear ‘This is what you need to do, you need a plan.’” Another assistant professor said, “Someone outside my department taught me the ropes.” Again, there is wide variability between Departments with regard to the success of communicating promotion and tenure guidelines clearly and effectively. One assistant professor said, “Assistant professors need to be taught to look at a program and plan instead of just letting it happen.”

- There was a strong belief in both the assistant and associate professor ranks that a good mentoring system was of great value. Besides the obvious help such a system can be for the assistant professors, a number of older associate professors mentioned that they should be included too. “Just because we are older doesn’t mean that we wouldn’t benefit from constructive mentoring.” One older female assistant professor said, “When you’re non-traditional (older), you don’t look like you need mentoring, and so no one thinks of helping me.” Even the full professor can benefit from mentoring, and sometimes in two ways. Not only could full professors benefit from suggestions from others and conversations from others about late career options, they also can indirectly benefit from the mentoring conversations they have with others. There is the good feeling one gets from helping others who appreciate the help. As one full professor remarked: “Mentoring and advising are ignored in annual
reviews, but it really matters at the full level—one needs to be cultivating students and younger faculty, restructuring programs, and such things.”

- However, when mentoring at Purdue in particular was further discussed, there was less comfort with the quality of our mentoring when it is available. In too many cases mentors are assigned who either don’t understand the field of study of the person they are assigned; or, mentors are assigned who simply are ill-equipped to mentor; or an assigned mentor simply doesn’t care to mentor; or instances where an assigned mentor exploits the relationship for the mentor’s gain. With regard to the promotion and tenure process, one assistant professor said, “I’m assigned a sponsor who presents my case to the primary committee and I’m supposed to meet regularly with that person, but it’s happened only once.”

- There were happy exceptions to the mentoring experience noted at Purdue too. In a number of cases the mentor’s counsel and advice was given graciously and gratuitously and was received gratefully. The outcome was mutually satisfying. The Faculty Mentoring Network (a program supported by the Teaching Academy at Purdue) was pointed out as a good beginning on ways to develop reciprocal mentoring in teaching.

Overall, there is little procedural or product similarity between Departments and Schools when it comes to faculty performance evaluations at Purdue. Besides this lack of standard approaches to reviews, it was noted that many Department Heads in particular could benefit from some kind of human communication and personnel management training. It was also believed that while mentoring is a welcomed opportunity in principle, in practice much remains to be done insofar as the breadth and depth of the mentoring experience.

2. *How effectively does this evaluation cover all aspects of your contributions to the university?*

- For the most part, there seemed to be a consensus that the myriad of assessment forms and categories of productive contributions being used for the annual merit review and the promotion and tenure reviews are adequately covering much, though not all, of our possible faculty contributions.

- However, the sense that there is still faculty dissatisfaction with both processes stems from at least six different causes:
  
  - Once the information has been gathered, there remains the question of exactly how and by whom it is responsibly used since the typical feedback is so limited.
The weighting of the areas of productivity is unspecified and therefore remains unclear.

There are a variety of important intangibles that are not included in the typical assessment process.

When and if there is individual goal setting as part of the review process, only short-term goals are invited.

Whether intended to or not, the outcomes of the review processes themselves send a signal that says: “Be selfish and you shall succeed.”

When performance reviews get reduced to formulas, faculty performance is trivialized and the results become meaningless: “Give me a formula,” said one full professor, “and I’ll optimize it.”

- With regard to the annual merit review process, it is a concern that however well the filled-out activity forms might capture a short-term goal, there is no mechanism to assess the actual impact of that activity over time.

- With regard to the effectiveness of these assessments, it was pointed out a number of times by our faculty that even if a process can be shown to be effective, the process can still be quite unfair. Or, and put another way, one associate professor asked: “Effective for what?” An assistant professor noted that, “Our self-evaluation document helps me to say what really has happened, but my evaluation from the Head is not concrete, it’s very loose, and doesn’t give a good feel for direction.” And one associate professor said, “When the entire annual review process appears to be so subterranean—and it does appear that way to me—it would be so much better if there was a more even-handed and public weighting of the kinds of productivity that is expected.”

- Part of that possible unfairness of the annual merit reviews, for example, derives from a review process that is designed primarily to distribute money and is not necessarily designed to distribute other more intangible rewards, or to distribute rewards for intangible activities, or to enhance career long faculty development. The result, as one assistant professor rather colorfully pointed out, is inequity: “The inequity of salaries makes me want to vomit.” Or another, a full professor, “The annual merit review is worthless as professional development.” “The entire process is so amorphous,” said another participant.

- A really major problem pointed out by our faculty (of all ranks) with regard to reviews of any sort is the difficulty of assessing the compromising impact of the increasingly frequent collisions of expected responsibilities, duties, and loyalties. In other words, it is difficult for any single faculty member to simultaneously satisfy the multiple demands of
individual scholarly and academic conscience, Departmental citizenship, student needs, loyalty to chosen discipline professional obligations, and more recently the need to build interdisciplinary bridges—not to mention achieving success in grant writing. Add to these faculty ever-expanding career responsibilities the variety of life demands outside of academe and we have a formula for not just stress, but distress. One assistant professor said, “We have job enlargement—the job has enlarged beyond reasonable boundaries. You get sick, physically sick trying to do it all. The Faculty Affairs Committee needs to look at the jobs of the assistant professors—in academe, we eat our young.”

- Additionally, there is a faculty perception that there is a “one size fits all” mind set built into the reviews. Reminiscent of the medieval Procrustean bed, our faculty are ostensibly evaluated on equivalent contributions to discovery, learning, and engagement, but in reality it is discovery and the trappings associated with discovery (primarily extramural funding) that increasingly define the size and the value of the bed.

- A number of full professors in different focus groups expressed considerable concern over the apparent inverse relationship between upward promotions and sincere expressions of being needed or valued. One full professor said, “Everyone needs strokes. But as I assume more seniority, I get less and less feedback. I’d value that from someone I respect. We don’t work in a vacuum—as people we need that feedback.”

- There were also full professor sensitivities to the issue of quantity versus quality. “Now that I’m a full professor, I’m just a foot soldier, and it was disheartening to realize I was. I had to stare myself in the face—the responsibility is mine. I no longer have to please parents, teachers, admissions committees, or promotion committees.” From another who was commenting on the habitual bean counting, “Now that I’m a full professor, I don’t have to think about whether a committee would think there should be more (stuff). I decided to stop working on small things and work on big projects I think are important.” And from another, “The game playing is over. I want to do significant work. My Department Head won’t understand. I hate to see discouraging people from taking big risks.”

- There was considerable faculty appreciation for the complicated nature of standardizing reviews of any sort. For example, and within the area of discovery (research and scholarship), where it is common in some fields of study to publish ten to twelve papers a year, it is just as common for a capstone book in another field to take ten to twelve years to produce. Likewise, in the area of learning, student evaluations of our teaching can be influenced greatly by something as basic as whether the course is
required or an elective. One assistant professor said, “I run a program and I get one line on my vitae for it.”

Though these differences complicate our performance reviews, they should, nevertheless, be acknowledged and taken into consideration.

- In some of the clinical fields, there is a considerable gap between the values of the clinicians and the values of administrators charged with reviews. For instance, in the veterinary clinics, there is a moral obligation to come in on weekends, to devote considerable extra time to animal/patient and client needs, to mentor future veterinarians, to establish trust with the veterinarians served in the local and state-wide communities, and to write up the cases and test results in meaningful language. All of this takes time, but the typical review categories for these clinical services are not flexible enough to capture the time-spent element or the quality use of that time.

- Speaking to the effectiveness of performance reviews (whether merit or promotion/tenure), our faculty spoke to the importance of diversity. If our review processes are to be both effective and fair, then it is imperative that we build into the system social and cultural flexibility and respect—whether of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, sex, politics, or any other category of possible discrimination, including insensitivities to work and life conflicts. One associate professor remarked that, “Purdue’s typical primary committee is so non-heterogeneous that their decisions often times do not reflect diverse approaches to research or even to long term career development.”

- Just as crucial to effectiveness and fairness of faculty reviews is the need to guarantee the opportunity to express the intellectual diversity afforded by academic freedom and protected by the tenure system. “I believe tenure exists,” wrote one faculty member, “because of the unique social function of the university as the home of independent thought. No other social institution comes close to supporting this function to the degree that the university does. The modern university is so large and it does so many things that are also done by other institutions that the special characteristics of the university are often obscured.” Our focus groups both implicitly and explicitly spoke to the imperative to perpetuate this special and historically validated characteristic of colleges and universities.

- With regard to the intangibles, our focus group faculty reports that many time consuming and important intangible activities simply do not find their way into the review systems. Some of these intangibles include: meeting with students, orientation of new students—especially graduate students, giving Department tours, recruiting students and faculty, maintaining laboratory equipment, answering the welter of daily electronic
mail correspondence, writing letters of recommendations and peer reviews of promotion candidates from other universities, keeping up with technology, creating and maintaining course web sites, mentoring, on-campus guest lecturing, journal and book reviewing, never-ending committee meetings, and even such activities as being a willing member of a focus group. One assistant professor said, “There is a tendency to put work not understood into ‘service,’ so it is not valued.” And another, regarding the value of service said, “Any service is downgraded in my department—the culture is that ‘only wimps do service’.” Another focus group member said, “There are so many little things done on a daily basis that don’t go into the review document; small things seem trivial when putting them in the document.” One female full professor said that, “Women are especially expected to protect junior faculty, but leadership activities are not recognized in the reward system.” One other female full said, “A leadership role is recognized only if formal, yet it’s often ad hoc and informal.” And another full professor participant: “Things need to be done that no one else is doing, but no one knows I do them.”

• Even if existing metrics are used even-handedly, some of our participants said, there are activities that just can’t comfortably be measured. For example, in the area of teaching effectiveness, other than student scores—which in themselves can be validly questioned—there aren’t many other quantifiable assessment tools. Or, in the area of interdisciplinary research, it is difficult to measure the impact from a Departmental standpoint. As one associate professor said, “Nothing I have done at Purdue with regard to interdisciplinary research has ever been evaluated effectively or even valued by my Department.”

• Some of our focus groups suggested that more emphasis be placed on self-evaluation as part of the annual reviews. In other words, rather than merely an activities report leaning toward quantifying whatever can be counted, the review documents should include narrative self-assessments as well. This addition could help dispel the frequently expressed faculty feeling that “they don’t really know what I am doing or why I am doing it.” “What I do is simply not taken seriously by anyone, yet I know that what I do is absolutely necessary to the day-to-day life of a major university.” Ways to improve mutual understanding could greatly improve the sincerity and the accuracy of these review processes.

• When taken as a whole, there was support within all three ranks for more flexible models of what counts as performance excellence. With more of a team approach to our collective contributions, far more faculty members can be players though in different ways. If, for instance, differential teaching loads were understood to celebrate teaching excellence and expertise instead of being used as a negative sanction for low discovery activities, then other faculty members who excel at discovery could gain
time to do more of what energizes them; and at the same time the master
teachers can then be valued and rewarded for what energizes them as well,
not to mention the benefits that might accrue for our students.

Overall, it is fair to say that the general impression of our existing review systems by our
faculty focus group participants is that these review systems themselves need institutional
review.

3. In the original faculty survey, (66% fulls, 80% associates, 93% assistants) agreed
with the statement “All full professors should undergo regular performance reviews
by their peers.” What do you think the respondents were thinking about when they
answered “yes”?

- It was difficult for our focus group participants to confidently speculate
  about what their colleagues “were thinking about when they answered
  ‘yes’.” Who really knows? On the face of it, however, and seeing the
decreasing support for full professor peer review as the professorial rank
rose, the obvious conclusion drawn by most focus groups was that the
associate and assistant professors might believe that professoring
productivity falls off as the years go by—hence, the “dead wood”
stereotype.

- More simply put, as one participant said, “no one should be exempt from
  review.”

- There were a number of reasons given for including full professors in the
  review cycle enjoyed by the other two ranks, including:

  ➢ What is good for the goose . . .
  ➢ Complacency creeps into the full professor ranks if full professors
    are not held to the same standards as the other two ranks.
  ➢ A complacent full professor creates cynicism in other ranks and
    throughout the Department.
  ➢ Full professors are often out of touch and yet at the same time
    perceive themselves as untouchable.
  ➢ If full professors “retire on active duty” (as one participant said),
    the assistants and associates end up picking up the responsibilities
    on a day-to-day basis. It is difficult enough to carry oneself
    through merit reviews and tenure and promotion reviews without
    having to carry others besides.
  ➢ Assistant professors should have an opportunity to review those
    who review them, especially in areas that affect them directly, such
    as mentoring ability.
  ➢ As the bar is raised higher and higher, the assistant professors are
    especially nervous about the judgment ability of those who might
There was an overall impression from all three faculty ranks that there are some full professors who could be labeled as “not pulling their weight.” Many participants could think of an example or two within their own Department or School, but on the whole participants expressed certainty that the “problem” was not widespread. Some of the assistant and associate professors admitted that their mental examples of full professor dead wood had actually come from their own graduate student days or from remembrances of colleagues from other institutions. Nonetheless, as one assistant professor said, “fulls shouldn’t be able to push their work onto the backs of assistant professors.” And another assistant professor, “Our Department is top heavy—assistants go through a horrendous process, but fulls aren’t pulling their weight—yet they’re not evaluated.” “But,” as one full professor said, “I am doing the very best I can, and I don’t weigh that much anyway.”

In the associate professor ranks, and speculating on why 80% of their rank would have supported periodic peer review of full professors, one associate said, “I like to get feedback at all stages of my career, and so I assumed that the same should be true for the full professors.” Another associate said, “I participated in the survey and I can tell you exactly what I was thinking: I was thinking about those not pulling their weight, and about those who might be paid twice as much money yet doing half as much work.”

There was also the observation that “not pulling one’s own weight” wasn’t limited to the full professor rank. Participants pointed out that there are similar instances of associates and even assistants who are also having this kind of weight problem.

On the other hand, there were a number of assistant and associate professors in our focus groups that strongly supported the full professors in their Departments. One associate professor said, “Our full professors would measure up under any evaluation system.” “Not only would they do well,” an assistant professor said, “they would welcome the review. To go into the office on Saturday and find three full professors already there sends a great message: We’re all in this together.”

It was also pointed out by a few of the assistant and associate faculty participants that in the 2001 Faculty Culture Survey at Purdue, the full professors were in fact the most productive of the three ranks reporting having published more articles and books and landed more research money than either of the other two ranks in the last two years (1999-2000).
There were also assistant and associate professor participants who pointed to the reality and importance of professorial career stages. They mentioned how much they appreciated the additional activities some full professors undertake in their Departments, such as administrative positions, leadership, curricular revisions, accreditation reviews and reports, fund raising, retention and recruitment of other faculty, and other necessary institutional needs. Because of their willingness to assume these roles others are freed up to concentrate a bit more on their research and/or grant writing.

There was the additional observation that if the traditional “publish or perish” metrics were expanded to include assessments of unconventional yet important and appreciated contributions, even some of the so-called dead wood at Purdue would be quite alive at the core. In the current structure, it was suggested, there simply may not be enough flexibility or sophistication in defining productive roles and in finding better models for long-term career stages. The system isn’t good at figuring out exactly what full professors do and should be doing and then assessing those activities.

When the full professors were asked the question regarding why 66% of their own rank would favor peer performance reviews within their rank, many responded that they are already peer reviewed. In interpreting the question, it was suggested that some read the question to mean: Were they in support of peer review as such? Yes, they were. They pointed to peer reviewed journals, internal and external grant and fellowship peer review, professional association and Academy peer reviews, distinguished and named professorship nomination peer reviews, not to mention the annual merit reviews and student evaluations of their teaching performance. Faculty representing the School of Agriculture, for example, pointed to the SAM and the CRIS reports their faculties are asked to submit annually to outside agencies. “What we need,” said one full professor “is a voluntary program of post-tenure faculty development, not a mandated post-tenure faculty review.”

Speaking of the word “peer,” our focus groups also noted considerable differences in what the word might have been taken to mean. To some, peers would be members of the same rank. To others, peers were simply faculty colleagues at Purdue of whatever rank. To others, peers might have meant external reviewers in the same scholarly or research field. Consequently, with the meaning of “peer” floating in the faculty survey, the interpretation of the question results cannot be easily anchored.

While all three ranks were terribly concerned about the issue of “having not enough time” to do justice to their many faceted responsibilities, it was the fulls in particular that centered on the crunch of time and the result of
fatigue as a major career liability. “I’m tired . . . I need more time to do what needs to be done.” There was also a subtle tone to these focus discussions with the fulls in that they were also running out of time. “I wish I had more time to be a faculty member. I’m so busy hustling money I’m not able to find any time any more to think, to create, to explore, to teach, to visit with students, or to even talk shop with my colleagues, and my time is running out.” And another professor says: “Why is it no longer as much fun to be a full professor at Purdue?”

- Some full professors, who may appear to be, relatively speaking, inactive, are quite simply burnt out. And this condition or stage or predicament, our other ranks pointed out, isn’t restricted to the full professor ranks alone. It can happen at any time in a career. And it is just as much a potential consequence of the nature of the zero-sum competitive system itself as it is a result of the career decisions of any individual faculty member. One assistant professor argued “the current reward system produces a culture in which faculty will burn out.” The problem of faculty burn out is a responsibility to be shared between the consenting partners—the individuals and the institutions—and the solutions to it must be shared as well.

- Some of the full professors also lamented the absence of a credible mechanism to set their future goals and create their own vision for a productive future after they were promoted to full professor. Up until then many of the goals and targets were dictated by the promotion and tenure system itself. This is especially true for those who would enjoy turning some of their time back into what is good for the Department and the University, a shift from individual goals to collective goals. “It is a mistake to believe,” one full professor said, “that to be a full professor is to have arrived at the Promised Land. Full professors can be quite unhappy with their circumstances too.”

- Some of the associate professors also commented on the too restrictive models of effectiveness and productivity. For example, departmental and institutional leadership—admittedly hard to define and assess—will be a huge need in the near future as our fulls begin to move on to retirement, yet there isn’t much incentive or reward for associates to be reviewed or groomed for their potential leadership roles: Who is going to do this if not us? Where is the leadership pipeline?

- In fact, as many associates pointed out, some of the bona fide ways to enhance genuine leadership-related faculty development roles are contradicted by the restrictedness of the promotion and tenure guidelines themselves. In other words, if an associate professor does choose to acquire experience in one or another administrative or leadership positions, “You will have effectively compromised your promotion
possibilities to the rank of full professor. And given Purdue’s system of only turning to full professors for Department Heads, then we are denied serving in a leadership role we might choose to pursue and might even be good at. It’s lose-lose all the way around.”

- Although the associates as a group seemed supportive of the idea of peer review of full professors, it was this rank that especially sensed the potential for the politically charged nature of such reviews. Like a team sport (soccer was the example used), all the glory goes to the forwards who score, but the team is not a successful team without the defenders too—less glorified but absolutely essential to the team’s success. If a university can be construed as a team, distributing rewards and advancement so disproportionately only to the “star” forwards, quickly dismantles the spirit and the success of the entire team.

Overall, and although expressed in different ways, it was clear from the discussions that our faculty participants on this question, regardless of ranks, were concerned far more with badly handled existing reviews than the idea of being reviewed itself. “Healthy competition is good,” said one assistant professor, “but not killing each other in order to survive.” Careless, prejudiced, uninformed, or hurried reviews, combined with little or no feedback, are disincentives to university loyalty, overall productivity, and good departmental citizenship. Our focus groups reiterated the need for meaningful reviews that contained specific and constructive feedback and a corresponding effort to provide the enabling resources to accomplish significant long-term goals as the key to faculty development. “Peer review could be an opportunity for peer information,” said one full professor, “if it was framed as a way not to take pot shots, but a way to support each other’s works.” “I crave constructive feedback now,” said a younger associate professor, “before I become unmalleable. It is difficult to motivate a 58 year old if inertia has set in.”

4. *Shifting now from performance reviews to professional development, what motivates you, or could motivate you, to continue your professional development?*

Within all three ranks, it was the focus group committee’s impression that this and the following question provoked discussions with a somewhat broader perspective and livelier and more enthusiastic tone than the discussions the previous three questions elicited. This is understandable, of course, because these final two questions invited more constructive-future-solution-conversations than pointing-out-existing-problem-conversations.

- Without exception, throughout all three ranks it was the students themselves—as learners, as custodians of our future culture(s), as the hope for improving the quality of life for us all—who are the primary reasons for many of us choosing the academic life in the first place. One associate
professor said, “Students motivate me. I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for the students.” Another associate professor said, “Every single year I volunteer to march in our university commencement ceremony in order to remind myself why I’m here.”

- Sprinkled throughout all three focus groups was the occasional call for Purdue University to not forget the original idea of the meaning of an academic community. One full professor pointed to the imperative need to perpetuate the idea of the academic community generation after generation: “The ethos of the university is changing—we’re aping corporate goals, but we should be interested in the life of the mind and cultivating well-being and the well lived life. There is not enough talk about what we do and why we have chosen to live like this.” Expressed in another way, one full professor said, “We need more opportunities to speak together.” And another full professor, noting the modern turn away from fostering the scholarly community: “I’d like to retire early and go teach at a small college so I could do traditional research and have an active, communal intellectual life.”

- “Keeping up” is also an imperative need for many of our focus group participants. Much of the motivation for this need is intrinsic and not especially affected one way or the other by either carrots or sticks. “If money motivated me,” said one assistant professor, “I wouldn’t be at Purdue.” That isn’t to say that extrinsic factors aren’t of value, only that such rewards are derivative of an inner need that precedes them. “Yes,” said one associate professor, “I want to devote most of my time to encourage my students to do more than follow the recipes of others. I want to challenge them to think and the be up to date on all of the significant aspects of their chosen field of study.” A full professor remarked, “Tenured faculty have to figure out how to share their expertise in ways that lead to others’ productivity.”

- Or, conversely, “not keeping up” can result in the wrong kind of recognition, the kind one assistant professor baldly described this way: “At a conference you don’t want to be the subject of bar talk as a leading national example and ideal-type of a really bad professor.” So avoiding that kind of reputation is a motivator as well.

- The inner sense of achievement that comes from doing something really well, many of our participants pointed out, isn’t especially measurable but it is real nonetheless. There were focus group participants who were proud to be among those “leading the way.” But even those who aspire to be “the” expert on whatever the subject say that local encouragement and the occasional pats on the back by colleagues or by a Department Head or a Dean can be incredibly important motivators to sustaining their development. “Just being told that you are a valued member of this
community can be a reward in itself.” And another participant said, “Value what I do. Listen to what I say. Don’t think I just want to relax. Help me do what I do well.”

To say, however, that our focus group participants were satisfied with the level of support they receive would be an exaggeration. What is beginning to show up in a number of different scholarly fields, our discussants reported, is the difficulty of successfully persuading graduate students to take up the life of a university professor. Graduate students are not blind to the many career stressors from within and without that are part and parcel of a professorial career—whether chronically low salaries, the demoralizing effect of salary compression, the heightened level of competitiveness, the ever-increasing time commitment necessary for success in the tenure and promotion systems, the vagaries of higher education funding, the perpetual Catch-22 feeling—where publications are necessary to get grants but the grants are needed to get the resources to do the discovery necessary to publish, the Department politics, the competing life demands affecting us all, and on and on. “I try to get some sleep now and then,” said one assistant professor. Referring to the difficulty of recruiting graduate students into academe, one professor said, “My grad students don’t want to be like me.”

Some of the associate professors in our sample said that they thought there were a number of good ideas for faculty development being explored with our in-coming assistant professors. But, and unfortunately, very little effort is given to similar development possibilities at the associate and full professor level. “After all,” said one full professor, “apparently half of us are below average.” “The big question,” noted another full professor “is to figure out how we can provide a mechanism by which we get better in our soul and our passion.”

One useful way of motivating our professorate to do their best, to keep up, to innovate, and to be productive career long is to remove the ever-increasing layers of disincentives that get in the way of what are strong, inner-driven success efforts. Most of these disincentives, our focus groups pointed out, are often the little things, the day-to-day nickels and dimes: Restrictive supply and expense budgets, slow or no reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses, insufficient travel money, inadequate computer technical support, recent elimination of research article copying and campus mail sending of library holdings by library, reduced secretarial support, large lecture classes, ever-changing demands, the miniscule percent of grant overhead return to researchers themselves, space allocation for labs and offices, Departments that actively discourage inter-Departmental or inter-School collaborations, and so on. “I have 973 students in my courses and my zeroxing budget limit is 1,000 pages of
copying,” says one associate professor. “Who do you think now pays for the necessary duplicating costs for my course?”

- Specific to salaries, again there was a sense across all ranks that Purdue University needs to do much better. “Money is always a good motivator,” said one assistant professor. At the same time, however, there was the recognition that efforts are underway in the administration’s strategic planning process to “move to the next level” in all ways, including improving faculty salaries. Without question, increasing salary levels can be significant motivator.

- A number of participants in all ranks referred to the positive motivating influences found off campus through their professional organizations and academic societies. There was a sense of satisfaction expressed with the professional growth and renewal opportunities that can occur in the relationships with colleagues at other universities and organizations in the nation and the world. “I joined the academy to create social change,” said one assistant professor, who was commenting on the significance of being able to extend his influence and work beyond our local institution and to the world at large.

- Cropping up throughout our discussions were examples of faculty development opportunities that exist but that for various reasons cannot be taken advantage of. For instance, while the idea of periodic sabbaticals is generally highly regarded, there are often circumstances that make the standard sabbatical difficult to pursue. Three obstacles in particular were mentioned a number of times. First, there is the impact of a professor’s absence in the Department and the impact that that creates for others who are often asked to pick up the absent faculty member’s teaching load and other responsibilities—and usually without compensation because the Department does not typically receive resources to cover the responsibilities in the professor’s absence. (In fact, some Department Heads discourage sabbaticals primarily because of the predicament they create for the Department.) Second, there is the problem of an absent lead researcher on a research team or in a laboratory and the impact that absence has on graduate students and other members of the team. Third, working spouses or partners make it difficult to pick up and leave the community for any specified period of time. One professor said, “Taking a sabbatical is almost a penalty instead of a growth opportunity.” Another: “Can you believe that I really can’t find the time to take a sabbatical?”

- Without question, the number one obstacle to faculty development is lack of time. Finding the time to do what needs to be done was mentioned over and over again not only in response to our fourth question, but throughout all of the question discussions. “I just don’t have the time to do the
important things.” While there might be a perception that assistant professors are time challenged the most, both the full professors and the associate professors report that they had far more time conflicts after promotion than before promotion. More and more there is a common practice today of protecting the assistant professors to give them more research/publishing hours. But if and when responsibilities are not evenly distributed throughout the Department, the associate and the full professor ranks are expected to pick up the slack.

• When followed up, and when our faculty spoke more exactly about what is lost in the time wars, more often than not they said: “The time to learn.” Or, and similarly, “How can I find the time to read and think if I am always just reacting to something.”

• In the associate professor ranks, some of the more senior participants have given up on the idea of ever being promoted to full professor. “I don’t care about being promoted to full. I just want to get better and better at what I choose to do.”

• The reasons for some associate professors not pursuing this full professor goal vary. A few say that the financial incentive is not really all that great since there are some associate professors who earn more than fulls anyway. Others say that the way their responsibilities have evolved at Purdue is not conducive to the kinds of accomplishments that lead to promotion even if they are working to the bone and maybe even enjoy what they do. A few expressed some frustration at the system itself and the kind of “me not we” behavior the system breeds. Some others shared their sense of being marginalized, if busy, because they weren’t doing the “right” things. Still others reflected on the inconsistencies of the criteria for success—the ever-moving target. Others mentioned the never-ending increasing height of the bar. Still others pointed to having been given bad advice earlier in their careers and no mentoring since.

• What some associate professors appreciated in particular, however, was when someone noticed what they were doing and then went out of their way to compliment them on doing it well. Other associates were appreciative of the help some of the full professors have given them when their progress toward promotion became problematical. “When you fall off the saddle,” one associate professor said, “it’s really nice to have someone give you a leg up to help you get back on.”

• One associate professor who has ostensibly pulled out of the promotion system altogether still loves professoring: “Where else could I ever have the most wonderful experience of interacting with some of the brightest people from all over the world on a daily basis? Why would I want to work anywhere else?” Another associate professor not actively pursuing
promotion to full still commented that he really appreciates being able to say every single day, “I get to go to work. Not everyone can say that.”

- Additionally, and although there is a recognition that things are ever so slowly changing in a positive direction at Purdue, there is very little reinforcement or reward for teaching excellence in the promotion system. While the public positive statements about the tripod of learning, discovery, and engagement are more frequently mentioned in both internal and external communication, promotions are still essentially and almost exclusively discovery-based. “It is really difficult to be promoted anymore if you are an evenly balanced faculty member who is evenly competent in all three areas.”

- A few of the assistant professors who value teaching excellence become demoralized when the mantra that they hear over and over from above is: “You were hired to do research, not to become a master teacher.” Or, and from their own ranks on the opposite side, some assistant professors hear their colleagues derogatorily say, “I was hired to do research but we have to teach.”

- In the conversations with the assistant professors there was also a slight sense of resignation that, like professional golfers who go from one qualifying tournament to the next to try to get in the door for the bigger tourneys, promotion and tenure may take more than one assistant professor university appointment in order to create a successful case for promotion and tenure given today’s standards. The expectations have risen but without a corresponding increase in the time-in-rank to build a tenure-winning case. “What’s so sacred about five or six years?” commented one assistant professor.

- Most all ranks pointed to the value of feedback on internal competitions and proposals for funding instead of short regret letters. “How can we figure out what succeeds internally if we aren’t given constructive criticism?”

- Helpful feedback taken one step further, the assistant professors mentioned how useful it would be to see anonymous promotion document samples of cases that do not succeed and with explanations for why the case wasn’t a winning case.

- A few faculty thought that the way this question (#4) was worded seemed to imply that our faculty might be waiting around for incentives before they will engage in professional development. One professor wrote: “The only implication one can draw from that question is that if there were incentives and rewards we would be more productive! I can see the
headlines in the Indianapolis papers: ‘Tenured Professors Would Be More Productive If Given Higher Salaries.’”

Overall, and while there may not be a common theme to what motivates the Purdue University faculty to tend to their professional development career long, there seemed to be a tacit need: to be valued. Respect—the two way opportunity to be both self-respecting and to be respected by others in our university community—was a touchstone throughout the discussions of this question.

5. **What can Purdue do to enhance your professional development?**

By the time we arrived at question #5, most of the focus groups had spent themselves on the preceding questions. In many instances Question #4 naturally moved into Question #5 without prodding. The kinds of ideas our focus group participants suggested in this final question are ideas that could positively improve our faculty culture and thereby the long-term opportunities for our Purdue faculty to succeed. Inevitably there is redundancy in these suggestions from responses to earlier questions. But we believe that the redundancy underscores the importance and timeliness of some of these suggestions.

One other qualification is necessary. We are fully aware that some of these ideas already have standing or are being piloted in some Departments or Schools. Nonetheless, we are including the suggestions on the assumption that there might still be a need to spread the ideas around if they are good ideas. As they stand, these ideas—even if instanced someplace on campus—are apparently not widely known, available, or understood.

- Positive change can often occur in faculty lives even when there is just the simple and sustained public declaration that Purdue University is committed to on going efforts to help its faculty grow and develop throughout all career stages. One professor called this pronouncement a good example of “psychic income.”

- At this moment in time at Purdue University the primary message our faculty receives from central administration (whether intended to be or not) is that “it is all about money.” At the very least, and if it is a true perception that the hunt for money is a driving force, then it stands to reason that some of the money (or more of the money than available at present) could and should be dedicated to faculty growth and development (not to mention similar growth and development investments in staff and service personnel).

- A place to start is to increase the number and kinds of internal professional development grant opportunities. Good examples of positive professional development opportunities include such programs as Study in a Second Discipline, and SLA’s Centers for humanistic, social science and artistic endeavors.
• Centralize the publicity about all of the internal development opportunities available in discovery, learning, and engagement. This could be done on a website that is designed for faculty interested in self-help. The publicity ought to include all necessary information pursuant to making and following through on the application.

• If it is true that Purdue already has approximately 40 faculty development-type programs, these need to be aggressively marketed. If some of these opportunities are not popular, we need to determine if they are under-advertised, impractical, or utterly irrelevant.

• Multiply the number and kind of workshops and seminars for faculty learning, whether improving our ability to use our available technology, or ways to improve our teaching. Good examples are the efforts from the Center for Instructional Excellence to set up workshops on College Teaching, and the talk/discussions on teaching sponsored by the Teaching Academy.

• Make every effort to multiply the number of distinguished faculty appointments and named professorships, including opportunity for distinguished recognition in learning and engagement.

• Given that faculty work and life issues frequently collide, a genuine effort needs to be made to provide assistance as necessary, whether it is providing day-care on campus or additional release time at opportune life stages.

• If faculty members are being held to certain expectations and levels of accomplishment, then we need to have the full institutional support to achieve these levels. For instance, if interdisciplinary research is a *summum bonum*, then there must be university-wide support of that goal, including and especially local Department support. Or, if an assistant professor is awarded a research grant but the work cannot begin because the laboratory space to conduct the research is not yet available, then consideration needs to be given for the predicament—such as a temporary stopping of the tenure clock.

• Again speaking to the call to step up interdisciplinary and externally supported research activity, when such activity is undertaken we must find a way to recognize the contributions of the entire team instead of the more common practice of giving credit primarily or sometimes even exclusively to the primary investigator.
• If full-length sabbaticals are problematic for so many, then maybe minisabbaticals might work. We need more flexibility with regard to the sabbatical opportunities.

• Establish some kind of faculty commons or club where faculty can informally meet, get acquainted, compare teaching tips, find research collaborators, network, and otherwise talk shop. (As an aside, the focus group committee was pleasantly surprised that a number of the focus group participants in many of the groups remained well after the focus group ending bell. They hung around to visit, get acquainted, exchange contact information, and discuss common interests—most of whom, by the way, did not know one another until the day of the discussions.)

• There is good reason to survey faculty at the Department level in every Department to identify the top 10 local stressors in faculty work lives. Once identified, then each Department might be able to do something about reducing overall Department stress. This is necessary at the local Departmental level since there are so many differences between Departments and what might bother some faculty in some Departments will not bother others in other Departments. Some Departments have little to no travel or development money, for example, and others report they can afford to give thousands of dollars every year to support faculty travel or grant writing or course development.

• Mentoring can be wonderful if it is promoted, desired, mutually beneficial, and without stigmas attached. These opportunities should be possible in all ranks and career long. As one senior faculty member said: “I crave feedback.”

• Although our focus group participants didn’t suggest how this might be accomplished without self-aggrandizement, it would be wonderful they said if there was more transparency in learning what their colleagues are actually doing. If our colleagues understand one another’s priorities and values and goals, this would go a long way toward collective and collegial successes. One professor said, “I don’t know what my full professor colleagues are doing because it’s not seen in the kind of review that assistants and associates get and I need to know—because if I don’t know, I think it must not be important; if I don’t see it, I think it must not be going on. There’s no shared visibility for what we’re doing.”

• While policy standardization campus wide can be overdone, Purdue is a long way from the possible threat of doing so. Our de-centralized history is certainly a valuable and distinctive mark, but the differences between Departments within and between Schools are now so exaggerated that there is a need to look into the extent to which these discrepancies are creating resentment, especially in such areas as salaries, teaching loads,
advising responsibilities, S&E, release time, sabbatical frequencies, diversity, gender, and other important metrics.

- The reality of faculty career stages must be introduced to all of our review systems. What younger faculty members can and should do is recognizably different from senior faculty abilities and interests in many cases.

- One helpful way to find out more about the disincentives at Purdue University is to create a standing mechanism to conduct systematic exit interviews with faculty who have chosen to go elsewhere.

- Periodic Department Head and Dean internal evaluations should be mandated across the entire university.

- Although it is difficult to generalize throughout the Purdue campus, there is a perception that many business offices do more to stymie than to facilitate processing external grant applications and awards.

- We absolutely must get a better handle on the evaluation of teaching at Purdue. If teaching evaluation by students, for example, is not a universal practice (as it was stipulated as a “should be” in Senate Document 97-9 and approved in April 1998), then it ought to be. Added to that, however, is the problem that when student evaluations are given and analyzed, there is the problem of figuring out exactly what the numbers themselves mean. After all, what is a 4.2 or a 3.3 on a particular assessment criterion actually mean? How do these numbers translate into studied improvements in the classroom, not just differentiations in our pecking order within our Departments? Peer review of teaching could also be of considerable help in raising the overall levels of teaching effectiveness. The Teaching Academy is making nice contributions to teaching effectiveness through the many workshops and seminars they sponsor. But it sometimes seems that they “preach to the choir,” and getting those to attend who need the help most is often problematical.

- Additionally, and regarding efforts to improve our teaching across the board, as one faculty member said, “We can all win if we are all helped.” In other words, maybe we should assume we could all benefit from plowing additional resources and learning opportunities into improving our teaching effectiveness. Could we universalize a “teaching boot camp” of sorts where we could all rotate periodically through a constructive and healthy re-certification of our teaching skills?

- While receiving considered and constructive feedback from existing review systems is an imperative, no less important is to provide opportunity for all Purdue faculty to submit both short and long range
goals and objectives and then have those goals and objectives used in any forthcoming institutional reviews. As one faculty member said: “I would like to have an opportunity to say ‘this is important to me,’ and then to have what is important understood as being important, and finally to be confirmed by others to be important.”

- One of the concerns raised regarding the promotion and tenure process was the increasing weight external review letters seem to carry in the review process. Since it is difficult for any external reviewer to comment directly on much else besides the candidate’s discovery record, other contributions and achievements in learning, engagement, and citizenship—not to mention the fit between the candidate and the Department’s strategic plan—are apt to be overlooked. While external reviews are incredibly helpful in this day of increasing specialization, the process shouldn’t become reductionist in practice and therefore less human in principle.

Overall, in regard to the fifth and final question, our focus groups suggested a number of positive and mostly practical steps that Purdue could take to multiply our entire faculty and institutional growth and development opportunities. Implicitly understood in this entire conversation, and for the good of the whole—that is, for the good of all of us Purdue—is the reminder that we all are human beings. Hence, whatever we ultimately choose to add or subtract to our existing systems must be humane. While this may sound trite, it is a useful reminder in an age where there are so many forces at work that attempt to reduce us all to little more than resources or capital.

**Summary and Recommendations**

As we bring this focus group project report to its conclusion, we applaud the participation of our focus group participants. Regardless of rank, they were remarkably frank, sincere, and insightful in the course of these discussions. They epitomized the very meaning of collegiality and the proper role of modern faculty taking part in the shared governance of its university. While there were obviously significant differences among them all in point of view, generation to which they belonged, gender, race, creed, national origin, and the discipline they represented, they still spoke as one on behalf of the inherent value of untrammeled discourse, and of thoughtful and responsible recommendation. We thank them all for their participation.

**Cons and Pros Summarized**

Although there is the possibility of oversimplification in summarizing so many conversations, we have tried to plainly list both the perceived negatives and positives of adopting a post-tenure review policy in general at Purdue University, and without regard to specific rank review or to adoption of any particular model:

- Negatives
Is Post-Tenure Review Working?

Is post-tenure review actually working in those universities who have created such reviews? In January 2002, Chris Licata and Joseph Morreale presented a sketch of the results of the first comprehensive study reviewing post-tenure review to the AAHE Faculty Roles and Rewards Conference in Phoenix, Arizona (New Pathways Project). They selected nine higher education institutions that had at least five years of post-tenure review experience. Their review was based on surveys, focus groups, and interviews of groups of faculty, department heads, and deans on all nine campuses. All faculty members of all nine campuses were surveyed. There was a 35% response rate to this non-random sample (1,611 responses). Of the responses received, department chairs represented about 13% (208) and deans 15% (253) of the responses received.

Five critical areas to the success of post-tenure review were included in the report: effectiveness, impact on performance/development of faculty, worth the time and effort, benefits, and problems. The Licata and Morreale presentation was focused primarily on how department chairs view post-tenure review. This decision was justified primarily because of the increasingly expanded department head responsibilities for evaluation and professional development. Especially frustrating for department chairs, say Licata and Morreale, is that "most chairs are not selected or elected because of their evaluation expertise." For our committee purposes, however, this study is useful because in their
discussion they included comparisons with deans and faculty on all five categories of comment.

- **Is Post-Tenure Review Effective?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Chairs</th>
<th>Deans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Effective</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Too Soon to Know</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The authors of the study report that the reasons given by faculty to explain why post-tenure review policies are ineffective are exactly the same reasons that both the chairs and the deans give:

- Review has shown little evidence of positive outcomes
- Review is not taken seriously because no significant follow-up action is taken
- Review is not taken seriously because no sanctions for poor performance are available

- **Impact on Performance/Development of Faculty?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Chairs</th>
<th>Deans</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Too Soon to Tell</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Over 50% of all categories of respondents say there is either a neutral effect or that it is too soon to tell what the impact is
- Of those indicating that post-tenure review is positive, more of the chairs and deans than the faculty believe such

- **Is Post-Tenure Review Worth the Time and Effort?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Chairs</th>
<th>Deans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

- Chairs and faculty do not hold similar views on this question
- Even though the deans’ response is in between the faculty and the chairs, their response is also less favorable

- Is Post-Tenure Review Beneficial?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Benefit</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Soon/Know</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- No matter faculty or chairs, those seeing benefit to post-tenure review are much lower than those perceiving no benefits
- Relatively speaking, chairs see more benefit in the teaching role than the faculty do
- The strongest benefit is perceived to be on the research role rather than on either teaching or service
- Regarding other benefits (not in table), chairs and deans feel that post-tenure review increases accountability (51% and 53%)
- The majority of chairs and deans (53%) each believe that the post-tenure review process helps establish a developmental culture, whereas only 40% of the faculty believe this to be true

- Problems With Post-Tenure Review?

- All three groups (faculty, chairs, and deans) report specific problems associated with post-tenure review
- At least one half to one third of all three groups report some degree of difficulty with: excessive time and paperwork requirements and insufficient resources to support both required and self-initiated faculty development projects
- There were a variety of other problems reported, but most of those turned up in the previous four questions

Committee Recommendations

We now move beyond our information gathering about post-tenure review and faculty development to our considered judgment. We began our year-long project with the goal of determining what our faculty meant in their rank-by-rank responses to a single question on our 2001 Faculty Survey (Question 23.n), “All full professors should undergo regular performance reviews by their peers.” After conducting 18 focus groups and listening to conversations with 191 Purdue faculty members—not to mention getting input and information from our consultant and from the literature reviews—our committee arrived at a far different place than where we anticipated we would be at this time.
Traveling by way of these conversations we were taken from our beginning “yes or no” platform question on post-tenure review, to insights on the many levels of assumptions and circumstances that such reviews—no matter the type—presuppose. In fact, as this report reports, our faculty participants spent very little time dealing directly with the ins and outs of post-tenure review itself. Instead and considerably more important, we heard them say, was the need for Purdue University to undertake a far more visionary and ambitious project: To create and maintain a faculty culture based on career long growth and development.

This committee has no quarrel with the need for reviews and assessments and metrics, or the importance of accountability and quality assurance. And based on our focus group responses, neither do our faculty members. However, we couldn’t help but notice that even when our focus group participants might criticize the status quo, or point to departmental inertia, or refer to faculty who may not be pulling their weight, or point to so many unhealthy stressors, all the while they still more positively and fundamentally pointed to solutions. And meaningful solutions, they said, depend primarily on cultivating good local leadership, good collegial relationships, and good collaborations; these goods in turn can enhance our collective ability to promote and sustain a good community doing good things for the good of the world.

It is our opinion that few of these identified goods can be pursued or assured at this time, much less perpetuated, simply by creating yet another institutional review process in addition to our already pre-existing but often pro forma and sometimes bogus annual review process. Additionally, it appears to us that however well intended most non-annual and periodic post-tenure reviews at other institutions attempt to be, the proper and laudable ends of the review (faculty growth and development) are seemingly lost in the hasty efforts to invent or shore up the means by which the ends are presumably attained or verified (the reviews themselves). In part, we believe, this approach to faculty development is simplistic and is precisely why there is such confusion and uncertainty being reported from the universities who have undertaken one or another post-tenure review processes.

Instead, let us at Purdue University attempt to create a culture in which our faculty are encouraged to plan their future development goals and are assisted in the process of accomplishing these goals. We believe it is indeed possible to focus on the positive outcomes associated with post-tenure review, avoid most of the negatives associated with not having post-tenure review, and in the end create a unique and meaningful program of faculty development without instituting a separate and distinct post-tenure review system at this time. Accordingly, it is our recommendation that our Purdue University administrative leadership and its faculty enter into a social contract of sorts to take the necessary steps to create an environment conducive to career long faculty growth and development. Our faculty focus group participants have already contributed many reasonable and energizing ideas that could promote faculty development, especially in their responses to our question #5. Beyond these suggestions and based on our focus groups collective discussion responses, our committee believes there are five overriding
categories of concern that, when tackled simultaneously, could create a strong beginning for an intentionally and mutually planned university-wide faculty development community.

A few qualifications. First, these goal-oriented recommendations are intended to cut across the entire university family; they should be prevalent and visible in every academic unit on campus. Second, if some of our units are already doing things especially well in the area of enhancing faculty growth and development in any or all of the five goal areas, these units will likely become models for the rest of us to follow. Third, we are not stipulating precise procedures for accomplishing these goals; fresher minds will be needed to create specific and consensual ways to collectively achieve these important goals. But, and fourth, where possible we do set out specific ideas that we think are worthy of serious consideration and action. And fifth, these goals are intended to include and apply to all clinical faculty, probationary and pre-tenured faculty, and both tenured professorial ranks.
Goal #1

*We recommend standardizing the procedures for our annual performance reviews across all academic units and that we fold longer-term faculty development goals into a deliberate expansion of the existing review process.*

- Even if badly handled in many instances, our annual performance review is still a skeleton form of post-tenure review and a good place to begin improving our faculty development activities, and this because all faculty members are included in the review irrespective of rank.

- All department performance reviews are to be conducted in approximately the same time frame within the academic calendar year.

- Faculty should have input into the criteria used for such assessments, including attempts to acknowledge and recognize intangible but real contributions toward individual and/or collective successes.

- At the outset of this standardized review process, all faculty members will be encouraged to develop both short (1 year) and long range (3 year) goals and strategies. These goals should reflect activity in discovery, learning, and engagement with the understanding that there could be differentiation between the amounts of activity/time given to any particular area of contribution.

- The development of a plan to accomplish the longer-range 3-year goals is entirely voluntary on the part of any faculty member.

- It would still be the Department Head’s responsibility to review the annual (1 year) goals and strategies and to carry out annual merit reviews for all faculty in the Department unless the Department initiates (or already uses) a peer review system for the annual reviews.

- But it would be the prerogative of the Departmental faculty whether or not to include an internal peer review body for assessing all 3-year plans. This might be especially useful in large Departments, but the option should be made available to the faculty notwithstanding the size of the Department. If Departmental faculty prefers not to create the peer review, the 3-year review would become the Department Head’s responsibility.

- It is the responsibility of the faculty member to include in their 1-year and 3-year goals and strategies reasonable justifications for the activities stipulated that describe both the ways in which the activities will impact individual faculty development and the ways in which this development is consistent with the department’s strategic plan.
• In each successive year, the faculty member will create new annual goals and strategies, and prepare a short report on the progress toward achieving the longer-term goals.

• It is a given that there will be mutual understanding between the faculty member and the Department Head and/or peer review team that the goals are reasonable, and that if special resources are necessary for the goals to be achieved that they are identified and can be made available.

• Should the Department Head or peer review body need additional clarification on any particular goal-setting document, they will meet and confer with the faculty member.

• At the conclusion of the annual assessment period, the faculty member will submit all the necessary documentation to support the accomplishments defined in the goals and strategies document.

• The Department Head will follow normal university guidelines for conducting the annual review and within the necessary time frame to be stipulated through university-wide agreement or by mandated budget timelines. The Department Head will give written evaluation feedback to the faculty member, including commentary on the perceived progress on the short-term goals.

• Should the faculty member believe the Department Head’s annual merit salary recommendation needs further clarification or discussion, the faculty member is encouraged to meet in person with the Department Head to discuss the matter.

• There needs to be a credible appeals system when the faculty member and the Department Head cannot come to an understanding on the annual merit review results.

• In the third year of the long-term goals assessment, the faculty member will submit a separate report on the status of the 3-year activity plan.

• If at the conclusion of the 3-year period the faculty member has indeed accomplished what he or she set out to accomplish, the faculty member will receive a non-recurring salary bonus (we recommend either a flat dollar amount or a percent of base—the literature indicates the 8% of base is the point at which salary incentives are considered meaningful).

• The cycle of 1 and 3 year assessments should continue over time and should be flexible enough for goals to be modified or redefined as necessary.
Goal #2

*We recommend that as a condition for the appointment to the position of Department Head, that the candidate successfully completes a defined training experience in leadership and personnel management skills.*

- Department Heads should expect as a matter of course that beyond their academic and scholarly experiences and qualifications, they also take time to prepare themselves for their leadership and management responsibilities within their unit.

- This expectation applies to existing or prospective Department Heads.

- The preparatory experience should not be thought of as an obstacle, but as an administrative opportunity to enhance Department productivity, visibility, and collegiality.

- One example of such an experience is a program sponsored by the American Council on Education and conducted by the Center for Institutional and International Initiatives and called “Chairing the Academic Department.” Workshops are given three times per year, in three different geographic regions, for four days, and cost approximately $700-$800 ([http://www.acenet.edu/programs/dlp/index.cfm](http://www.acenet.edu/programs/dlp/index.cfm)).

- Another example might be to use our Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) membership to take advantage of their professional development opportunities, such as their Department Executive Officer Seminars, or their Academic Leadership Program Seminars.

- Yet another at-home possibility is for certain Purdue University Departments (both Heads and faculty) who have had special success with departmental leadership and faculty development models to offer consulting opportunities to other on-campus academic units or to offer workshops.

- In addition to Department Heads, for those faculty members who are carrying out internal periodic peer review assessments, training or workshop sessions should also be provided. Reasonable release time or other compensation should accompany this responsibility.

- We leave the specifics of the necessary training program to others, but we recommend that the experience should be of enough length and quality to ensure that every Department Head at Purdue and any and all peer review evaluators will have had credible preparation for their new responsibilities.

Goal #3
We recommend that Purdue University and its faculty aggressively improve the quality and range of what until now has been a laissez faire mentoring system.

- This goal must be a mutually accepted responsibility between the university and its faculty; in a true community we help one another.

- The decision to be mentored should be voluntary, but it should also be available for any and all faculty at any stage in their career and in any appointment category defined in this report.

- The mentoring opportunity should not only be available, but be deliberately designed in the spirit of mutual growth and development of mentee and mentor.

- Availing oneself of mentoring opportunities must not be stigmatized; rather, such decisions should be considered to be a logical step in career growth and development.

- Mentoring matches must be made available both within and between the various units at Purdue.

- Mentoring should include possible matches designed to improve successes in the entire range of categories, including but not limited to the areas of discovery, learning, and/or engagement, and/or to special circumstances or characteristics where support might be desired such as gender, age, rank, or ethnic background.

- Should feedback be invited, mentors would naturally comply with requests to write up their descriptions and impressions of the activities or the progress their mentee might have made within a certain period of time.

- Mentoring shouldn’t be assumed to be one dimensional, most typically when an established faculty member might mentor a newer one; just as likely, a new faculty member who is bringing special skills to a department might become a mentor for an established faculty member who is wanting to improve their expertise on a subject or even to be trained in newer approaches to problems or questions.

- Mentoring policies and procedures should be both available and standardized within reason across the entire campus and not left entirely to the discretion of any individual unit.
Goal #4

We recommend that the entire concept of the sabbatical leave be reconsidered and reconfigured in order to re-create what sabbaticals were originally intended to make possible: a disengaging from one’s day-to-day responsibilities in order to experience unfettered time to think, to create, to explore, to discover, to study, to learn, and to renew.

- Our faculty simply cannot find the time to give equivalently to all aspects of their defined contributions, nor it seems even find the time to take a time out as time outs are currently defined; hence we must redefine what we mean by sabbaticals and make them universally accessible.

- We encourage adopting more expansive definitions of what we mean by sabbatical leaves, namely, flexible time blocks or responsibility release times creatively dispensed irregularly as career stages unfold.

- Given the many obstacles and disincentives connected with the traditional and current sabbatical conception of seven year cycles (dual careers, children’s school schedules, research program mandates, liabilities to departments), in addition to these standard seven year cycles, we need more frequent but shorter sabbatical leave and release time opportunities.

- A short yet focused mini-sabbatical time period could be useful for future career planning, for seeking further development opportunities, or for finding networking contacts.

- Some other ideas for less traditional sabbaticals include: creating a time-bank for every faculty member to spend in pursuit of periodic growth and development; creating quasi-sabbaticals within the ebb and flow of any given semester by semester-long release from all committee assignments; creating periodic lighter teaching loads; creating more opportunities for study in a second discipline; creating semester-long forays into administrative interning and made possible by appropriate release time.

- It is to be expected that the more creatively we define some kinds of sabbaticals the more integrated they must become within the goals and objectives of the academic unit; in other words, the aggregate must agree to step up and temporarily assist their academic unit as they free up one another individually for sabbatical time.
Goal #5

We recommend expanding our conception of the typical individual academic career from the traditional, linear transition through the ranks based on a personal identity established at the earliest career point, and to a conception of a career that also can evolve in often unanticipated but significant and important ways and where one’s contribution to the whole is still recognized, valued, and rewarded.

• As a precursor to achieving this goal, we believe that every reasonable effort must be made within each and every academic unit to create regular mechanisms to share and make visible the entire range of any single faculty member’s contribution to the entire enterprise, whether via newsletters, colloquia, retreats, bag lunch seminars, electronic postings, or whatever—we are still haunted by the comment of one faculty member quoted earlier in this report: “. . . if I don’t see it, I think it must not be going on. There’s no shared visibility for what we’re doing.” This must change.

• With regard to the fifth goal itself, in the academic institutions—as opposed to the typical corporate structures and hierarchies—where tenure is so highly valued and protected, we must better document and appreciate the diverse ways faculty interests change over time and the ways such career evolution can benefit the whole if made visible and if further nurtured in creative ways.

• If faculty productivity is viewed as a university-wide collective, then it is defensible to accommodate shifts and changes in faculty career goals over time, and especially where a particular member’s strengths and talents and motivations are recognized, facilitated, and rewarded, not turned against them as evidence of failure when held up against a static norm of conventional productivity.

• We must create an approach to faculty development that is inclusive, and one that above all rejects any systematic marginalizing of faculty members who are willingly and actively trying to participate in the community itself.

• And even in the cases of the unwilling or the inactive, we must make every effort to find common ground, to invite alternative ways for them to contribute to the whole, to assist removing perceived obstacles to productivity, and to figure out how to preserve autonomy within collegiality.

• While healthy competition can certainly be energizing, we must work towards creating a culture that eschews zero-sum competition in favor of helping one another develop to our utmost.

• By so expanding and welcoming diverse faculty, legitimate career stages, and perhaps even divergent faculty goals, we coincidentally also can create a culture based on mutual tolerance and respect.
This fifth and last goal, and admittedly the fuzziest of them all, will require the efforts of the entire university to redefine what counts as a productive faculty member career long; incorporating multiple faculty career models could have direct and therapeutic effects on any and all of our existing and future faculty review systems.
A Final Word

Early in this faculty focus group project—at the time we were contacting our randomized professor pools regarding their participation and before we began our conversations with those who volunteered—we received the following written response to our invitation from one of our colleagues: “I’ll be happy to give you my opinion now: Please ask yourselves just what you are trying to accomplish here? If the answer is ‘Looking for another way to waste the faculty’s valuable precious time, by gosh, you’ve found it. Please drop this and get back to work.”

Needless to say, in the end this professor was not one of our participants. Nor would this faculty member likely concede that facilitating faculty voice on campus is legitimate faculty work. Nonetheless, and although we didn’t heed the faculty member’s advice, this hastily written refusal to participate did serve a couple of purposes. First, and throughout the project, it did help us keep the primary question before us: What are we trying to accomplish here? Our answer, of course, is woven throughout the text of our report: To improve Purdue University and the career satisfactions of the faculty who compose it.

Secondly, our professor friend’s note was also a not-so-subtle reminder that if we asked for our faculty’s precious time, we had better give them something useful in return. This report is the result of that barter. In our opinion, we were hardly wasting our time, or the time of those who participated in our project, or we hope, not now wasting the time of those who choose to read our report in its entirety.

But unless and until constructive change can be worked out along the general lines of this summary of faculty views and the five concluding goals resulting from those conversations, we fear that our colleague’s admonition could still well be on the money. For this report is only a beginning, and it will certainly in the end be a complete waste of all of our time if nothing follows from it.

We believe we are on the brink of realizing something very special at Purdue University when it comes to faculty satisfaction and productivity. The combined voices of our faculty participants are pointing the way to building an even more remarkable community than we already enjoy. But these voices also challenge us. All the while we were asking them our questions, in turn they were implicitly questioning us, all of us at Purdue University:

- Are we serious about building a genuine foundation for career long faculty development at Purdue University?
- Are we willing to give the necessary energy and dedicate the requisite resources and time to actually bringing it about?

These questions remain.