

FDRadio: Reappointment – Now What?

- 00:00 Hi this is Dr. Christine Grant, Associate Dean in College of Engineering for the Office of Faculty Advancement and we're really excited to introduce a new series to you, it's called FDRadio, Faculty Development Radio, empowering engineering faculty success.
- 00:16 This is the first episode in the series of pieces that we're going to be doing to help faculty in their career development, especially around the "Now What?" series. And the "Now What?" series is a series that we're-it's kind of like a just-in-time series for faculty to help them in their career development and to point them in the right direction. Now I should say at the onset, that faculty are advised that their first piece of information comes from their department, their department heads-different departments have different cultures and also it is very important for the faculty to check the policies and procedures and Provost Office especially when it comes time for the reappointment, promotion and tenure. So, let's get started!
- 01:10 The first episode is actually talking about reappointment, now what? And this was based on the discussion that was done by a group of Faculty back in February of this year and we had some senior faculty, we had faculty that been promoted and we also had faculty that had actually been on the committee to evaluate packages at the College level. And the advice that they gave actually came in four primary categories. They had to do with format of packages for reappointment; the actual content; the process; and planning. And what I'm going to do today I'm going to give you information that was gleaned and was shared by this group with the faculty who were actually getting ready to go up for reappointment or had just been reappointed.
- 02:04 So we look at the format, one of the faculty members said that it is very important to stick to the format-the requirements. Don't make information in your package hard for the committee to see. It is easier for the committee members to discuss and to focus on the candid, instead of searching for the info on the package that's a very important point. The next thing in terms of format is that it's important to be consistent and to be fluid with the information you provide. When we start looking at content it's very important to not inflate your credentials, the committee will recognize if you do that. Inflation makes really good credentials look a little bit dubious.
- 02:45 Another aspect of content is graduate students-graduate PhD students keeping them on track. If a student is scheduled to graduate after the package is submitted, the department head might want to include that information in their letter. So, something like scheduled to defend which could be very important in terms of the number and productivity of the faculty member. In terms of content it's also important to reinforce the level of impact that you have made over the course of your career and the dossier doesn't talk, you can't change it, but you can

communicate as clearly as possible so that the reviewers can understand its merits and that it stands on its own.

- 3:22 It's also important to talk about your role in grants and grant applications. It's important to include a list of the proposals that you have submitted over time. I know for me, I've been at the University for 25 years and my package is very long because I have included every proposal I've ever written. And that's been awarded and in the back of my appendix I put in there the ones that have been that have not been funded and there have been a lot. It's important for me to show proposal activity. Now you don't have to include all that in your dossier, but it is important to have that in your back pocket-maybe keep it in a separate file, in case you're asked about your proposal activity.
- 04:02 The statement Mutual expectation is very important, it communicates your identity, it can list students, papers etcetera, for example in might say that you have mentored a number of graduate students and number of underrepresented minority students. It exposes interest and facts and who you are. "These are her goals and she has done that by positioning herself" is a quote that people have used in letters and actually helps people that writing letters. There's also an optional statement-candidate statement that you can include that goes beyond the SME or other information and a lot of people actually don't include that, but that is something that you would want to consider.
- 04:42 A question that was asked around the topic of content is, what disqualifies a letter writer? Well if their names are on a proposal with yours or their name is on the dossier or paper with you, that would disqualify them before the process begins. So, you need to be very aware of that and if you have questions ask your department head or check with the Provost office.
- 05:08 The other question is, what if you have a large research group and you're doing research in a large group like in the Castle Program or one of the big center grants, so you have maybe 90 people that don't work directly with you and you don't have a say in each other's work, can that person be a letter writer? Well you have to identify the relationship you have with that person and give us a certain level of explanation and that is something again that you need to discuss with your committee to make sure there's no apparent conflicts or someone who would be biased towards you in writing a letter. That's actually the reason why we do this.
- 05:47 Another thing that folks asked about in terms of content was, "what about parental leave, regarding parental leave? How do you communicate what might appear to be a non-productive leave period?" And the answer that this group came up with, was that the Department of Voting Faculty and Department Head can justify and should address that their letters and the optional statement that the candidate can write, you might be able to address that but again that's kind of nuance you need to discuss with the folks who are helping you prepare your package.

- 06:20 When we start looking at the process, a number of things came up. First of all, it's very important to pay attention to criticism especially if you have someone to review your package before you submit it. Accept that criticism, we all have areas that we can improve in. It's also important to find a mentor, communicate effectively after a department voting-faculty meeting, for example if you hear something that says this person has not "dot dot dot" then you should be seen as someone who can and does it address or at least tries to address any problem or concern that comes up. You need to communicate effectively the impact of your work, for example, publications, invited talks and grants so that colleagues would clearly understand or hear from others and in other departments or colleges, if it's external. For example, if you went to NSF, you ran a symposium, if you were coordinating a conference, things like that. They need to understand the impact of your work, not just your scholarship, but actually the role that you play in the community.
- 07:26 One of the questions that came up with regards to process was, "when do the department heads contact, send tenure file?" And the question actually had to do when are these packages sent up? And again, each department in College of Engineering here at NC State has a slightly different process in terms of their timing as to when they request letters and when your package is completed to send that information out. A lot of times, the folks who are writing the letters will Google the person, but the committee actually focus on the package itself, so only the information that's on the package. There's a minimum of five letters, the candidates often give four-five names and then the department comes up with some names-again check with your department head for the process. The dossier and the papers need to be listed for the folks who are getting ready to write the letters. It's okay if it's under review but not if it's half done. Folks would also look at your established website, they will look at your mission statement, vision and students to add to the paragraph description with a link.
- 08:34 Another question that was asked was, "what kind of interaction is allowable with a letter writer?" Some departments allow it, one department that was mentioned says that there should be no interaction with letter writers. So, what you need to do is to work on cultivating your relationship with the letter writers before they become letter writers, for example ask for feedback far enough out, so it does not violate the department rules or processes or best practices that are the culture in your particular field. One faculty member-senior faculty member in this group said that it is good to test the waters when you're asking someone to write a letter. Perhaps ask them directly in a way that letter-in the way that the letter writer would have an out if they're not interested. For example, I recognize your time commitment, if you have time-again this is if you are "allowed" in quotes to have interactions with letter writers and maybe you will set this up far in advance of when your package is due.
- 09:34 The verbiage that can be used is never quite clear. For example, may I submit your name as a potential letter writer? Not sure if that's really correct-again this is something you've gotta get some advice from people in your field. You should let

people know who you are and be established in the community and be active in establishing a community of scholars around you that could potentially write you letters. So, this is something you need to cultivate far ahead. And again, letters are not required for reappointment, but they are required for tenure.

10:08 Another faculty member said that, when they approach people they say, “do you mind if I submit your name?” Cultivate three to four years out, an outside mentor my help you or advice you how to do that. Two to three different people who you meet once or twice a year at conference are potential folks that can could letter writers. Peers, usually direct, are not letter writers. These are bad outliers. It minimizes the value of it by the committee, the committee calibrates and evaluates the letters that they get based on the background of the person and the perceived expertise in the field that's related to yours.

10:49 “Who submits the names?” was another question that came up. Well the candidates submit names, the department head and perhaps some folks in the department can submit names. Some department can have an exclude list, it's important that the candidates statement can couch information in controversial areas and tell the story. If you are working on something where, not everyone in the it field agrees with the results that you have, you need to figure out a way to present that, so that if you do get a letter from someone that is not positive, that there will be something to balance that out in your package that will explained something, especially if you have something that is a little bit controversial. Make sure you understand your departmental processes, policies and politics. Go to the department head with any questions that you have on this matter as well.

11:34 “How is it viewed on my dossier, in terms of being family leave-how is that perceived?” I know at the college level, sometimes that comes up, but it is not something that is consider in the promotion process.

11:54 So the last thing is the planning. What can you do to plan well to put your package together? One faculty member said that when you're-after reappointment, you have three years shorter than the package is due. It's important to reflect what you've done, and evaluate what you need to do and how much time it will take. So, you have a shorter a process to go up for tenure than you had to get for reappointment. For example, National Leadership External Service, remember that papers take time to publish. It is also important to terms of planning to prioritize your time, sustain your funding, and an organize symposiums. They provide networks with potential letter writers, who are not collaborators. Another thing to do is to have external eyes look at your dossier. Go to external reviewers, people who may not be writing you letters, that's important. Give a two-page description after your resume is optional, but you can do it.

12:56 The next thing is-in terms of planning is that you can invite people to give seminars, be the host, establish relationships with people who are potential letter writers or people who have a say kind of in the reception of you in the community. Ask for

feedback at conferences, don't just send your students to conferences, you go to conferences or be in the audience if they're speaking to see what the community thinks about the work that you're doing. Colleagues in your department can help you compile lists of conferences and people that you can interact with. You should also vet personalities that you're going to interact with wise counsel and that's where mentoring and coaching comes into play.

13:41 Another colleague said that it's most beneficial to run a workshop, even though it's a lot of work, you can be seen as the leading initiatives in a new area and it gives you greater amount of exposure.

13:53 You don't need a unanimous vote in order to be promoted, you just need strong votes and strong recommendation.

14:02 Finally, one colleague said that it is important to keep a record of EVERYTHING in all caps that you do. And an organized log, it shows commitment. You can use your radar file which gives information about your proposals and things that you have worked on, but make sure that you include a total snap shot. Keep a record, if you don't have a pins number in our system for proposals then it may not be in radar. So, you need to keep a complete record. Everything may not go in your dossier, but you never know when that information is going to be useful to you and all also it may be useful if you're being nominated for awards.

14:43 So Reappointment Now What? This is just a snapshot of information that we thought was useful to faculty who attended a luncheon back in February 2015. Again, this is Dr. Christine Grant, Associate Dean and the Unit for Faculty Advancement in the College of Engineering at North Carolina State University. And as I stated in the beginning of this particular broadcast, your department head and the college and university regulations are your first line of information for the official policies and procedures for this process to go up for promotion. The information that was provided in this particular broadcast were the thoughts and views of faculty that have gone through the process and have been a part of the evaluation. So, all the best to you and we'll see you in the next episode.