

Proposal for a non-tenure research track

Rationale

There is increasing diversity and complexity in the mission of the modern comprehensive research university and, increasingly, scholarly progress is occurring at the borders of established disciplines. This is particularly striking in the biomedical, engineering and physical sciences, where new disciplines such as informatics bridge traditional disciplines. In these fields, the fulfillment of our mission and our success and national prominence require increasing diversity of our faculty not only in terms of disciplinary adherence but also of faculty roles.

At the University of Iowa this change in the national research environment has stimulated existing—and led to the establishment of new—interdisciplinary research programs, centers and institutes that overlap traditional disciplines. This change is in line with the new NIH Roadmap which states “The scale and complexity of today's biomedical research problems demand that scientists move beyond the confines of their individual disciplines and explore new organizational models for team science.” These emerging models do not always have congruence with traditional disciplines and departments in their formal didactic educational roles and teaching needs. Teaching in this interdisciplinary research environment needs to have its focus in the laboratory and at the boundaries between traditional disciplines. Such research instructors often carry out certain activities traditionally performed by faculty; however, because they are not involved substantially in didactic teaching, appointment in the tenure track is not appropriate. With the continuing potential and expectation for expansion of the University's research mission and stature, and the accompanying need for research instruction and supervision, it is important to provide a more appropriate status than presently exists for certain staff involved in this developing research and research education enterprise.

Many, though not all, scientists who are non-faculty P&S employees (e.g., Research Scientists in the College of Medicine and other health science colleges, Research Scientists in the College of Liberal Arts and Scientists or Research Engineers in the College of Engineering) are independent research scientists. However, their appointment as research scientists or engineers, rather than as faculty, may be an impediment to their

obtaining independent extramurally funded research grants when review groups and study sections favor principal investigators with faculty titles and penalize those who are appointed in a staff capacity, because of the perception that these individuals are tied to a specific Tenure Track faculty research program and a perceived lack of commitment to staff on the part of the University. These independent scientists are critical to the increasingly diverse and complex missions of several colleges in the university. They offer important contributions to research, participate in graduate education and enhance the reputation of the University. A research faculty track will be an important mechanism to recruit, retain and reward these independent scientists.

In summary, the rationale for a research faculty track includes:

- 1) the contribution of such faculty to the increasingly diverse, complex and competitive environment in which the modern research university exists;
- 2) the need for research scientists whose mission is primarily research and teaching in a research environment without a substantial role in formal didactic teaching; and
- 3) the need to recognize, recruit, retain, and reward independent research scientists in an academic environment.

For all these reasons we propose the establishment of a Research Faculty Track at the University of Iowa for individuals whose principal mission would be research, and teaching in a research environment.

As occurred when the clinical track was established, all colleges would have the opportunity to develop a collegiate research-track faculty policy consistent with the University policy. However, appointments to this track are expected to occur primarily in the health/life sciences, physical sciences and engineering. The total number of faculty to be appointed to this track is expected to be small, limited to less than 10% of the faculty within any College,

Definition and characteristics

The non-tenure research faculty track at The University of Iowa would be defined so as to be largely consistent with that of the existing clinical track:

Research faculty would have positions through which they contribute to the research mission of the University, and hold faculty rank at the level of assistant professor, associate professor, or professor.

- Research faculty would not be eligible for tenure.
- Research faculty would have the right to serve on departmental, collegiate and university committees and to participate in the faculty governance process as defined by individual colleges and the Faculty Senate.
- Research faculty would be subject to the provisions of the Faculty Dispute Procedures, with appropriate revisions made to section III.29.9, which concerns clinical-track faculty, so as to incorporate research-track faculty as well.
- Research faculty would devote most of their time to independent, externally supported research and would be expected to submit and obtain research grants as principal investigator.

Teaching is an essential function of all faculty and in the case of research-track faculty would occur predominantly in the form of supervising and advising graduate students and postdoctoral students in research and in serving on graduate degree committees. Such activities, including mentoring graduate students and serving on graduate thesis committees, will require recognition of research-track faculty by the Graduate College (on a case by case basis). The use of research faculty largely to perform service or administrative activities with little or no research involvement would be inconsistent with this policy.

Appointments and Promotions

The scholarly and research expectations and standards for faculty appointment and promotion in the research track would be similar and parallel to the scholarly and research expectations of faculty in the tenure track. Faculty in the research track would be expected to demonstrate involvement and competence in teaching in an informal research environment, but would not be substantially engaged in formal didactic teaching.

Initial appointments for research faculty would be one to three years. After three years, or prior to that if a promotion is contemplated, a full-scale, departmental-collegiate review would be undertaken. This review would take into account the faculty member's demonstrated effectiveness in research and research supervision. It also would include an evaluation of the departmental, collegiate, and University research mission and the likely role of the faculty member in the future in achieving those goals. To assure unified decision-making at this point, full central administration review of the departmental-collegiate recommendation would be required. It is not anticipated that all existing Research Scientists and Research Engineers would be qualified or would seek appointment on the research track. Rather, the track would be targeted to those functioning as independent researchers.

After a positive review, research faculty would receive terms of appointment dependent on the rank. Assistant professors, associate professors, and professors would receive one to five-year appointments. Faculty would be reviewed on a schedule commensurate with their appointments according to written standards of competence and performance defined by their unit. A decision not to renew an appointment of a research faculty member would be for failure to meet written standards of competence and performance established by the unit and the University, or for changed economic circumstances, including failure of the faculty member to obtain research funding, or program needs such that the position itself is terminated. Non-renewal for changed economic circumstances or program needs only would occur at the conclusion of an appointment, and must carry appropriate notice (cf. UI Operations Manual III-12.2). As with the clinical track, research track faculty will have the opportunity to transition into the tenure track at any time in their appointment. However, such a transition can only occur once. Similarly, tenure track faculty may have the opportunity to transition into the research track, but only within the first three years of their appointment and without the chance to re-enter the tenure track.

Conclusion

The introduction of a research track at the University of Iowa would strengthen the research and research instruction capacity of the university, particularly in engineering and the biomedical sciences; would increase opportunities for recruitment and career

advancement for a number of research scientists and engineers; and would further diversify the faculty in a way that will enhance the mission of the University.