Jefferson Educator: Domain of Professional Vitality

The Jefferson Educator continually cultivates attitudes and skills that promote meaning in work, professional success, and personal fulfillment.

Faculty professional vitality is the synergy between high levels of satisfaction, productivity, and engagement that enables faculty to maximize their professional success and achieve their goals in concert with the goals of the institution. It is not simply the absence of burnout. It is a critical component for the success of both the faculty member's career and the institution.

Professional vitality can, therefore, be predicted by both individual and institutional factors. Valuing professional vitality means supporting the faculty member as a whole. Institutions rely on vibrant, engaged, and motivated faculty for their success. Institutions that prioritize holistic professional vitality invest in a culture that supports the emotional, physical, and professional wellbeing of its faculty.

Professional vitality brings a meaningful, diverse, inclusive, and productive work life, where all faculty are able to reach their fullest professional potential at Jefferson and beyond. Engaging in their work and their communities with passion, vigor, facility, efficacy, joy, and satisfaction will fuel faculty professional vitality longitudinally.

When might I use Professional Vitality?

- To reflect on your satisfaction with your work and with your institution.
- To map your progression through the faculty career life cycle.
- To identify what is expected and required of you to succeed in your career and at your institution.
- To guide your career development plans, individual development plans, and/or periodic performance reviews.
- To determine what strategic steps you can take to support your professional fulfillment.

Key Principles of Professional Vitality

Professional vitality draws upon developmental psychology and can be related to the stages of adult development, as described by psychologist Erik Erikson. These developmental stages describe predictable experiences that take place over time and over the course of the faculty member's life cycle. An academic career goes through developmental stages, and faculty have different goals, needs, skills, and tasks as they progress through these different stages. For the faculty member, considering these stages may help clarify the dynamic contract between the individual faculty member and the institution to meet shared needs and identify shared goals. While experiences will differ across the various types of faculty (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct, volunteer), there are predictable professional experiences and life challenges all faculty will experience. A life-cycle-model approach can provide faculty with a framework to identify, understand, and respond to the changing needs of being a faculty educator over the course of one's career.

The faculty career life cycle begins with recruitment and orientation, phases that establish the relationship between the faculty and the institution, and acculturates faculty to professional and institutional missions and values. During the **exploration** phase, faculty gain a better understanding of the opportunities, expectations, supports, and challenges for success in their chosen career path. The **engagement** phase affords the institution the opportunity to help faculty with choosing their respective career paths and formulating career goals that align with those of the institution. **Development** includes all activities and initiatives that prepare faculty to accomplish their goals. The **generativity** phase that follows represents synergistic growth and faculty vitality, by-products

from the mutually-beneficial relationship between faculty and the institution. And **retirement** refers to the phase in which faculty prepare to withdraw from continuous active service to the institution, while still giving them the opportunity to contribute to the academic community as valued stakeholders.

Early-career faculty require mentorship and orientation programs to help develop their teaching skills and academic identities. Mid-career faculty may benefit from programs that provide new skills and leadership training to help with role transitions and generativity. Advanced-career faculty will benefit from mentorship as they focus on integration, contributing to the academic community, and experiencing changes in roles and power.

How can I get started?

- Identify what stage you are at on the faculty career life cycle.

- Be self-compassionate.

- Reflect on your own level of vitality.

- Cultivate relationships.

- Find a mentor.

- Organize your "board of mentors."

- Dedicate time to your personal life.

- Develop a personal mission statement.

- Reflect on and learn from failures.

- Control the settings on your treadmill.

Selected Resources

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