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**Department Onboarding**

# October 2019 – Reminders for Students and Parents – Ideal Mini School Remember: Please send faculty checklist items to Administrative Affairs

# PREPARING FOR DAY ONE: WELCOMING YOUR NEW FACULTY

Taking time to build a positive relationship between you, your new faculty,   
and your department will provide a foundation for success, productivity, and retention.

So get off to a good start before your faculty arrives!

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER.**

**Inclusive, warm, and supportive environments improve faculty retention. A welcoming department climate can prevent feelings of isolation among faculty, help faculty feel valued, lead to productive research collaboration, and willingness to engage with the department decision-making process.**

**TIPS FOR ARRIVAL DAY**

**Be prepared**. *Sounds simple, but ensuring that their workplace is* ***set up*** *with everything they need is paramount.* Their arrival is a big deal. Being fully prepared for them sends the message that they are a valued member of the department and the UF Health enterprise.

**Set Up for Success!** Plan for their arrival day on campus. This may be the first time they have been on campus or in the hospital/clinic(s). You don’t want faculty left to fend for him or herself—for lunch, finding the breakroom, figuring out email, etc. Even if you cannot personally assist with these important details, be sure you have someone assigned to help make sure the new faculty is not left wondering what they should be doing or, worse, wandering around the building in search of a restroom!

You can think of the suggestions in this resource as conversation starters intended to serve as ways you (the department chair) can help new faculty survive their first day on the new job and hopefully head home afterwards with a smile on their face.

1. **Send Introduction and Welcome Email to Your Department,  
   and Copy the New Faculty Member.**

The day before your new faculty starts, send an email to your entire department, copying the new faculty. It should provide a brief introduction of the new faculty, their role, and a few CV/career highlights. Invite your department to stop by and introduce themselves on their first day. Your new faculty will have a positive message waiting for them when they first check their email and your department will be reminded of the new faculty’s arrival and will now have their name and email address.

*“What would have been better? Feeling welcomed by a person "We're so glad you are here!”*

*“Having someone at UF actually reach out to welcome me,   
see how I was doing, did I need anything, have any questions, etc.”* – Faculty responses to survey 2018

1. **Preparation for Orienting New Faculty**.

You want to help the new faculty remember department members and have a positive first impression. Helping your new faculty know who the administrative professionals are and a brief overview of the department is important. This facilitates the new faculty feeling engaged and excited about meeting their colleagues and resource professionals. Prepare a department packet, binder, or handout of key professionals with whom your new faculty will work, or provide them with a department link to their new colleagues. Organization charts or a list of names and titles are not very interesting. Provide faculty information and photos about the department. Walk through the binder and offer a brief comment about each department member.

*“Could have used online resources with a list of departments, organization chart, campus maps, UF history,   
who’s who, etc.”*– Faculty survey 2018

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER.** (Cont’d)

**Chairs Set the Tone.** Creating a supportive   
and welcoming environment benefits all faculty.   
An inclusive culture is one in which individuals,   
their perspectives and experiences are respected and valued.

***Though departments share the responsibility of creating inclusive cultures, Department Chairs can establish policies and practices that facilitate and promote that kind of culture.***

They can ensure there is transparency in the way decisions for tenure and promotions are made, with guidelines, HR policies, and administrative procedures available and accessible. Conversations about shared governance is particularly important for junior and new faculty.

1. **Facilitate Acclimation.**

Identify a few new faculty resources relevant to your department for quick access to support and make connections. It is also important for new faculty to have some early networking opportunities — even if other relationships may take substantially more time to materialize. Introduce them to other new faculty, provide them with resources that connect them to Jacksonville and the surrounding area.

*“It took a while at first to feel comfortable because people seem closed off in silos and you have to create your own tight-knit group. That can be hard at first, especially if you are moving here alone.”* – Faculty survey 2018

1. **Share the Vision.**

Spend some time sharing your vision for the department. What are you attempting to accomplish and achieve as the Chair? If your area has core values, a mission statement, strategic goals—share these items and explain how this is important to you and how the new faculty’s role and work will help realize these goals.

1. **Build the Foundation for Relationship.**

The Chair and Faculty relationship is so important to establish early on. If you are able to spend some focused time with the new faculty or take them to lunch on the first day (solo or with other members of the department) to get to know them, that sends the message that you are interested in them as a whole person, not just part of the faculty. If they are new to Florida, find out what they like to do in their free time and offer suggestions for places to go and things to do in our area (a list of restaurants, museums, and parks is a good idea.) Reference places that provide [GatorPerks](http://hr.ufl.edu/benefits-rewards/gatorperks/discount-program/) discounts to UF faculty! Give them time to talk about themselves (a familiar topic) and not just their new role (something that may be feeling a bit overwhelming).

1. **Supportive Check-in**

Check in with your new faculty toward the end of their first week. Ask them how everything went and whether any additional questions have come up. Acknowledge that the first day, week, even first several months will require some adjusting. Express your optimism that they will settle in and do a great job and that you, the Department Administrator and their administrative staff are part of their support team. If the faculty has requested accommodations, make sure they have what they need.

*“The staff in the department made it their priority to help me adjust to the new culture. That made a huge impact on me.”* – Faculty survey 2018