

CHFA Initiative for Junior Faculty Development: The Research-Intensive Semester for Junior Faculty

Effective 2009-10, we seek to make it possible for CHFA departments to offer their junior faculty one “research-intensive semester” before tenure so as to foster their progress on projects required for tenure. (The word “research” is intended broadly to include all kinds of creative work.) Research-Intensive Semesters (RIS) are those in which junior faculty are released from teaching duties; they are not leaves or sabbaticals. Faculty will ordinarily remain in residence and available for limited service activities such as participation on hiring committees and continued service and advising duties, although there may be exceptional circumstances when the goals of the RIS can best be met if part or all of the time is spent off-campus.

For departments that meet the minimum requirements for participation in this initiative (as described below), and for each of their eligible junior faculty members who submit a complete application (also described below), the College will provide replacement funding for one and possibly (if funds allow) two courses for those departments with an at least a 2-2 teaching load.

To qualify their departmental faculty for RIS support from CHFA, departments will submit a six-year Junior Faculty Support Plan annually, and interested junior faculty in those departments will submit RIS applications in a timely way. To be minimally eligible, junior faculty will have to 1) have submitted at least one application for grant funding during their first two years at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2) have had a classroom visit and teaching consultation with the Center for Teaching, ideally during their first two years, 3) have a work-in-progress that would benefit from a research-intensive semester, especially so as to complete it by the tenure decisions year; and 4) have taught a full normal load in each year of their tenure in the department and be scheduled to teach a normal load in the semester before and after the RIS, with no promise or possibility of an additional RIS from the department. Below are the likely elements of these documents.

Departments’ Junior Faculty Support Plan: This document will be submitted by the Chair and/or Department Personnel Committee by October 1 of each academic year. The document will:

--briefly lay out the department’s current and projected plan to support its junior faculty’s advancement, in teaching and research as well as perhaps other ways. This might include, for instance, the department’s participation in the Mellon Mutual Mentoring grant or other mentoring structures; its conference travel support, its work-in-progress colloquia, etc. Ideally it will also characterize the department’s policy for junior faculty service and administration.

--lay out the department’s junior faculty data (numbers, tenure decision years, etc.) and projected needs over the next six years for research-intensive semesters. This might entail surveying junior faculty in order to have some sense of which semesters would be optimal for their RIS and creating a plan to avoid heavily depleted course offerings or faculty availability in any one semester.

--describe its expected process for guiding junior faculty toward their RIS applications and for then vetting those applications at the departmental level to vouch for their academic soundness and contribution to timely completion of the project.

Junior Faculty Member's RIS Application: This document will be submitted one year in advance. It must include the following:

- curriculum vitae
- abstract of main creative or scholarly project
- time line for progress on the project, with an account of work completed or published
- rationale for the timing of the research-intensive semester
- date of the teaching consultation (no details of feedback needed)
- date[s], amount[s], and use of application[s] for college research funds
- chair's brief letter of support with vetting analysis from personnel committee or other departmental agent; the chair's letter should also outline the replacement plan, if any.

College Review and Support

The Dean or designee will review the applications, in consultation with the College Personnel Committee, to ensure that they are complete and worthy of support. Subject to funds available for the program, the College will aim to support all complete applications from eligible junior faculty housed in departments that have submitted a workable Junior Faculty Support Plan. If funding is not sufficient to support all applications, the Dean will seek rankings from the College Personnel Committee to determine which cases are most compelling. In such a triage situation, priority will be given to those faculty who have contributed most strongly to the teaching and/or advising mission of the campus as measured by numbers of students and courses taught, lack of release from teaching, and overall performance as colleagues.