

**BEST PRACTICES IN FACULTY AFFAIRS:**

# Achieving Faculty Buy-in

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# ACHIEVING FACULTY BUY-IN: LESSONS FROM INTERFOLIO'S PRODUCT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Interfolio's Product Advisory Committee is a group of leaders in faculty affairs and academic technology that all use Interfolio strategically to support faculty work, data, and decisions at their respective institutions. Interfolio engages with the Product Advisory Committee on a regular basis in order to ensure that what we build continues to be informed by an accurate picture of the evolving needs of higher education.

Here, we present a compilation of 10 key lessons from members' experience about building faculty buy-in for the use of enterprise faculty technology like Interfolio's.

## **BUILD TRUST THROUGH COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY.**

Faculty members can be skeptical when administrators ask for their individual activity data. Communication and transparency are important in building trust, support, and participation.

Lessons learned include:

- » Provide clear, consistent and frequent messaging from multiple outlets.
- » Communicate why faculty data is being collected and how it will be used.
- » Make sure faculty understand the processes, timing, and content required in institutional evaluation processes—for example: annual reviews, tenure, promotion, sabbatical.
- » Communicate aggregate metrics on performance levels (e.g., publications generated by the faculty overall) of the faculty as the basis for comparison.

- » Communicate metrics (like the number of promotions) on evaluation outcomes for major academic units (for example colleges).
- » Establish faculty "super users" throughout the institution who will serve as project champions and information resources for other faculty members.
- » Be consistent. Each subunit (for example, colleges) should have some level of standardization of review processes.

## **ESTABLISH ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.**

Key to establishing faculty buy-in is first establishing administrative buy-in. Getting administrators to support the project is easier if leadership and support is provided from the appropriate institutional levels and with the appropriate representation.

Key takeaways:

- » Establish a broad-based executive-level leadership team to serve as project sponsors.

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This group will communicate the benefits and importance of the project to the faculty, administrators, and institution.

- » Establish a broad-based project team with the appropriate skills to support implementation and ongoing operations of the project. This team will heavily influence the success of the launch and use of the system—which will heavily impact the level of faculty buy-in.
- » Evaluate administrators based on how well they use and manage the tool to support institutional goals for the project.
- » Provide administrator training on properly communications to faculty members. For example, making sure faculty know how things will be evaluated when they go up for tenure, promotion, sabbatical.

## INTEGRATE WITH FACULTY ADVANCEMENT, PROMOTION, AND EVALUATION.

Academic leaders are increasingly recognizing that it is imperative for their institutions to establish a comprehensive and coordinated means both of *collecting* faculty credentials, activities and accomplishments and of *generating output* in the form of activity reports, CVs, and dossiers. Such career-related outputs—especially when tied to the workflows around aspirational faculty evaluations such as tenure and promotion—give faculty members a compelling incentive to adopt the technology that generates them.

Key takeaways:

- » Create incentives for faculty members to use the technology by building mandatory online

actions into their requirements for moments of advancement, like merit pay increases, annual reviews, promotion, tenure, sabbaticals, etc.

- » Create a compensation policy that faculty member will receive a bonus if they enter data within a certain time period for review.

## INCLUDE MENTORING PROCESSES.

Many institutions have formalized faculty mentoring systems to support faculty members in the early stages of the faculty lifecycle. While there is no standard model, a common thread is the ability for internal and external colleagues to monitor the mentee's contributions and provide formative feedback on progress.

Key takeaways:

- » Create benefit for the faculty member by integrating data entered into the mentoring program's output (for example, CVs). Build an input template in which the institution and faculty enter data (credentials, activities, and narratives) as the basis for mentoring relationships. If faculty members do not complete the data required, they will not be able to fully participate. That is, the more

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accurate and comprehensive the data entered by the mentee, the better the quality of the mentoring relationship.

- » Establish interdisciplinary search tools to provide mentors and mentees to connect within the system.

## REDUCE THE BURDEN OF DATA COLLECTION.

Faculty information systems should allow scholars to spend save time and effort of collecting data and participating in institutional workflows—like committees and faculty review processes. The resulting benefit is faculty can spend more time on the activities they're uniquely qualified to do as professors: teaching, research, and service. In addition, faculty members can spend more time promoting themselves and collaborating professionally—providing benefits to both faculty members and their affiliated institution.

Based on comments from our clients, we recommend the following best practices:

- » Integrate data from multiple sources. Examples of common other data sources on campus include: HR systems, student information systems, publication and research databases, grants databases, course evaluation solutions.
- » Communicate to faculty members the benefits they are receiving and the time they are saving. Share examples of data not asked for by the institution because the faculty information system is serving as a central repository.

“ Allow faculty members to review and validate data entered from other campus systems. This process will help assure faculty members that their stories are being told accurately and completely. ”

## ALLOW FACULTY TO FACILITATE DATA.

Faculty members support faculty information systems more readily when an institution has a commitment to transparency and to allowing faculty to validate their activity data the institution holds about them.

Based on comments from our clients, we recommend the following best practices:

- » Allow faculty members to review and validate data entered from other campus systems (like HR systems, grants databases). This process will help assure faculty members that their stories are being told accurately and completely.
- » Streamline data validation processes to reduce the time investment required by faculty members.
- » Communicate to faculty the importance the institution places on making sure faculty data is accurate and complete.

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## ALLOW FACULTY TO REPURPOSE DATA.

Faculty members have responded very positively when they see their data used effectively. So when data is entered into our system, and that data automatically propagates to other systems, faculty appreciate the cost-to-benefit ratio—and their commitment to the system is enhanced.

Below are recommended practices by our clients that take advantage of this feature:

- » Populate personal web pages with data collected so faculty can highlight themselves to peers and to the public. This saves faculty time, keeps data updated, and provides collaboration, networking, and consulting opportunities.
- » Allow faculty profile data to be added to the campus website. This information can be searchable and controlled by each faculty member. For example, here is how this looks at the University of Arizona: <https://profiles.arizona.edu/>
- » Give faculty a designated period of time—say, a two-month window—to validate their work, revise the data, or opt out of its public display.
- » Make clear that if faculty members add to or change the data, the output reflects that change immediately.
- » Feed selected faculty data to nominate faculty for awards, research, and grant funding opportunities.
- » Provide real-time monitoring of scholarly impact—like times cited and altmetrics.
- » Use the school's office of institutional research (or other appropriate office) to publish the

levels of research and creative production efforts.

- » Provide timesaving support for repetitive efforts, like biosketches for NIH and NSF grants.
- » Communicate to faculty that the data entered is portable, and they can take their data with them if they leave this institution.

## EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING.

Faculty really like to extend their data to personal uses that go beyond what the institution wants. We see this over and over. Faculty members are using the data in our system for other things that benefit them.

Below are examples provided by our clients:

- » Allow faculty members to do word searching of selected sections of the database to find other faculty members with common and complementary interests. This functionality provides significant opportunities for collaboration and networking.
- » Integrate the data in our system with academic social media outlets (like Academia.edu and ResearchGate) for networking opportunities and public promotion of research.
- » Communicate collaboration and networking success stories to all faculty members.

## CREATE TRANSPARENT REVIEW PROCESSES.

One of our client institutions noted their faculty felt like they were not included in the evaluation

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processes because of a lack of transparency. Instead, faculty want their evaluation processes (like annual review, tenure, promotion, sabbatical) to be open, fair and equitable—transparent. Interfolio has consciously designed our faculty platform to support transparency, which we believe promotes faculty support of the system.

Below are some best practices we heard from clients:

- » Provide more data and discover inequities. For example, publish the percentage of successful candidates and provide data on inter-unit comparisons. Newer faculty will likely see this as guidance, mentoring, and an opportunity to better understand institutional performance levels.
- » Utilize the system to start conversations with junior faculty about inequities. A common response was, “You aren’t looking at our data in a fair way. The review process is just lip service—you’re not really looking at the data.” This sentiment started a conversation about how to change to be more equitable.
- » Use faculty data collected to give out rewards and grants.

## **PROVIDE SELF-ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES.**

Faculty benefit from interim feedback and reflecting on their performance and cumulative progress. As a result, our system allows faculty easy access self-assessment metrics.

Here are some examples:

- » Provide access to a variety of personal metrics (like teaching and scholarship) as formative

feedback to target areas of improvement.

Faculty need constant feedback on where they stand on their path to success.

- » Communicate how faculty can access these metrics, bases for comparison, and access to mentors.

Conversations like those we’ve had so far with the Product Advisory Committee are absolutely essential to ensuring the long-term value of the Interfolio platform for higher education. By bringing our most active clients into an honest dialogue with us about the needs of their faculty, we give colleges and universities an avenue to exert a genuine influence on the academic technology available to them, now and in the future.

## About Interfolio

Interfolio launched its academic decision-making platform in 2012 as a response to user feedback about the need for better systems to support shared governance and committee decisions. Today, Interfolio has grown to support the entire lifecycle of faculty activity, decisions, and data, from hiring through tenure. With the addition of a system for faculty activity reporting and accreditation, Interfolio now offers the most comprehensive, user-friendly, and faculty-focused technology in higher education to over 200 clients worldwide. To learn more about what your peers are saying about Interfolio, visit [www.interfolio.com](http://www.interfolio.com) or contact [team@interfolio.com](mailto:team@interfolio.com)