How and When to Say “No”

Developing a Career You Enjoy

Advance at UNM

April 5 2017

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Reminders

• “Shut up and Write” (or Grade or Review or Read) on Tues (2-4) and Fri (1:30-3:00) afternoons through the semester! The ADVANCE space is a quiet zone during these times.

• You can work in the ADVANCE space any time we are there!
Reminders

• “Everything (except the science) You Need for Successful Proposals” April 12th 1-3 Ortega 335

• “Developing A Career You Enjoy: Small Negotiations” April 19th at noon (ADVANCE at UNM space)

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Departments/Colleges/the University/Professional Organizations run on volunteer labor. Nationally....

• Women faculty and faculty of color tend to engage in more university service than men: mentorship, service on diversity committees, institutional housekeeping

• This heavier service burden stems from women faculty and faculty of color
  • feeling a moral obligation to help people and communities with which they identify
  • not feeling like they can say no to (frequent) requests from leadership and senior faculty

• This contributes to lower levels of productivity and higher rates of attrition among women faculty and faculty of color

(References available)
UNM

• 2013 Work Life Survey, 2015 Equity and Inclusion Focus Groups, 2016 Advance at UNM Survey

• Women and faculty of color perceive
  • higher service burdens
  • colleagues expect them to represent the point of view of their identity rather than their individual perspective
  • service obligations reduce time for their research and scholarship

• We are all university citizens and need to contribute.
Types of Service Demands

Explicit service: Faculty efforts which are formally assigned and are a standard part of department and college functioning

Identity taxation: requests, assignments and obligations based on gender/race/ethnicity leading to:

Implicit service: Informal efforts arising out of interest, obligation or perceived expectation that are generally not reported or “counted” as part of workload

Explicit service: based on need to have women and faculty of color on committees
A few different types of requests

• Students (including from outside your department or program)
• Department
• College or University
• Professional

Be gracious, responsive, and protect your own time
Develop some rules, guidelines or policies that work for you
  • Written expectations for writing letters of recommendation
  • Some flexibility for students if they DON’T tell you why an assignment is missing or late

Find out what is “normal” in your department
In general, don’t say “yes” right away – build in a delay
Know the resources available for students
A few different approaches from UNM Senior Faculty

• Never take a committee position with the title of “secretary”

• Don’t serve on committees that don’t have at least one other woman or faculty of color

• As an assistant professor don’t
  • serve on committees that meet more than once a month (on average)
  • review more than one article or proposal per month (and this is high)
  • serve on proposal review panels more than once/year
Things to Ask *Yourself* When Considering a New Project or Time Commitment:

- **Why me?** Do I have something unique to offer?
- **Will this work have an impact?**
  - Will this help me on my path to associate/full professor?
  - Will it bring insight/help shape discussions and paradigms?
- **Can I use it in teaching/research/leverage in other ways?**
- **Does it connect me to people I want to work and spend time with?**
- **How much time will it take—will it slow down other projects?**
- **What does my gut say?**
"This is important, but my time is fully allocated now. What is ending or can I let go to make room for this?"

If there is nothing, then No.
Things to Ask *Other People* When Considering a New Committee or Service Assignment:

- Who is the Committee Chair? Who else is on it?
- How often does it meet and for how long?
- What did the committee do last year or last time? (Impact?)
- Who was on the committee last time?
- Is there administrative support?
- How much time will this take? At what point during the semester is the work load the highest?

Things you are trying to learn:

Answers to the questions on the previous slide

*Is this a worthwhile expenditure of my time or...*
a soul-destroying pit of despair?

Don’t even think about trying to escape...
Develop a Committee of “No”

Seek advice from trusted colleagues

Get advice before agreeing to either of the most dangerous requests....
The Boomerang Request

No matter how many times you turn it down, it keeps coming back

A time to negotiate!
Beware the Zombie Request

You turned down the request months ago and yet....

I’ve asked everyone and no one can do it and you’re still the best person and everyone agrees and I really need you to do it

A time to negotiate!
Negotiate? During a budget crisis?

• Reduce your other service commitments or your teaching load

• If you can’t reduce your teaching load, can you:
  • Teach a less demanding course, have fewer preparations, teach intersession or summer (online?)
  • Get help with grading
  • Get some administrative help with the service assignment (ie scheduling meetings or organizing files or....)

• Get in writing that you will have a less demanding teaching or service load for the next year

• Less likely but worth trying (particularly with Boomerang or Zombie requests!)
  • Special Administrative Compensation
  • GA or RA help
  • Travel or research support

• Just because you aren’t aware of other people in the department having “deals” doesn’t mean there aren’t any
Say “No” rather than do a bad job and develop a reputation for being unreliable

What if you are forced to say “yes” and can’t manage the extra work?

*Bail before you fail*

- Be honest not whiny or defensive
- Notify your chair or the committee chair
  - Can you play a smaller role?
  - Change a deadline?
  - Help find a replacement?
- If you are the committee chair
  - seek help from other members
  - use administrative support if you have it
  - get advice on how to get the committee back on track
Saying “No”, when “No” doesn’t work:

I’m up for tenure soon and really need to focus on my writing/research/book chapter.

I’ve just had a couple of heavy service commitments and need to focus on teaching and research for this year.

I’m really interested in that committee but just can’t do it right now. Please keep me in mind for a later time. (Only say this if you mean it!)

Let me suggest a couple of other people that might be in a better position to help out.

I’m sorry, I’m leaving for a meeting right now. Let’s schedule an appointment during my office hours.

Can you send this request to me in email and let me think about it? Say “No” by email.
Questions?
Women and Faculty of Color tend to do more formal and informal student advising

• Formal student advising – what has been the case in the department in the past?
• Informal student advising
  • Meet with students as a group
  • Don’t become the student’s therapist
  • Know the resources available to students
  • Beware of a constant "open door" policy

• Develop guidelines for writing letters of recommendation for students
  • How much time in advance you need the request
  • Information you expect the student to provide (they should be prepared to provide you with information if you are going to take the time to write a compelling letter)

• In-class
  • One approach is to allow students some flexibility in timing or number of assignments provided they DON’T tell you why it is late, missing, etc
Membership on Various Departmental Committees by Gender

Source: 2013 UNM Work Life Survey

Only includes responses from faculty whose departments have these kinds of committees
Membership on Various Departmental Committees by URM Status

Source: 2013 UNM Work Life Survey
Only includes responses from faculty whose departments have these kinds of committees
Membership on Various Departmental Committees by Gender and URM Status

Source: 2013 UNM Work Life Survey
Only includes responses from faculty whose departments have these kinds of committees