New Faculty Onboarding: A Guide for Academic Departments

WHAT NEW FACULTY TELL US

Since 2004, the Provost has hosted a First Anniversary Luncheon for second-year faculty. In addition to celebrating the completion of their first year of service, we ask participants what went well, what didn’t go well, and how the university could make someone’s first year the best it could be.

WHAT HAVE WE DISCOVERED?

While new faculty are very appreciative of University-wide programs and services, they especially love it when their own departments make a sincere effort to communicate a warm welcome and to demonstrate their support for a successful start.

Regardless of the specific approaches that your department uses to welcome and bring on board new faculty, there are three key ideas that we have heard over and over:

>>> PERSONAL CONNECTIONS MATTER

There is a big difference between sending someone a web link and spending a few minutes to show them how to navigate through a process. There’s a big difference between telling someone they should get to know a particular person and arranging a personal introduction. When you take the time and effort to make personal connections, your new faculty are grateful.

>>> GET EVERYONE INVOLVED

It’s not just the chair’s job or the administrative assistant’s job to welcome new faculty. When the entire department is engaged and invested in personally welcoming and supporting new members, they start to feel like they belong and are eager to begin making a contribution.

>>> TIMING IS EVERYTHING

There is no way you can tell a new faculty everything they need to know on Day One. Figure out what they need to know and do right away. Then take some time over weeks and months to add information and support that is timely. New faculty appreciate “just in time” information and support as cyclical activities come around.
Based on a decade of feedback, we offer these recommended activities as you welcome new faculty over the course of their first weeks and months. Your new faculty will appreciate all that you do and will be glad that they said “Yes” to your job offer.

WHAT ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS CAN DO

NEW HIRE PROCESSES

[ ] Use this detailed guide for managers provided by Human Resources at: hrs.boisestate.edu/managers/faculty-hiring-process/. Click on New Employee Checklist to ensure that you and your new faculty have completed all the “getting started” business that makes life smoother for all new employees at Boise State University.

[ ] Share this link: hrs.boisestate.edu/new-employees/ so that your new faculty can use a “getting started” checklist of their own.

[ ] Pay attention to details. Ensure that new faculty have keys or electronic access, a Bronco Faculty ID card, parking and transportation information, business cards, an office nameplate, etc.

[ ] New Faculty will receive information from Institutional Compliance and Human Resource Services regarding mandatory compliance training.

[ ] Human Resource Services will contact new faculty regarding Faculty Benefits Orientation.

[ ] The Center for Teaching and Learning will invite new faculty to attend the New Faculty Orientation program (August) and other faculty development opportunities.

WELCOME ACTIVITIES

[ ] Plan welcome activities, some that include families as well as colleagues.

[ ] Assist with the transition into a new community by providing information that might be of interest and extending social invitations that introduce new individuals and families to what Boise has to offer.

[ ] Organize colleagues to reach out and make regular contact at work, perhaps over coffee or lunch.

[ ] Take new faculty on a guided tour of key places on campus.

[ ] Provide a department roster with names, titles/roles, and contact information.

[ ] Update your web page as soon as possible to include them.

OFFICE AND LAB SET-UP

[ ] Communicate prior to arrival about what new faculty can expect regarding office, labs, and other facilities.

[ ] Make sure office, labs and facilities are equipped to function right away.

[ ] Ensure that software and hardware are installed.

[ ] Create a checklist of accounts, systems, and facilities that are unique to your department and ensure that new faculty have access to what they need when they need it.

INTRODUCTION TO YOUR DEPARTMENT AND COLLEGE

[ ] Make as many personal introductions as possible. This might include the Dean’s office, student services, and other key people and units.

[ ] Provide training and instruction to learn policies, processes, and technologies specific to your department and college.

[ ] Provide budget orientation and training for new faculty with fund management responsibilities.

[ ] Offer assistance with student hiring, travel and purchasing processes.

[ ] Offer mentoring opportunities within the department and/or discipline.

[ ] Demonstrate commitment to work-life flexibility.
INTRODUCTION TO CAMPUS

[ ] Encourage participation in New Faculty Orientation, the President’s address, College and Department meetings, Student Convocation, and other events designed to kick-off the semester and/or that will introduce your new faculty to the campus culture.

[ ] Introduce new faculty to key student service units (e.g. Academic Enhancement and Advising, Dean of Students, CARE Team) so that they will know about available resources to handle student issues as they arise.

[ ] Make sure you help new faculty with individual needs to connect with resources such as Foreign Faculty Services, the Disability Resource Center, ADA accommodations, Campus Recreation, Child Care Center, etc.

PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

[ ] Submit a Graduate Faculty Nomination form to the Graduate Council when appropriate and explain the privileges and duties of this status.

[ ] Introduce new faculty to the Center for Teaching and Learning, the IDEA Shop, their Library Liaison, and other resources on campus that can help them prepare to teach at Boise State University.

[ ] Introduce them to processes such as ordering textbooks, setting up a Blackboard site, using the Testing Center, online student course evaluations, etc.

[ ] Provide syllabus templates, examples, required or recommended language, etc.

[ ] Share resources and procedures related to student academic dishonesty.

PREPARATION FOR RESEARCH

[ ] Introduce new faculty to the Office of Sponsored Projects, Office of Research Compliance and other units within the Division of Research and Economic Development.

[ ] Provide a list of Centers and Institutes and contact names in areas that might be of interest.

[ ] Encourage interdisciplinary connections and minimize obstacles to collaboration.

[ ] Offer assistance with student hiring and purchasing processes.

PREPARATION FOR SERVICE

[ ] Make introductions at agencies, schools, businesses, and industries where new faculty might be looking for community partners.

[ ] Help new faculty find department, college, and university committee assignments that will address their learning needs without compromising time required for teaching new courses and building their research agendas.

SET PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

[ ] Communicate unambiguous expectations for professional success.

[ ] Create a safe environment in which to ask questions.

[ ] Introduce new faculty to Digital Measures so that they know what it is used for and how to request an account from Institutional Research.

[ ] Take time to go over department and college policies and procedures related to workload, tenure and promotion, annual performance evaluation, academic advising, office hours, etc.

[ ] Offer departmental peer observation of teaching and/or encourage use of the Center for Teaching and Learning services to provide formative feedback so that there are opportunities for improvement prior to summative performance evaluation.