

The joy of annual reviews

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A new study on the factors which determine job satisfaction seems to be published weekly. However, they all produce similar results. Factors such as salary and benefits are generally not as important as factors such as feeling appreciated and doing important work. This is good news for department chairs since we don't have the ability to give large raises, but we do have the ability to show appreciation and help faculty and staff feel they are doing important work.

Annual reviews are a dichotomy in that they can be used to both inspire and enforce expectations. On the fun side, they are an excellent opportunity to thank people for the amazing work they have been doing. You can never thank people enough, and in-person meetings are an outstanding opportunity to show your appreciation. They are also an opportunity to learn what excites people, what their greatest accomplishments are, and what you can do to inspire them to greater achievement. This presentation will discuss some of the reasons why you should look forward to annual reviews, and some key questions you should ask during your meetings.

At the same time, there can be performance issues that need to be addressed. The annual review should not be the first time these issues are mentioned, but the review does need to document the situation. We will go through the process of setting expectations and documenting progress in the event of a possible termination.

The presentation stresses three key points: know the rules, thank people more often, and set clear expectations. We will talk about staff and faculty examples, and work through the key phrases to include. Next, we will divide into small groups to discuss some case studies, then report back on ideas for handling different annual review situations.