

Investing in Our Faculty: Creative Virtual Recognition Ideas for Leadership

University faculty are one of our greatest assets. They are key in promoting student success and persistence while bringing higher values, standards and worth to our schools. As leaders, we never want to take our faculty for granted. When we take the time to recognize the hard work, success, and accomplishments of our faculty, it creates a sense of belonging, encourages faculty engagement, and makes faculty feel valued.

Recognition plays an important role in retention. One of the primary reasons many employees leave their jobs is because they do not feel appreciated, or they feel they are being taken for granted. It has been shown repeatedly that employees who feel appreciated are motivated to improve their overall performance because they feel their work is valued. This also leads to better employee retention. Attracting high quality, experienced individuals is often a pressing hiring issue and can come with a steep price tag. According to Kaminski and Geisler (2012), start-up costs alone for a faculty member in science or engineering can range from \$110,000 to \$1.5 million and can take up to 10 years to recoup. This is just one reason why faculty retention should be a prime concern for University administration.

Recognition of noticeable work may be given in any form. Unfortunately, many in administrative roles incorrectly confuse formal performance appraisals with recognition, and to compensate, simply give more frequent performance appraisals. The inherent problem with this approach is that performance appraisals not only provide praise, but criticism as well (Morgan, 2011). Positive recognition or praise should not be paired with constructive criticism to ensure that it is being received with the positive intent in which it is given.

As leaders, we must make faculty appreciation a priority, commit to providing frequent recognition of their accomplishments, and make it our responsibility to create a culture of recognition in our departments, because appreciative leaders are appreciated leaders. Challenges such as cost and/or working from home due to COVID-19, should not hinder leadership from recognizing faculty. In this presentation, we will share creative ways that leadership can show appreciation in a virtual setting by recognizing faculty achievements, as well as allowing for opportunities for peer-to-peer recognition. We will discuss strategies for effective recognition when a one-size-fits-all approach does not work due to large departments, and allow participants to work together to design a draft of recognition ideas to take back with them to their own departments.