Contract Renewal, Tenure, and Promotion – a Web Based Faculty Resource

Kristi Kaniho
Department of Educational Technology
University of Hawaii at Manoa
Honolulu, Hawaii, USA
kanihok@hawaii.edu

Abstract: Consistent with the University’s promotion criteria, candidates for promotion and tenure are to have demonstrated accomplishments in the areas of teaching, scholarship and/or extension, outreach, and/or other forms of service. A successful candidate should have a significant record of accomplishment as a faculty member and show promise of continued professional growth and recognition. This resource module provided information to support the College of Pharmacy (CoP) faculty on the criteria for assessment of their contract renewal, tenure, and promotion application at the University of Hawaii at Hilo (UHH). The module was delivered through a website to deliver information as well as additional resources and guides. Presenting an additional and centralized source for information delivery provided faculty with an opportunity to increase their knowledge and added support to ensure continued success in their professional growth. Survey results indicated that the module reinforced accessibility of a valuable resource. Comments from the participants indicated the effectiveness of the online resource module and provided the basis for changes to increase its effectiveness.

Introduction

At the University of Hawaii at Hilo (UHH), College of Pharmacy (CoP), concerns have been raised that junior level faculty feel unprepared for the contract renewal, tenure, and promotion process. Consistent with the University's promotion criteria, candidates for promotion and tenure are to have demonstrated accomplishments in the areas of teaching, scholarship and/or extension, outreach, and/or other forms of service. A successful candidate should have a significant record of accomplishment as a faculty member and show promise of continued professional growth and recognition.

The purpose of this instructional design project was to develop and evaluate a web-based resource for College of Pharmacy (CoP) faculty on the criteria for assessment of their contract renewal, tenure, and promotion application at the University of Hawaii at Hilo (UHH). Information related to UHH CoP’s promotion process has been paper-based and was located in several different locations. Presenting an additional and centralized source
for information delivery would provide faculty with an opportunity to increase their knowledge and add support to ensure continued success in their professional growth. The research indicated the effectiveness of the online resource module and provided the basis to make changes to increase its effectiveness.

**Background**

Universities typically judge faculty progress based on the triad model of teaching, scholarship, and service. To achieve contract renewal, tenure, and promotion, faculty must first satisfy the requirements of their respective college. In this process, a committee is typically appointed and charged to review the portfolios of such candidates and relay their recommendation to administration (Glover & Armayor, 2006).

Filetti’s 2009 study emphasizes that the department chair of each appropriate discipline should specify and clearly communicate the expected levels of teaching, service, and scholarship which will position faculty for successful tenure and promotion decisions. Glover and Armayor (2006) suggest that faculty should educate themselves on the criteria assessed for promotion so they may prepare themselves accordingly. Communication and constant availability of the information of this process is deemed to be essential.

Although the UHH CoP faculty members are provided with text-based manuals and once a year workshops, they continue to feel unprepared for the process due to a lack of readily available resources. Understanding faculty perceptions of resource availability and sufficiency is important in order to fulfill their needs and encourage success in their professional development.

**Methodology**

Collaboration with the CoP tenure and promotion (T&P) committee along with consultation of current guidelines from the UHH Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (UHH VCAA) office was used to develop the resource module. Faculty accepted guidelines that explained promotion criteria for three separate categorical faculty at CoP (Pharmacy Practice Tenure Track Faculty, Specialist Faculty, and Pharmaceutical Science Faculty) was included in the module. Under the CoP specific guide tab, guidelines for the departmental/division personnel committee (DPC) was made available. Teaching and research resources compiled by the T&P committee were displayed in their own respective web pages. Also created by the T&P committee, dossier preparation checklists for both specialists and teaching faculty was embedded on its own subject page. The last web page housed embedded general handbook documents and calendar for personnel actions provided by the UHH VCAA.

**Technologies**

The module was developed and hosted on Weebly. This website creation program was selected because of its accessibility and the researcher’s familiarity with the program. An upgrade to Weebly Pro was purchased to enable advanced features such as increased file
uploading size and file embedding, which allowed for insertion of multimedia files such as documents, graphics, audio or video. The twenty-page website delivered the information via text. Links provided a direct connection to other websites which provided additional resource information. Easy navigation and ease of use were important items considered in the module design. Embedded documents containing text information for policies, procedures and forms needed for tenure, promotion, or contract renewal were available for instant viewing, downloadable, and print accessible. Information that was not embedded, was made available as a PDF download for viewing and printing.

Population

A call for participation was sent by email to all current (43) CoP faculty. The email requested faculty participation, explained the purpose of the project, and provided a link to the learning module. Respondents had 14 days to complete the learning module. A reminder email was sent 7 days after the initial email and on day fourteen, a final reminder and notification email was sent to inform the faculty of a 5 day extension for participation.

Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected using pre- and post-surveys to determine the effectiveness of the resource module. The surveys were embedded into the website and was developed using GoogleDocs. To ensure anonymity, the participants were asked to create and input a code in the pre- and post-surveys. Demographic information collected asked for information regarding their respective department, current position title and tenure line. Likert scale questions compared the pre- and post-understanding of the assessment criteria, availability of information and perception of preparedness for the contract renewal, tenure, and/or promotion process. The open-ended questions allowed for comments, questions, and suggestions to improve the resource website.

Results

Of the 43 faculty emailed in the call for participation, 18 pre-survey responses and 17 post-survey responses were received.

According to the data, eleven of the seventeen participants who responded to both surveys reported that they had a better understanding of the assessment criteria for contract renewal, tenure, and/or promotion at the University of Hawaii after reviewing the resource module (see Figure 1).
When asked about the availability of information about the UH contract renewal, tenure, and promotion process, the majority of the respondents were neutral/agreed that it was readily available. After reviewing the module, 64.7% showed an increase in their agreement that information was readily available (see Figure 2).

The data collected showed that before reviewing the web resource, most respondents had average to low confidence in preparing their application for contract renewal, tenure, and/or promotion. The post-survey data showed that 11 of the 17 (64.7%) increased their confidence for application preparation (see Figure 3).
Question four asked participants to rate their sense of sufficiency of available resources and guides to assist in preparation for the contract renewal, tenure, and/or promotion process. The pre-survey data indicated that prior to the module review, majority of the respondents disagreed/neutral that they possessed enough resources and guides to help them in the process. After the resource website review, 58.8% indicated an increase in sufficiency of resources and guides (see Figure 4).
Data from the open-ended questions from all participants were compiled and was reviewed to measure the website’s effectiveness. When asked for questions about the contract renewal, tenure, and/or promotion process in the pre-survey, four questions were received. Three asked for a timeline of what needs to be done and one asked what guideline they should use as a specialist with teaching responsibilities.

The responses to the open-ended questions on the post-survey indicated that the web-based resource was successful in providing understanding about the contract renewal, tenure and/or promotion application requirements. Responses also indicated a positive response for centralized information. “This website is useful as it puts some key information in one easy to find place,” says one participant. Another participant responded “the information was clearly organized, it was easy to find details connected with a particular area.”

Almost all (1 neutral) of the respondents indicated that the website was easy to use (see Figure 5).

When asked for suggestions for improvement of the module, multiple responses suggested that further categorization of the content is needed. Specifically, the research resources should be categorized into domains such as workshops, grant funding agencies, journals, and grant proposal samples. “It would be nice to have more UH Hilo pharmacy practice specific resources, rather than just UH Hilo specific” a participant commented. Another participant responded,

It would be nice to have a mentor assigned who can look at your documents and meet every 6 months to assess weak areas and make suggestions for improvement. They could also review the documents before submitting to ensure best presentation/content is put forward. (Faculty participant)

Discussion

It appears that the participants benefitted from having an additional information resource that the website provided (Figure 1). The results also indicated an increase in perceived information availability (Figure 2). Also, in this evaluation, observed was a significant
increase in faculty members’ self-rated confidence (Figure 3) and an increase in sufficiency of guides and resources (Figure 4).

Through the open solicitation for improvement, the comment for a mentor warrants further exploration. Other studies have acknowledged that mentoring can be an important part of the promotion and tenure process and some academics who are not awarded tenure sometimes claim that they were insufficiently mentored (Hambright & Diamantes, 2004). Boice (1992) also suggests that the junior faculty members’ experiences in the first year are critical to establishing a pattern of productivity and Lucas & Murry (2002) say that having a faculty mentor is vital through at least the first three years. Junior faculty who are mentored become more productive scholars and more confident teachers, feel less isolated and have more collegial relationships with other departmental faculty, report higher career and job satisfaction, and experience greater career advancement (Borders, Young, Wester, Murray, Villalba, Lewis & Mobley, 2011).

Another area for improvement is further categorization of the research and teaching resource page. Breaking the information down into specific areas would prevent users from being overwhelmed by the large amount of content provided. Pharmacy field specific resources and interactivity should be considered for inclusion into the website. The aim of the interactivity is to increase learning efficiency and promote interaction between learners and teachers, providing positive values to learners. Interactivity as the result of information exchange with content, other learners, instructors, and media technology can enhance learner comprehension. It would provide diverse types of interactions, such as content and social interaction (Sun & Hsu, 2012).

Continuation of the web resource would foster familiarity of contract renewal, tenure and promotion requirements and encourage further professional development within teaching and research.

**Conclusion**

Developed and implemented was a web-based faculty resource to provide information on the criteria for assessment of their contract renewal, tenure, and promotion application. Participation in the resource module increased faculty members perceived confidence of application preparation. Survey results also indicated that the module reinforced accessibility of a valuable resource. As such, the resource module appears to be a viable and effective platform for promoting adoption of a shared and centralized source for information delivery. In this time of limited resources, and with recent increases in the number of pharmacy schools despite a shortage and high turnover of qualified pharmacy faculty, an opportunity to increase their knowledge and added support to ensure continued success in their professional growth is necessary.

Overall, the study recommends that:

A. Contract renewal, tenure, and promotion guidelines be introduced to faculty at the beginning of their initial appointment period.
B. Establishment of a mentorship program to provide additional guidance to junior faculty.
C. Continuance and further development of resource website to include improvements such as pharmacy specific resources and interactivity.

References


