

Case Studies for AAPT New Faculty Workshop Reunion
June 2007

- 1) You are on the selection committee for the department's REU program. There are many outstanding applicants, but only 10 slots for students this summer. Each of the five members on the committee has ranked the candidates and now you are faced with the tabulated results in a meeting to pick the 10 students. When you went through the files you started to notice that the tone of the letters was different for the male students than the female students. You also noticed that the male students are more likely to already have had some research opportunity at their home institution or previous REU site. Now that you are looking at the rankings you see that the top 10 students are all white males. The committee has had no discussion of the ranking criteria prior to this meeting.
 - a) How can you make sure that women and ethnic minority students are given the same opportunities as the white male students?
 - b) How do you deal with the differential language in the letters of recommendation?
 - c) What criteria should you use in selecting students for such programs?

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June 2007

- 2) You arrive in class one Monday morning and some of the students are discussing what they did over the weekend. Sarah, a white student, is talking to her best friend Shanna, a Black student and telling of her visit to Prairie View A&M, an HBCU, last Friday. Sarah's boyfriend is Black and considering attending PVAM to play football. As Sarah tells of how totally uncomfortable she was "surrounded by all these Black people" Shanna starts getting visible upset.
- a) What do you do?
 - b) Does it matter that this conversation took place "before" class?
 - c) Do you follow-up with either of the students after class?
 - d) In general how can you make your classroom more inviting to all types of students?

Case Studies for AAPT New Faculty Workshop Reunion
June 2007

- 3) You have a graduate student in your group that gets pregnant. Her project has been going quite well and you expect that within a month she will have some extraordinary results that will assure your NSF/DOE funding renewal and likely tenure. She is required to do her preliminary exam next semester, and you are confident she will do well since she is one of the best students in the department. She is supported on your NSF/DOE grant. Her project requires work in a lab with hazardous chemicals.
- a) What accommodations does your department have for such a case?
 - b) How do you protect progress on the project while protecting the student?
 - c) Do you continue paying her using DOE/NSF funds?
 - d) Are there any sources of bridge funding that might be available – either to pay the graduate student or hire some temporary help to keep the project moving?
 - e) What do you do if the student says she does not want to be moved out of the lab at this time – even this is an unhealthy environment for the fetus?

Case Studies for AAPT New Faculty Workshop Reunion
June 2007

- 4) You are serving on a faculty search committee that has worked hard to identify as diverse a pool of qualified candidates as possible. You brought in a few candidates to interview, including one woman. The discussion has boiled down to two candidates: the woman, whom the committee knows has a husband who is also a physicist in the same subfield, and a man who has a stay-at-home wife. The female candidate has volunteered the information that no position is needed for her husband. However, you are aware that there is speculation that her situation could change in the future; one member of the search committee has even stated that it is clear the offer should be made to the man since the woman would not accept without a position for the husband.
- a) What can you do to keep inappropriate considerations from entering the discussion during search committee meetings, both proactively and at the instance of occurrence?
 - b) What do you do to capitalize on two-body opportunities presented by dual career couples?
 - c) What policies are most effective in attracting women scientists to an institution? Do you have policies that facilitate the hiring of couples? How are these policies implemented?
 - d) What measures are in place to attain gender equity in hiring and recruitment?

- 5) Two years ago, your department hired an outstanding woman as an assistant professor. Her husband is employed outside your institution. Several years ago, before you were part of the faculty, the department hired another woman assistant professor but she failed to get tenure. While no one says it was because she had a child you get the sense that they weren't really supportive of her family situation. The new faculty member is considering starting a family and has approached you for advice. While the university has just instituted maternity/child care policies (e.g., extension of the tenure clock and teaching relief for the birth or adoption of a new child) she is concerned about what the other faculty will think if she decides to have a child. Also she wonders what will the ramifications be if she takes advantage of these policies.
- a) What advice do you give her?
 - b) How do you deal with perceptions that anyone who stops the tenure clock or takes advantage of the teaching relief policy is getting an unfair advantage?
 - c) How does your department deal with maternity leave? Does your institution stop the tenure clock by default when a leave is requested or must a separate request be made?
 - d) Should there be particular instructions given when soliciting outside letters at tenure time when there has been a clock extension?
 - e) How do you deal with the impact of child birth/adoption leaves on other faculty members, especially in small departments?

Case Studies for AAPT New Faculty Workshop Reunion
June 2007

- 6) Last year, your department hired a new female assistant professor who has a young child. For years, your faculty meetings have always started at 5:00 pm so that they didn't interfere with getting work done during the day. This new faculty member always arrives at the meetings on time, but often leaves early – particularly when the meetings run long. People are starting to talk about her early departures. As a concerned colleague, you inquire and discover that she must pick up her child from day care by 6:30. She says she does not want to inconvenience everyone else by asking that the meetings be earlier, but she cannot stay beyond 6:15.
- a) Do you bring this issue to the department chair?
 - b) How can you be supportive of faculty / postdocs / grad students so that they thrive professionally while having a personal life?
 - c) How do you balance the needs/desires of a few versus those of the whole?
 - d) How are the priorities set and decisions made on such matters?
 - e) What policies do you have in place to facilitate child-bearing or adoption for: (a) faculty, (b) postdoctoral researchers; (c) graduate students?

Case Studies for AAPT New Faculty Workshop Reunion
June 2007

- 7) This year you are very happy that a colleague and a friend has become the first woman to achieve the rank of full professor in your department. Additionally she has just been elected as a fellow of the APS. As you enter the break room with her, you hear one of the department's most distinguished members loudly stating that the advantage of being a woman in physics is that you get noticed for accolades so much more easily; after all, everyone knew when we hired her that we would have to tenure/promote her or be labeled as bigots. While she appears to shrug the comment off, you are concerned and when you talk to her later you find out that this was not an isolated incident but something she has been dealing with for years. You also find out that this continual under current of comments is badly affecting her morale.
- a) What can you do to help set the tone of the department and make clear that these types of comments are not acceptable?
 - b) How do you support women faculty members who have been faced with these types of remarks?
 - c) How would you deal with complaints from female faculty about having their work devaluated by their male colleagues and also about lack of respect from their male colleagues?
 - d) How are awards and recognitions recognized / celebrated in your department?

Case Studies for AAPT New Faculty Workshop Reunion
June 2007

- 8) Your department has recently recruited an outstanding woman scientist who is now the only woman in the department. When she was hired, she was allocated a significant amount of time from your machine shop to enable her to set up her lab. The set up of her lab is behind schedule and she shares with you her frustrations in getting her work through the shop. After she was hired, a more senior male in the department started a new project that has put a significant load on the shop that had not been anticipated. The woman scientist is frustrated that it seems that his work is taking priority over hers and that the shop staff will stop work on her project whenever he asks them to do something for him. It also becomes apparent that while it seemed she was getting along very well with the office staff who always address her by her first name (unlike the more formal modes of address they use for male faculty); that she feels that the office staff do not treat her with the same respect as they do the other scientific staff. She cannot be sure, but she wonders if the differential treatment may be related to her gender.
- a) What advice do you give your new colleague?
 - b) Do you mention this to the department Chair? the support staff? How?
 - c) How are priorities decided for shop time and other resources?