

RUTGERS

Joint Appointments

THE INSIDE SCOOP

The information in this document is based on the presentations and discussions at “Split Lines, Split Lives? Navigating Joint Faculty Appointments,” a professional development workshop organized by the Institute for Research on Women on March 9, 2011, and co-sponsored by the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity and RU FAIR ADVANCE/Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics.

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Joint Appointments: The Inside Scoop

Joint faculty appointments (also known as “dual” or “shared appointments”) provide great opportunities for interdisciplinary scholars whose work makes it challenging to find a “fit” in a traditional department. But these appointments can also be complicated. Joint appointments can be split between two departments, but they can also be split between a department and a Center, Institute or Program. They work best if:

- The two units get along well
- There are several joint appointments in both units
- The units interact regularly with each other
- The terms of the appointment are discussed clearly from the beginning

A successful joint appointment often requires a scholar to negotiate between host units over a variety of issues, including teaching, service and space. The Institute for Research on Women held a workshop on joint faculty appointments on March 9, 2011. Some of the best practices described in the workshop are enumerated below and just to be balanced we have included a list of cautions and caveats. At the end of this document you will also find a checklist of issues to consider when negotiating a shared or joint appointment.

Best Practices

BP #1: Pick wisely

If possible, pick a primary department that recognizes the complexities of joint appointments and that will represent you to your secondary department or unit. At Rutgers, a primary department is one where 51-75% of your line weight is situated. A secondary department is one where 25-49% of your line weight is situated. Primary departments are in charge of tenure and promotion cases.

BP #2: Communicate

“It makes it a much better experience, not just me having a foot in each department, but two vibrant bodies communicating with one another...it just enriches the whole experience for everybody.”

Good communication at all levels is vital to successfully managing a joint appointment. To the extent that is conceivably possible, make sure at the outset of your appointment that there is good communication between units about the expectations that each will have for you. Check in regularly with your Chairs and/or Directors to keep them aware of how well the joint appointment is working and inform them of any problems you might encounter.

BP #3: Educate key personnel

“You have to be brave and not shy. Keep educating the administrators – bring them up to speed on your complicated situation. Otherwise it’s in the bottom of some desk drawer and no one’s going to remember”

Institutional memory can disappear fast—and often happens with a change of administration. Take responsibility for educating key administrators and keeping them updated on your situation. Try to confirm the terms of your appointment in writing with your main department’s chair to promote continuity when personnel changes occur.

BP #4: Get as many expectations as possible in writing

“The Dean or Chair, whosever in charge, needs to articulate expectations over 5 years, over 7 years, over 10 years... Administrations tend to be short lived, so unless it’s in writing, the expectations may change.”

Use the checklist at the end of this document to help you figure out the best way to memorialize expectations associated with your joint appointment in writing. Issues that can fruitfully be addressed in this manner include teaching distribution, service responsibilities, space, and staff support.

BP #5: Build collegial allies

Sometimes scholars seek to change the contours of their joint appointments, realigning the percentages defining the “split” between departments, or moving from a center or program to a department. These changes are most likely to occur smoothly when a scholar has first cultivated her colleagues as allies, and the host unit has lobbied the Dean on her behalf. In other words, it is more politic to effect change with support from below than to have it imposed from above.

BP #6: Ask for voting rights if you want them

Some departments—especially those with many split lines—grant minority citizens voting rights, but you usually have to ask for them. In the History and Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies departments at Rutgers, for instance, you can vote with a 25% line.

Cautions and Caveats

C&C #1: Be strategic about defining the contours of your joint appointment

- A 75-25% split creates clear lines of demarcation, giving precedence to a major department, center or institute. This makes the process for promotions, merit pay etc. more straightforward than with a more equitable split, when lines of demarcation can get muddled. A 51-49% split tends to be more difficult to navigate and is more feasible after tenure.
- A joint appointment split between two departments may be easier to navigate than a joint appointment split between a department and an institute or center. The divergent requirements of departments on the one hand, and centers and institutes on the other, may create challenges when it comes to evaluating a scholar's contributions as part of the promotion process.
- Joint appointments split between a department and a program also have distinct challenges, as a program lacks an institutional body behind it and therefore may not contribute to tenure cases, discussion of merit pay etc.

C&C #2: Beware of excessive service as junior faculty

"The most important thing for younger scholars is for them to do their research and to figure out how to teach."

Junior faculty are not expected to take on extensive service commitments; tenure brings a more significant service obligation. Excessive service early in a scholar's career can be detrimental to promotion.

C&C #3: "Beware of invisible labor"

Scholars with joint appointments should remember that service performed for one unit may not be readily seen by the other. Sometimes colleagues tend to think that faculty use joint appointments as an excuse to provide less service to their departments or programs. This is even more complex when some of the service is performed as part of an obligation to a program: "Programs frequently rely on the kindness of strangers. They don't have their own faculty. The Dean will remember your contributions, but not the other department (your primary department). So your primary department may not see you." It is a good idea to prepare an annual report of the service you have performed in all the relevant units or departments to keep everyone informed of what you are

doing in each department. This report will also help you remember all the service you have provided when preparing your tenure or promotion packet.

Issues to Consider when Negotiating a Shared or Joint Appointment

- ✓ Line weight and how it might affect the future possibility of tenure
- ✓ Coordination of courses to be taught in the participating units or departments
- ✓ Course release distribution among participating departments or units
- ✓ Graduate teaching assignments and how they are affected by being a joint appointment
- ✓ The locations of lab and/or office space, and whether they promote visibility in the relevant departments or units
- ✓ Service expectations and how they are related to line weight
- ✓ The voting rights available in each department, program or unit
- ✓ Which department or unit will serve as the administrative home for processing necessary paperwork, managing research funds, etc. This is usually a scholar's primary department.
- ✓ How the administration of grants will be split between involved departments or units
- ✓ How lab administration will be handled among relevant departments or units
- ✓ Expectations for the tenure process
- ✓ The distribution of members from the relevant units on the tenure review committee
- ✓ The approach to evaluating candidates with interdisciplinary research and teaching profiles
- ✓ The approach to accommodating a joint appointment that includes an administrative position within one of the relevant units
- ✓ The way in which administrative positions for jointly appointed faculty serving in an additional unit (such as the office of the Dean, heading a center or institute not linked to any of the hiring departments) are treated
- ✓ The dean for reporting purposes, especially if the relevant departments or units fall under different area deans
- ✓ The possibility of revisiting the terms of the joint appointment with chairs, directors, and/or dean in a set amount of years

Useful Online Resources on Joint Appointments

http://www.provost.umich.edu/faculty/joint_appointments/Joint_Appts.html

<http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/aa/faculty/best>

<http://provost.wustl.edu/node/133>

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