

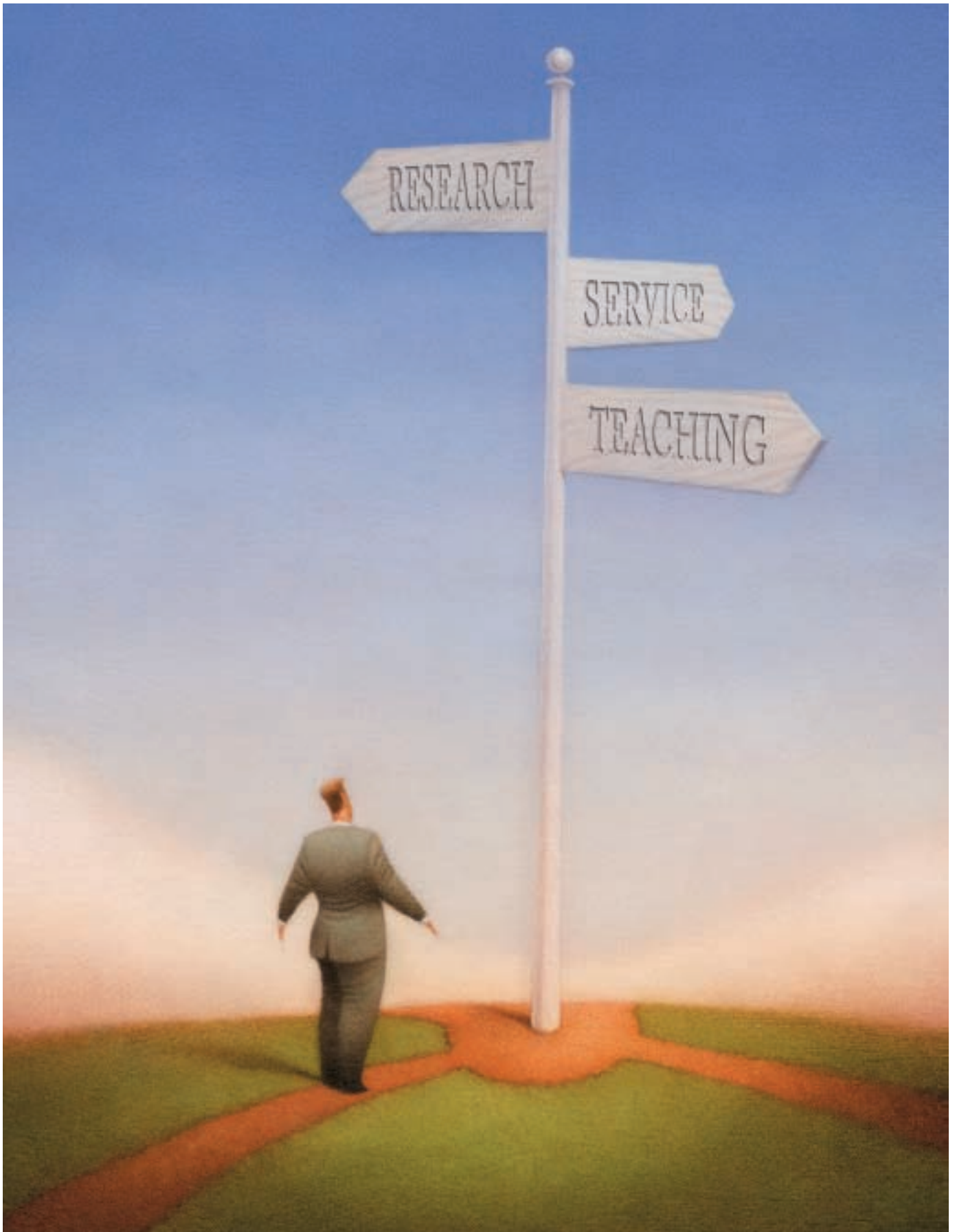
Paths to Performance

by Gordon McCray, Charles Iacovou, Michelle Roehm, Matthew Phillips, and Steve Reinemund

As business schools cope with tighter budgets and restricted resources, it's more important than ever that they design the best models for teaching and scholarship. Recently, we rethought our entire approach to faculty development when we merged what had been two schools—the Calloway School of Business and Accounting and the Babcock Graduate School of Management—into the Wake Forest University Schools of Business in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The result is a multilayered approach that we call the Faculty Path Model, which gives our faculty more opportunities to tap their greatest talents and perform to their fullest potential. It also provides our leadership with efficient, transparent, and holistic methods to maintain academic quality, manage school operations, and use school resources more effectively.

Wake Forest replaces a “one-size-fits-all” approach to faculty evaluation with a six-path model, which allows faculty to pursue the path that best suits their passions and strengths.



Different Passions, Different Paths

The Wake Forest Schools of Business, like most business schools, had long subscribed to a narrow idea of what a faculty member must do to become academically qualified (AQ) or professionally qualified (PQ). It was a “one-size-fits-all” approach that did not allow us to capitalize on faculty interests and strengths.

Our Faculty Path Model recognizes a diversity of passions and skill sets among faculty. It doesn’t assume that all faculty must pursue tenure through scholarly research alone—or even that all faculty want to pursue tenure at all. In this way, it’s not only more realistic but also fulfills AQ/PQ standards.

This model sets out six possible paths—four for tenured faculty, one for tenure-track faculty, and one for non-tenure-track professors of practice. Each path places lighter or heavier emphasis on teaching, research, or service, depending on the faculty member’s individual interests and objectives, as outlined in the chart below.

Too often, administrators view professors as a homogeneous population and respond to a professor’s perceived shortcomings with programmatic solutions. This approach can be detrimental to faculty members and students alike. For example, a professor with lagging research performance might be given a heavier teaching load, regardless of her teaching ability. Alternatively, a weak teacher might be assigned lighter teaching loads and heavier research responsibilities, regardless of his scholarly prowess.

By providing six paths to success, we avoid such undesirable scenarios. In our redesigned model, teaching-

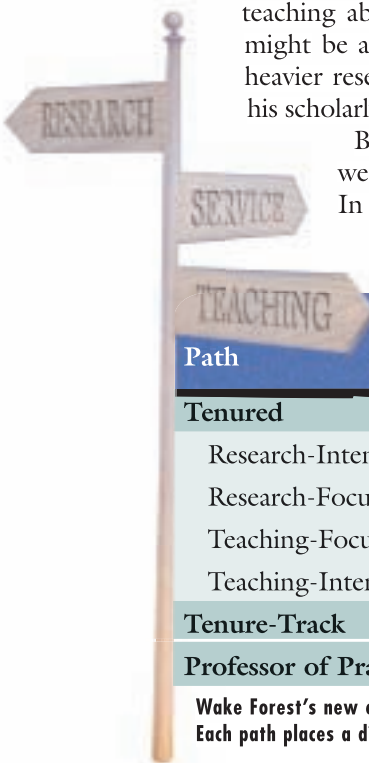
oriented paths *must* be populated with faculty members who have demonstrated excellence in the classroom.

Moreover, shortcomings in research productivity do not lead to punitive action or reassignment to a more teaching-oriented path. Instead, they trigger either a remediation and mentoring effort or a strategic consideration of path reassignment. Similarly, if professors are underperforming in the classroom, we don’t steer them toward more scholarship; we work together with them to improve their teaching skills.

For this model to work, however, we know we have to keep it simple. Although the system treats each faculty member as an individual, acknowledging his or her individual goals and talents, we also want it to be easy, time-efficient, and cost-effective for administrators to manage. With that in mind, we have created clearly articulated performance criteria to assess the performance of faculty members in each path.

To evaluate teaching, for instance, we use course evaluations and benchmark comparisons across programs. To evaluate research, we recognize three broad categories of scholarship: academic, practitioner, and pedagogical. Within those categories, we recognize three tiers of publications, including premier, highly selective, and quality. Finally, to evaluate service, we assign points for each type of service commitment our faculty members make, based on the time involved, the challenge of the activity, and overall performance.

These measurements are transparent, geared toward not only evaluation, but also individual improvement. Our goal is to insure that all of our faculty members perform exceptionally well either as teachers or researchers, if not both.



Path	Teaching Load (3-credit courses)	Annual Evaluation Components (%)		
		Research	Teaching	Service
Tenured				
Research-Intensive	3	50	30	20
Research-Focused	4	40	40	20
Teaching-Focused	5	25	55	20
Teaching-Intensive	6	10	70	20
Tenure-Track	3	45	45	10
Professor of Practice	6	-	80	20

Wake Forest’s new evaluation process allows faculty to pursue six possible professional paths, depending on their career interests and passions. Each path places a different level of emphasis on teaching, research, and service.

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Guiding Principles

During the restructuring process, we assembled faculty teams and asked them to study best practices and formulate proposals for various aspects of the Faculty Path Model. The new model and its associated policies were then adopted by faculty vote.

The model includes five core principles that now guide us in our approach to faculty performance:

Faculty members are a school's most important resource.

To enhance faculty satisfaction and commitment, we wanted to create consistent policies and practices within our new model. The goal was to create a performance-driven culture that recognizes superior contributions, encourages continuous improvement, and affords no safe harbor for marginal faculty performance.

Faculty members have different strengths, goals, and passions. Moreover, their diverse passions can, and often do, change over time. For this reason, our new model provides explicit policies for faculty regarding the entry, maintenance, and exit criteria for individual paths. Each of our path assignments lasts for three years, so we do not anticipate requests from faculty to change directions for some time. When faculty do want to change paths, approval for the change will depend in part on their recent performance records and the strength of their articulated plans.

Transparency is necessary to achieve faculty buy-in. It was essential that we make explicit all elements of the model, such as acceptable levels of output for each dimension of faculty productivity. Such transparency also mitigates misgivings about the fairness of the model.

Faculty performance models should link to school operations. To have maximum impact, the faculty model must align with other key aspects of school operations, particularly those associated with AACSB accreditation.

For us, it has been very important to create a model that supports our teaching mission. After all, we cannot afford to have a preponderance of research-intensive faculty who teach only three courses per year. Our portfolio model allows us to continue to maintain the quality of our courses and programs and deliver them more cost effectively.

Additional Benefits

Already our faculty members are coming to appreciate the freedom the Faculty Path Model allows. One professor who was recently granted tenure chose to embark on a research-focused path so he could continue his scholarly activity. Under the old model, he most likely would have been forced into taking on a higher teaching load. Another member of



GREG HARGREAVES/GETTY IMAGES

our faculty who recently won a teaching award opted into a teaching-intensive path, which would not have been available to him before.

Two others are now collaborating to work on a research project focused on pedagogy. They have noted that before we adopted this model, they would not have begun this particular study, even though they are very passionate about their topic, because pedagogical research had not been considered a “high-value” activity.

We expect that this newfound freedom to follow their true passions will lead our faculty members to greater innovation in teaching and research. We also expect to see benefits in other areas:

We have created an environment where excellence is expected and rewarded on all three dimensions of faculty activity—teaching, research and service—regardless of path.

Career growth. The model provides a useful framework for faculty members' professional development, especially as they chart future career paths. They now can be more deliberate in path switching, because they know that this model not only rewards their performance in research *and* teaching, but also addresses inadequate performance.

The model is developmental rather than punitive, self-directed by the individuals themselves. Faculty members know that if they do not meet expectations on one or more of their paths' stated performance dimensions, they will be expected to produce and implement a remediation plan with the help of the senior associate dean of faculty.

Recruitment. The Faculty Path Model also allows us to show potential new hires the variety of career paths available to them in our organization. We can explain how their work will be evaluated, depending on the paths they choose post-tenure, and how excellent performance will be rewarded. We can demonstrate how we recognize tenure-track and tenured professors, as well as non-tenured professors of practice. This enables us to attract both AQ and PQ faculty at a time when there is a critical shortage of qualified talent.

Flexibility. Path assignments last for renewable three-year terms. At the end of each term, faculty members have the option to switch paths, perhaps to take on a new research project or to develop a new curricular offering. Through discus-

sion and planning, we make sure that such shifts do not hinder the courses we teach or create other operational problems. This flexibility helps us motivate and reward high-performing faculty members, even as their interests evolve.

A Different Dynamic

Even as we offer faculty different options, we know that we have to remain mindful of faculty sufficiency standards and targeted learning outcomes, especially in light of maintenance of accreditation standards. But, in many ways, we find that the Faculty Path Model enhances our accreditation efforts. It sets up expectations for each path that are consistent with AACSB's Assurance of Learning standards. We will not accept inferior teaching from even our most productive scholars.

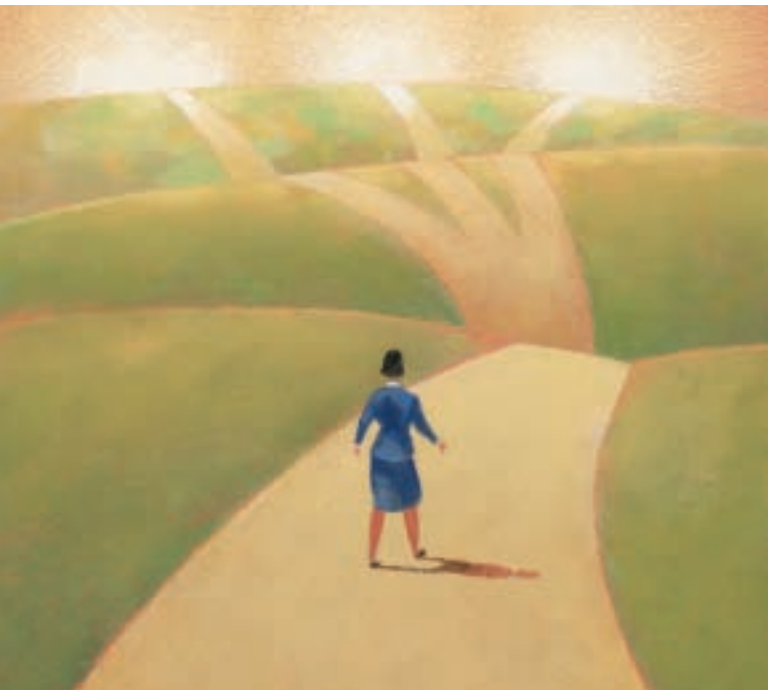
The model also intensifies our focus on setting goals, allocating resources effectively, and measuring and monitoring our continuous improvement—all key elements to a successful Assurance of Learning strategy.

Likewise, we expect our teaching-intensive faculty to be more innovative in their instruction; and even though we allow pedagogical research to count toward their expected research contributions, such research must be of high quality. That is, we have created an environment where excellence is expected and rewarded on all three dimensions of faculty activity—teaching, research and service—regardless of path.

We have found that in any performance-driven organizational culture, one-size-fits-all incentives can be ineffective for all but the very best performers. In a business school, they create a dynamic that penalizes faculty members for subpar performance in areas where they lack passion, skills, or both. Just as demoralizing are incentives that fail to embrace individual areas of excellence, simply because those areas are not adequately valued.

In a portfolio of faculty, individual differences are strengths, not liabilities. Such a portfolio creates a more effective approach to faculty productivity and business school management by allowing administrators to write policies and practices that work together to support a single vision of academic excellence. **Z**

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