

Responses to Guiding Questions for Faculty

Workshop on Education Research Positions in STEM Disciplinary Departments

From Michael Wittmann Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Maine

I. Summary of responses (3 respondents)

1. What are your responsibilities for teaching, research, and service? (e.g., teaching loads, courses, coaching/mentoring roles, types of research, liaison roles with education department)?

Of the responses I received, and based on other information, I can say that the focus is never on service, too often solely on teaching, and sometimes on research. Teaching schools have 3 courses a semester, with no teaching assistants. There is little time left for research. Research universities have roughly 3 courses a year, give or take. Depending on the appointment, some people in our community are in education departments, some in physics, some jointly appointed. Most are in physics and have little connection to education departments.

2. In what ways (if any) do your responsibilities differ from your non-education focused colleagues?

Too often, people are asked to be "resource" rather than "research" personnel. Requests for outreach work are too often dumped on our door. There is often a general disinterest with or ignorance about the work that we do.

Grant awards (for research funding) are often lower when there is little equipment involved, meaning that the dollar amounts are not as easily noticed in some departments.

Otherwise, publication rates in the community have been low, so we are held to a different (and slightly looser) standard, if we're lucky. That isn't always true, though.

3. What positions have you held and do you currently hold in your department?

Respondents were all at or just past junior level faculty, some very close to tenure, others not so close, some just past.

4. In what ways (if any) do your current position and your career prospects differ from your non-education focused colleagues? (e.g., title and rank, paths to tenure, resource issues, joint appointments with other departments).

None. Assistant or associate professor, tenure requirements must be met by the candidate, sometimes joint appointments (as stated above). Start-up packages are often small (for research I standards) or non-existent (for teaching oriented schools).

4. To what extent and how does your department (or school or university) support your position and your research? (e.g., financial support, cultural support, etc)

Either indifference or support were described by all respondents. See above about start-up packages.

II. Individual Responses

PERSON 1: CH

1. What are your responsibilities for teaching, research, and service? (e.g., teaching loads, courses, coaching/mentoring roles, types of research, liaison roles with education department)?

CH: I teach 1-1 and am expected to do significant research (measured primarily by papers and grants) and engage in some level of service. I mainly teach large-lecture introductory physics courses, but also have taught smaller courses focused on physics teaching majors and am scheduled to teach a graduate science education course next year.

2. In what ways (if any) do your responsibilities differ from your non-education focused colleagues?

CH: I have a joint appointment so have service responsibilities in the Institute for Science Education.

3. What positions have you held and do you currently hold in your department?

CH: I'm the department faculty Senator and am on several committees.

4. In what ways (if any) do your current position and your career prospects differ from your non-education focused colleagues? (e.g., title and rank, paths to tenure, resource issues, joint appointments with other departments).

CH: I have a joint appointment with the institute for science education. The tenure process seems comparable for me as for my traditional physics colleagues.

5. To what extent and how does your department (or school or university) support your position and your research? (e.g., financial support, cultural support, etc)

CH: Very little - except for a modest startup fund and low teaching load.

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PERSON 2: TS

Background: I'm an associate professor of astronomy, and I think I'm the first in the country to get tenure in an astronomy department (we're totally separate from physics here at the University of Arizona) using teaching and learning as my scholarship area.

1. What are your responsibilities for teaching, research, and service? (e.g., teaching loads, courses, coaching/mentoring roles, types of research, liaison roles with education department)?

TS: I have the same load and responsibilities as other people in my department. My teaching course load is three courses in four semesters. I do not have any formal requirements for liaisons with the college of education.

2. In what ways (if any) do your responsibilities differ from your non-education focused colleagues?

TS: In no ways, really.

3. What positions have you held and do you currently hold in your department?

TS: Associate Professor of Astronomy

4. In what ways (if any) do your current position and your career prospects differ from your non-education focused colleagues? (e.g., title and rank, paths to tenure, resource issues, joint appointments with other departments).

TS: It is often automatically assumed that because I'm an education person, I'm an excellent teacher. This typically is an advantage. It is also often assumed that I am passionately interested in public outreach. This is a disadvantage (mostly because I'm not terribly interested in public outreach) and I frequently get brought into meetings and collaborations for this purpose.

I do have to spend considerable time figuring out ways to inform my colleagues what it is that I actually do, so I am always sure to take every advantage to give departmental talk and colloquia.

The only other issue is that education grants are typically much smaller than large scientific instrumentation and space hardware grants, so I have to have quite a few projects going on in order to get noticed within my department.

5. To what extent and how does your department (or school or university) support your position and your research? (e.g., financial support, cultural support, etc)

TS: The Department Chair and most of the senior faculty are incredibly supportive of what I do and this makes my department a wonderful place to work. I suspect with a different department head, it could be a not-so-great place to be very quickly.

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PERSON 3: AJ

1. What are your responsibilities for teaching, research, and service? (e.g., teaching loads, courses, coaching/mentoring roles, types of research, liaison roles with education department)?

AJ: I teach 12 semester cr hours, two semesters a year. One cr hr might be reassigned for advising of teaching majors. I usually get out two conference papers per year, and maybe one journal paper per year. These are all educational research. For service, I serve on committees within the department and university to evaluate various programs and curricula. I am on a committee within our college of science that maintains the interaction between us and the school of education here. I often host school groups here for general visits and/or demo shows, and am often invited to visit schools.

2. In what ways (if any) do your responsibilities differ from your non-education focused colleagues?

AJ: Not a significant difference EXCEPT that it's expressly written in my contract that I should be doing educational research and service. I end up doing more service than most simply because there may be more demand for someone with my background.

3. What positions have you held and do you currently hold in your department?

AJ: I've been Assistant Professor and now Associate Professor (with tenure pending this year). I chair our assessment and lab committees and I am the teaching supervisor for the department.

4. In what ways (if any) do your current position and your career prospects differ from your non-education focused colleagues? (e.g., title and rank, paths to tenure, resource issues, joint appointments with other departments).

AJ: In my case, none. Same expectations, but different research line. I end up working with more people on campus, but my appointment is solely in physics.

5. To what extent and how does your department (or school or university) support your position and your research? (e.g., financial support, cultural support, etc)

AJ: I think that the idea of the position was a result of me being in the right place at the right time. They would not have thought to create the position without them first having some knowledge of me, what I do, etc.

I don't have financial support that's really specific to me, but there is a culture of support that I get from most faculty here, and at the levels of chair and dean. Once my tenure review is finished I may have a more specific answer to this. :-)

When others are applying for grants, they are appreciative of the fact that I'm an easy person to turn to for evaluation of their proposed programs. In cases like this, others see a specific value in having me around. They value me in other ways, too, but it's nice to have something relatively concrete.