

Faculty Symposium focuses on changing roles of faculty

Approximately 65 faculty members and administrators gathered in early April to discuss “The Changing Roles, Perceptions and Expectations: Faculty in the American Research University” at the UGA Teaching Academy’s 24th annual Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium.

Joe Broder, of the symposium planning committee who has organized the symposium for the past several years, introduced the theme of the symposium by posing the question of how faculty roles and expectations have changed over the years.

Speakers at this year’s event included **Mark Becker**, president of Georgia State University, who spoke on the challenges of transitioning from a graduate student to faculty member and then to the presidency of an urban public research I university. **Jeffrey Dorfman**, professor of agricultural economics in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, spoke on the economic impact of higher education in Georgia.

Two panel discussions were featured. The first panel focused on the professional development of early career faculty, including opportunities for career development through the Center for Teaching and Learning and planning a path to promotion and tenure. The second panel addressed ideas and strategies for promoting leadership and engagement of mid-career faculty, including involvement within the department, as well as on a local and global scale with community and professional organizations.

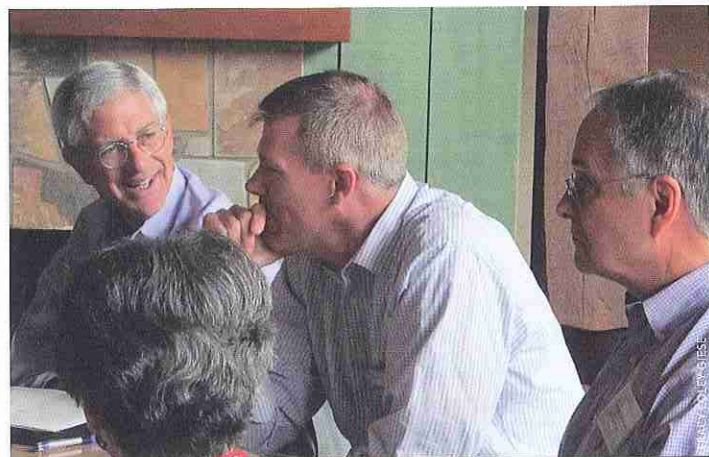
“As a new faculty member, this symposium provided me with the opportunity to interact with some of the top faculty across campus,” said **Bynum Boley**, assistant professor in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. “The time spent with these seasoned professors not only revealed

their passion for serving UGA, but it left me even more excited about being a member of the faculty and engaging in the university’s mission.”

During the course of the two-day event, the participants split into five groups to develop strategies for enhancing the professional environment for UGA faculty. On the second day, each breakout group presented a summary of their discussions, as well as recommendations that will be formally sent to the provost for consideration.

Preliminary recommendations included creating an interdisciplinary hiring initiative that would blend senior faculty and graduate students; establishing a faculty mentoring institute with a central hub of information about grants, awards and other opportunities for faculty; creating guidelines and training for faculty seeking promotion and tenure; creating a program for faculty to enhance leadership skills and initiatives through faculty learning communities and workshops; and embedding entrepreneurship within the roles of teaching, research and service through a summer entrepreneurial fellows program.

“I really like the symposium’s continued focus on helping us grow as faculty members,” said **Audrey Haynes**, Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor and 15-year faculty member in political science. “The panels and breakout discussions are a smart and efficient way for faculty from all levels and departments to interact




Marcus Fechheimer, **Josiah Meigs Distinguished Professor in the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences**, discusses strategies for enhancing faculty development with fellow faculty members (left to right) **Luke Naeher**, associate professor, College of Public Health; and **George Francisco**, associate dean and professor, College of Pharmacy.

and share our concerns, as well as our knowledge of how to solve some of those concerns. Innovation and new challenges keep us moving full steam ahead. I am grateful that the Teaching Academy helps support our ability to do this.”

Suzanne O’Connell, assistant professor of horticulture in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, agreed. “I was inspired by the number of senior faculty who were engaged and enthusiastic about describing their own work, but also when brainstorming ideas to improve the university for everyone.”

At the conclusion of the symposium, Provost **Pamela Whitten** encouraged the faculty to consider what works in a complex organization to enhance the faculty experience.

“Always ask what is or should be unique about the University of Georgia. It’s the novel things we do that set us apart from other universities. So let’s think about what’s expected and what’s normal. Then let’s push the envelope to become the university we want to be.” 

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—Tracy Coley Giese, OVPI