

A Template for Integrating Interdisciplinary Research and Team Science into the Tenure Track Offer Letter

Although every recruitment is unique, emphasis on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary science is becoming quite common. Research institutions wanting to encourage collaborative research while promoting development of bright early career researchers need to establish well-defined guidelines for review and reward of those who engage in interdisciplinary science. It is crucial that offer letters explicitly delineate what is expected of both the institution and the individual scientist. The template below identifies a set of questions the answers to which ought to be clear from either the offer letter or ancillary communications with the recruit.

Participating in or Leading an Interdisciplinary Research Project

Roles, Responsibilities, Expectations

1. What will be the role of the individual?
2. What will be expected of the early career scientist?
3. How will success be defined for those participating in interdisciplinary research? Leading an interdisciplinary team?
4. What will be the role of the department? Chair?
5. What will be expected of the department? Chair?

Review and Reward*

1. Success: What criteria will be used to assess the progress and success of the scientist for interdisciplinary work?
2. Sharing Credit and Data: How will data sharing, processes for access to data, authorship decisions be reviewed and assessed?

Mentoring

1. How will the early career scientist be mentored in interdisciplinary research? (Individual mentor, mentoring committee, etc...)
2. What will be expected of the scientist in mentoring his or her own lab/team members?
3. What training is expected and/or required of those participating in or leading interdisciplinary efforts?

Joint Appointments

For researchers appointed in more than one department the agreement will clearly:

1. Identify the departments/organizations involved in supporting the scientist
2. State that the departments/organizations are committed to the tenure-track scientist
3. State who will be responsible for the administration of the scientist (performance reviews, HR, budget tracking, etc...) and define administrative home
4. Which resources will be provided by which department/organization
5. Commit to annual review and define who will participate
6. Establish a procedure to follow in case of disagreement
7. Establish a procedure to follow should any party decide to withdraw or significantly alter the agreement

***Possible criteria to include for reviewing an interdisciplinary researcher:**

1. Clearly describe the researcher's role in driving the project(s) forward
2. What is the major effort that she/he is leading or to which she/he is making significant scientific contributions?
3. Is the contribution essential for the overall success of the project?
4. How did the contribution influence the overall outcome/direction of the project?
5. Was the contribution original rather than a reproduction of the work of others (e.g., was the software developed with novel, original features that will be used by others in the field, or did the scientist merely modify existing software to make it compatible with the workflow of the project)?
6. What accomplishments/achievements can be attributed to the PI in the context of the larger team?
7. For PIs whose research is mainly collaborative, how is the contribution of the individual PI regarded in the PI's field of research? What is the significance of the contributions?
8. What agreements were put in place to decide how authorship, data, and presentations would be shared? What processes were put in place in case of disagreement?