

Robert Boice. *Advice for new faculty members : nihil nimus* Boston : Allyn and Bacon. 2000. 319 pages.

Reviewed by:
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This publication as the author says, “is not designed to be read and put into practice in a single setting.” In fact, if you are looking for a “quick fix” this is not the book to pick up. However, if you are willing to take the time to read and to reflect, you will be rewarded. Don’t let the harried pace and overworked feeling so common in higher education today influence your decision to skip this book. For it is the very issues of harried pace and feeling overworked that Boice addresses well. His emphasis is on helping new faculty to see what matters, to see what does not and to solve the right problems. How much of the harried pace and overworked feeling is self-inflicted is important for all faculty to recognize.

To be honest it was probably those feelings of being overworked and behind that made me struggle at first with this book. The initial section of the book is on teaching; my favorite part of being a faculty member. Yet, I found myself carrying on this dialogue in my head with the author saying, “that’s obvious”, “come on”, etc. But then I began to realize that the greater problem was that I was reading it, and thinking, only in terms of the readership of SCHOLE. For many of us in Recreation, planning, organizing and communicating are our strengths. This is not to say this section is not of value but rather I think most in Recreation would relate best to this book if they would start with section three: Socialize and Serve with Compassion.

Boice’s research has allowed him to identify what he calls the “exemplars” or successful faculty members. In each section he presents and discusses the characteristics or behaviors of the exemplars. He offers several exercises and the rationale for each. While I doubt anyone will do all the exercises, the number and type of exercises make this book of value to new faculty and mentors. In addition to the exercises, resources are listed within each chapter and an appendix. On a personal note, I found myself quite intrigued with his selection of quotes (there are many), whether they be Anne Lamont in the writing section, Adam Smith in teaching or George Bernard Shaw in service.

In the section on teaching, new faculty members in Recreation will find his comments on early evaluations, encouraging criticism and role of self talk most helpful. All faculty would benefit from reading the chapter on classroom incivilities. He not only gives excellent techniques to handle situations but describes well how often the teacher is the initiator of classroom incivilities without even realizing it.

Boice’s strongest section is the second, on writing. In discussing the exemplars Boice presents the “keys” to their success and then corrects himself and says better to say their “efficiencies”. This in itself reflects the tone of the section. Successful writing is not the result of one or two keys or absolutes but rather developing the style/pace which works best for you. Boice relates well to the new faculty member who is strug-

gling and provides wonderful insight and suggestions. He stresses that not everyone has to be perfect writer, but rather be willing to be a great rewriter. He realistically responds to the common defenses heard by faculty as to why they are not writing. His exercises are practical and valuable.

Considering many enter the field of teaching after a mad dash to finish writing the dissertation and may bring with them poor writing habits to the first few years of teaching, his research on pace of writing is both helpful and humorous. Besides pace another stumbling block for new faculty is feeling comfortable in asking for input on their writing. Boice offers several small and yet, comfortable steps one can take. He even goes so far as to suggest wording in how to ask for input. Finally he reminds the reader of the many myths about writing that are perpetuated in many university settings. The distinctions between productive and verbal, ego and spirit are done well.

My reasons for recommending the final section as the first to read are many. First, it is in this chapter that the author provides concrete advice about what a new faculty member should do (before arriving on campus or in the first couple of months) whether they are starting at a new institution or going from term to a tenure line at the same institution. Second, this section discusses what I feel are most often the greatest concerns of new faculty: how to fit in, what is the culture, are expectations for promotion and tenure clear, etc. Third, the situational examples in this chapter are ones to which all can relate. Finally, and my guess is this is why Boice chose to use it as the conclusion, he ties together teaching, writing and service in this section. New faculty will appreciate his research on middle-aged disillusioned colleagues (MADCs) and his work on gender and race and the first few years of teaching. In fact, I think all faculty, especially department chairs should read section three.

The sub-title to this book is *Nihil Nimus* – “everything in moderation.” Robert Boice reminds us that it is only when a new faculty member realizes that it is balance or moderation that allows for success will the experience of being a faculty member be a happy one.