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THE “RESCUER FROM AFAR” SYNDROME: CAUTIONS FOR THE NEW ENGINEERING EDUCATOR, OR THINGS AREN’T ALWAYS AS THEY SEEM

Introduction:

The “expert from afar” syndrome, well known in business¹⁻⁴, involves organizations placing more credence in opinions of individuals from other organizations and/or new personnel than those of longer-term employees. One manifestation can occur with the hiring and management of new engineering faculty⁵⁻⁹. For reasons to be discussed below, in infrequent instances, a new faculty member, particularly one hired into their first academic position and/or a small program, may be led to believe that they have been hired to “rescue” the program, and perceive senior faculty in a less than positive light, without fully understanding applicable history, culture, and constraints, or the full extent of contributions of existing faculty. Web sites now make it easy for applicants to familiarize themselves with the university and current professors’ professional histories (for example, research record or teaching innovations), and if not meeting the new person’s standards, it is possible for him/her to develop a marginal superiority complex.

If perceiving approval from the chair or dean, they may, with good motives, propose new ideas, proposals, and concerns about the status quo. They may consciously or subconsciously try to mold the program into the image of their preceding institution(s). However, they may be perceived by senior faculty as not showing respect and deference. This causes senior faculty responsible for the status quo to become defensive, and can start a sequence of ill-will and related events that do not bode well for the new professor’s long-term future (for example, tenure, promotion, and merit pay recommendations from senior faculty-dominated committees).

Certainly, the rescuer from afar syndrome is not restricted to new engineering educators (NEE), nor do anywhere near all NEE exhibit this syndrome. Most do not. Some with naturally low-key personalities, or those in large or elite institutions, may even exhibit over-caution and hesitancy in expressing opinions, exhibiting initiative, and enabling change. However, the syndrome occurs frequently enough, particularly in relatively small academic units, to be worthy of discussion.

Worst Case Scenario:

Programs searching for new faculty are interested in new or additional areas of expertise, new perspectives, and fresh energy and enthusiasm. Often administrators hope that the latter will rub-off on existing faculty, some of whom may be, at least from the administrators’ viewpoints, entrenched, outdated, and in a rut. As administrators know, motivating and regimenting mature, tenured faculty can be like getting cats to march in formation. Head-on approaches rarely work well, and example and competition are sometimes perceived as potentially more effective.

Such attitudes can be communicated indirectly during the interview and hiring process for NEE. Less tactful administrators may directly tell interviewees of these supposed problems with existing faculty, and how they hope that the interviewees could help to alleviate these. This is particularly common at mid-to-lower tier institutions in which some senior faculty may, indeed, not be prominent researchers or academic leaders, and be past their most motivated and productive years (but certainly not unproductive).

The interviewee/new hireling may read more into this than the steam-venting interviewer intended. This over-perception may be accentuated if the NEE has researched, say, from superficial information available on the Internet, the backgrounds, qualifications, and accomplishments of existing faculty, and interpreted them in less than a positive light. In infrequent instances, the NEE may begin to feel that he/she has been given “carte blanche” and a “mandate” to “rescue”, “move and shake”, and propel-to-fame the program. There may be a grain of truth in this, but usually not very much. Administrators do desire new blood to energize and enhance the academic unit, but most do not desire for a NEE to usurp senior faculty and cause discord.

NEE may not know what they don’t know regarding interviewers’ real attitudes and the politics of academia. If perceiving (perception is not necessarily reality) approval from the director, chair, or dean, they may offer a flurry of new ideas, criticisms, and proposals for change during their first year or two. The fact that NEE often obtain start-up funds, equipment, laboratory space, office furnishings, computer systems, etc. can add to this perception of favor. They may, indeed, identify problems, needs, and opportunities in the unit, and feel that their insight and creativity, when coupled to valid ideas and experiences from their previous institution, can effectively address these.

Such NEE may frequently visit the director, chair, or dean with observations, concerns, and ideas. The administrators, usually fully aware of such, usually give the NEE tacit attention and even apparent agreement (in principle). The administrator did usually help hire him/her, and, in the name of support and courtesy, is obliged to listen. Unfortunately, this can also help fuel the NEE’s perception of carte blanche and favor (versus solely polite audience). Furthermore, such activity may be perceived by lower administrators and senior faculty as an “end run- around”, and invoke resentment.

Things become serious if NEE feel empowered to violate the formal chains-of-command. They may feel that the dean’s or even vice-chancellor’s door is always open to discuss departmental issues. Unfortunately, directors and chairs do not like to be circumvented or the last to know. This is a recipe for a fall, unless the circumvented administrator is magnanimous. Occasional brief informal discussions between a NEE and higher administrator are acceptable in the name of collegiality, particularly if at the request of the administrator and with foreknowledge of lower administrators, but all in the chain-of-command should be involved in discussions of issues-of-substance. Higher-level administrators should be careful to not appropriate or counteract the designated role of a lower administrator, except in extreme situations and with full notification of such. That is, they should be neither the goalpost of the “end run-around”, or a court of appeals.

With usually good motives, emboldened NEE may editorialize during faculty meetings. They may interject in most discussions without fully knowing the history, personalities, culture, and broad set of constraints of/on the department or college. They may send detailed memoranda (or e-mails in recent years) on issues to administrators, or faculty e-mail list-serves. They may not recognize that earlier versions of their ideas have already been re-warmed multiple times in the past, and not adopted because of constraints. NEE may not be sensitive to all realities of budget constraints and processes, both university and legislative. They may not intuitively understand that there is a huge difference in feasibility between a \$5000 and a \$50,000 innovation, and propose funding for multiple ambitious ideas. They may quote former professors from graduate school, or relate what was done at their previous institutions: “That’s the way we/they did it”.

This empowerment may also be fueled by the natural rapport that NEE have with students¹⁰. Some of this has to do with the novelty of any new faculty member, but is accentuated if a youthful NEE can relate to the culture, habits, dress, music, slang, etc. of the students, and joke with them. A young NEE may hit it off well with the students, and thrive on positive feedback and apparent admiration, particularly if hearing contrasting, negative comments about existing faculty from the posturing students. This can snowball if not dampened by reality. The NEE may not understand that winning the popularity contest is transient, and he/she will wake-up in the future as an old timer, also experiencing the generation gap with students. This settling time toward “conformity” will be minimized if the NEE teaches classes with high standards and workloads, as is common with NEE fresh out of the rigor-intensive experience of graduate school and eager to disseminate advanced knowledge to less than fully motivated students.

Although their motives and observations may be directly on-target, what NEE may fail to realize is that, by definition, the status quo is how senior faculty, and often director, chair, and dean, have defined and developed it. Attacks on the status quo reflect upon them, and they take it that way. An exception is when a deficiency is the fault of an external entity (for example, administration or state) or circumstances (for example, a long-period of inadequate budgets) on which the problem can be blamed. Even then, there is a veiled implication that current faculty are either inferior because they tolerated the problem and didn’t demand and compel a remedy, or move-on to another job, or, at least, were complacent in and even contributed to the problem. There is also an implication that they have not exhibited sufficient vision or creativity in the past to solve the problem.

Thus senior faculty may take umbrage at the NEE’s insight, ideas, and criticisms, even if valid, if more than occasional and low-key. Less secure faculty may feel irritated and even threatened in terms of their preeminence, leadership, capabilities, professionalism, and perks (for example, a big share of the supply/equipment budget). They may interpret the NEE’s attitude and actions as a lack of respect and deference for them, the program, the institution, and even the region (for example, a “Yankee” NEE in a school south of the Mason-Dixon line, or vice versa). They may feel that the NEE does not have sufficient gratitude for his/her new job and whatever perks that came with it (usually a salary as high as or higher than those of some senior faculty).

Of course, the above worst case scenario does not happen in most cases. Whether it does is a function of the NEE's personality and initiative, the other personalities, and institutional circumstances. Some NEE may be hesitant to be assertive, particularly in upper-tier institutions with prominent faculty. Some may be unusually perceptive of potential pitfalls. Senior faculty with satisfying, stable professional circumstances and a solid record and self-image are not as apt to feel threatened as those who feel less secure or accomplished. Such faculty may feel more amused than threatened, particularly if they went through this previously with other NEE, or even were themselves a similarly ambitious NEE years ago. However, faculty members who think that they could be displaced or discredited will feel threatened, and begin to respond accordingly.

It is also a function of the tact exhibited by the NEE. If ideas for change are presented as inquiries for learning about and understanding how things are done, rather than criticisms or demands, they will be accepted much better. If subtly proposed within a context of appreciation, respect, and teamwork, rather than superiority, entitlement, or accusation, they may be thoughtfully considered, rather than summarily rejected, by senior faculty.

Administrators play a pivotal role in fostering or squelching such scenarios. Directors, chairs, deans, and even higher administrators should not inadvertently foster them by saying inappropriate things during the interview, hiring process, and particularly during the first year of the NEE's employment, or giving the NEE encouragement through too much audience, apparent agreement, or fulfilled requests. Administrators should not editorialize any frustration with senior faculty or program deficiencies. An exception would be if the deficiency had a significant direct impact on the NEE's formal set of responsibilities, for example, a senior faculty member who deliberately inhibited the NEE's work, say, by not making available departmental equipment needed for the NEE to teach a laboratory course. Even then, with the problem being necessarily discussed, the administrator must be conservative and respectful in discussing it with the NEE, and in privately correcting (not in the presence of the NEE) the faculty member.

Infrequently, irritated senior faculty may confront the NEE with reality behind closed doors. This can be unpleasant if outside of the formal chain of command. A preferred approach would be for offended faculty to ask the director, chair, or official NEE faculty mentor to talk with the NEE. In many cases, the first annual performance review would be a good opportunity. Unfortunately, this is usually after some damage may have been done. If the appropriate administrator or mentor becomes aware (as they should) of the festering problem, he/she should address it immediately with a gentle but definitive discussion with the NEE, and with any senior faculty members who are unnecessarily further irritating any developing discord through overreaction or NEE-bashing.

More commonly, there is not confrontation, at least not initially. Instead, there is a slow simmering among the senior faculty, and private chats about the NEE. Exaggerated anecdotal evidence may proliferate about the NEE's supposed excesses. It doesn't take long for few irritated faculty to establish a covert tone of "let's get (rid of) him/her".

This could be manifested in lack of cooperation with the NEE, withholding key information, or even providing false or inconsistent information in infrequent cases. It could also include strategic negative comments about the NEE to students, hence, igniting the rumor mill. It is commonly manifested in a decision (usually individually but sometimes collectively) to never support the NEE in committee deliberations, for example, regarding budget allocations (say travel or research), merit pay, and promotion and tenure. Follow-ups on such decisions sometimes are not immediate, but will wait upon an opportunity when a NEE application/request and an offended senior faculty member on a given committee come into confluence. This could take years, and act like a time bomb and landmine in the NEE's academic career path.

Ironically the NEE may be slow in discerning accumulating hints that all is not well, particularly if still sensing that the director, chair, dean, and/or mentor support them. Many faculty are skilled at hiding their true feelings, and may still present a civil face to the NEE, even if seething internally. They may smile while proverbially stabbing the NEE in the back. Hints include a repeated pattern of what a senior faculty member does being inconsistent with what he/she has said (unfulfilled "promises" or obvious lack of cooperation), or there being instances of erroneous information coming from a faculty member. If this is repeated over multiple faculty members, the hints should be loud and clear. Unfortunately, an inexperienced NEE may interpret these signs as just more indication of the senior faculty's incompetence, and further fuel, rather than dampen, the simmering fire. Depending upon how the administrators have interacted with the NEE, he/she may still feel that he/she has a mandate to shake-up and rescue the department, and forge-on ahead, even if he/she does sense the senior faculty's evolving displeasure.

This is a serious miscalculation. Administrators often come and go, but an offended faculty colleague may be there for many years. Making a bad first (months') impression, and starting-out on the wrong foot, rarely go away. People, particularly highly political academicians, have long memories. Time may eventually smooth things-over as the NEE matures, mellows, and becomes an accepted part of the faculty team, but not always. Ask any long-term college professor about politics in academia. Such politics can make Washington D.C. look tame...

The Rescuer from A-Near From Afar (or Vice Versa):

Another variation is the "expert from a-near from afar" (or vice versa). This occurs when one of the program's own graduates has received advanced degrees at a distant, usually larger and more prestigious, institution, and then decides to come back to their alma mater (sometimes with subsequent job experience and often without) as a professor, and inject their knowledge, innovations, and standards. The difference between this situation and that discussed above is that the person now usually already has (1) some idea of weaknesses in the program and faculty (at least from a former student's perspective), (2) a genuine loyalty and concern for, and desire to improve, the program, and (3) personal relationships with his/her former professors. However, he/she still often doesn't know what he/she doesn't know about behind-the-scenes operations and, thus, has only a partial view of realities (political, logistical, bureaucratic, interpersonal, and budgetary). Self-

perceived familiarity with the program and faculty may lead him/her to be quite bold and vocal in criticisms, recommendations, and initiatives for change, thinking that these will be graciously and gratefully accepted. Unfortunately, human nature is still human nature, and few people like to be told that their ways of doing things are outdated or ineffective (even if true and coming from one of their own). Furthermore, the senior faculty's familiarity with the new professor, and their memories of him/her as a student, usually will work against their acceptance of the new ideas, rather than for them.

In some cases, the graduate school-bound undergraduate will have even made note of deficiencies in the program before graduation, with the goal of returning and repairing them in the future as a professor. He/she may also feel less hesitant to act upon this goal than if at a brand new institution because he/she may know, in addition to the engineering faculty, other professors and staff on-campus from his/her years as an undergraduate. He/she may feel (and partially be) "politically" connected.

A troubling situation occurs when the NEE, as a student, become aware of different "camps" between faculty members, particularly if mutually antagonistic or competitive, and plays upon this when returning as a professor. He/she may have been a bit "poisoned" against one or more faculty outside of the camp of his/her advisor or faculty in his/her specialization, without knowing the history and different perspectives of the antagonism. This can lead to political shenanigans^{11, 12} by the NEE, particularly if prompted by some of the same senior faculty. This is no way to make friends and invoke support. Overly political, particularly confrontational, NEE are playing a dangerous game with senior faculty with whom they think they are only sparring, but who have the upper hand. If the NEE's mentor or administrative advocate happens to change jobs or retire, the NEE may find himself/herself dangerously alone with multiple enemies. Even if the NEE maintains some supporters, faculty members who have been offended will still have their day in court (actually committee).

Although many universities hesitate to hire their own graduates due to "inbreeding" concerns (that is, a supposed lack of fresh, outside ideas), there are advantages in doing so, for example, in the loyalty and dedication of the NEE, and familiarity with the culture and norms of the region and students. However, there are pitfalls, as discussed above. It is usually good to not do so until the alumnus has several years of previous job experience past graduate school, and associated maturity, polished rough edges, and full awareness of his/her own limitations. Otherwise, the university can, infrequently, end-up with an expert/rescuer from a-near from afar with a penchant for drama.

The Author's Personal Experiences:

The author has sequentially experienced the rescuer from afar, and rescuer from a-near from afar, syndromes from several angles. He returned to his undergraduate alma mater as an electrical engineering professor fresh from graduate school at another institution. One difference with the standard scenario is that the author's bachelor degree was in physics, with subsequent master and Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering, but he returned as a faculty member in a small, purely undergraduate, multidisciplinary

engineering program¹³ with which he was less familiar than the physics program. However, he was quickly filled-in on details about the engineering program by former physics professors, and the chair of engineering who had interviewed and hired him. The engineering program had just expanded from its original solely agricultural engineering program to include programs in civil, electrical, and mechanical engineering, under a common Bachelor of Science in Engineering umbrella.

The chair told the author during the interview and after hiring that he would be responsible for developing the electrical engineering program with all due haste and almost from scratch, and getting it into an ABET-accepted framework (within the B.S.-Engineering umbrella). The author perceived this as a wonderful opportunity and mandate (which it really was in this case) and worked hard the first few years advocating a variety of program development and research initiatives, most of which, with the chair's, dean's, and higher administration's support, came to fruition. These efforts, indeed, involved many memoranda and trips to the chair's and dean's offices.

However, this was not without irritation of other faculty. The author was successful in obtaining both university and external support/funding, and in attracting frequent publicity, especially for a research and dissemination program in semiconductor film deposition¹⁴⁻¹⁶. Although not a major problem during the first few years, upon the author's continuing long-term initiative and success, and successful competition for logistical and financial resources with other faculty and programs, a handful (certainly not the majority) of colleagues began to show symptoms of professional envy and act accordingly, even temporarily tainting the chair's opinion of the author's efforts. Although easily promoted to Associate Professor and tenured after four and five years, respectively, the author experienced a major act of sabotage and subterfuge among the departmental promotion and tenure committee members when applying for promotion to full professor nine years after first joining the faculty, even with a strong record and application (probably much too strong for a few of his colleagues).

Two vocal faculty members on that year's committee were out to pass the author a message, and compelled the other two members to acquiesce in not recommending the promotion. To the departmental chair's credit, he persuaded the author to withdraw the application before the "official" vote was held, but there were still hard feelings on both sides. The following year the author reapplied, after acquiring a large number of strong recommendation letters from other on-campus and off-campus colleagues, and informally making it clear to the committee that the application would go all of the way. In spite of the same attitudes, the committee was cornered into approving the application, and it went through the rest of the multi-step university review process with no problems and an approved promotion. Over these two years, the chair perceived the true state of affairs, and once again became a strong advocate and supporter of the author.

The author had not perceived the depth of those few colleagues' resentment. There had been some minor disagreements, but these appeared to have been resolved collegially. Furthermore, most faculty members did like and support the author, and correctly judged the sincerity of his motives. Thus, in a sense, the author was "blindsided".

Fast-forward several years. The author was a more senior professor in the college and had the opportunity to observe and interact with several other NEE that had come after him. Sensitized by his own earlier experiences, he took special note of the NEEs' approaches, particularly bad ones, to balancing ambition and creativity with restraint and deference, and was further educated regarding several variations on the rescuer from afar syndrome, ranging from minimal to pronounced. This also included NEE who were former students of the program and were returning immediately after graduate school. The syndrome usually became apparent quickly after the NEE joined the faculty. Although occasionally personally affected and irritated, the author was typically more amused by the almost predictable attitudes, behaviors, and ultimate ramifications. In most cases, affected NEE quickly ran into conflicts that started to moderate behavior, but, in some cases, a certain superiority and/or confrontational complex lasted several years.

Fast-forward a few more years. The author is the director of the electrical engineering program and a frequent member of the college promotion and tenure committee, and now deals with the same syndrome administratively. In recent years, a few NEE have wisely approached the author for informal mentorship, especially regarding building a research program and dealing with campus politics. However, the same patterns still sometime occur within a certain range of variation. Particularly common is the "end run-around" in which NEE violate the formal chain of command and manipulate issues covertly. The author, as director, frequently becomes aware when NEE have gone around his back (or those of their own engineering directors) to higher administrators. He has had to counsel NEE over this issue. Also common is NEE jumping-in ahead of senior faculty in maneuvering to obtain high-visibility tasks and publicity. There is still almost universally a lack of understanding and appreciation of the senior faculty's depth and breadth of practical experience, which usually more than make-up for any perceived (by the NEE or new administrators) minor deficiencies of state-of-the-art knowledge, a little of which the NEE may have from his/her intensive but focused graduate program. NEE also do not usually realize that the rules of the game are a bit different for senior faculty who have already gone over the promotion and tenure mountaintop, and are high on the pecking order, both the formal and informal ones.

In addition to NEE complaining that the senior faculty's technical knowledge is a little dated (which may be partially true), they also criticize the senior faculty's perceived lack of urgency and zeal for major change (supposedly improvement), and apparent lack of creativity and interest regarding innovation. The author was guilty of this in his early years. However, things are usually not how they seem. Most senior faculty members do have a love, loyalty, and a zeal for the program and the profession. This is apparent if one studies their long-term records relative to the history and mission of the program. However, senior faculty members are battle-hardened and have been burned in their idealistic younger years. They now realize that one cannot turn a battleship on a dime, and that timing is very important in implementing change. They are tired of pushing against locked doors until they hear a key turning the lock. Senior faculty members also see a much broader panorama²³ of all issues and personalities associated with academia,

not only the most obvious ones. They have a more developed “sixth sense” about timing, feasibility, probability of success, and economy of time, effort, and money.

In most cases, NEE motives are basically good but still a bit mixed. There is sometimes a bit of natural personal ambition and one-upmanship; that is, most want to become not only promoted, tenured, and well paid as soon as possible, but also gain influence, power, reputation, and resources. Some can be zealous in this endeavor. However, most also have a genuine desire to help the program, profession, and students, and do a good job for its own sake. The exact balance between these two calls (personal versus altruistic) depends upon the individual, circumstances, and length of service. In most cases, the balance will tip firmly toward the latter as the NEE gains maturity, experience, and battle scars, and becomes a veteran faculty team member. As the author’s late boss, Dr. Albert Mink, used to emphasize, the primary mission of faculty is to provide students a marketable education of quality (to produce a “quality product” as he put it), and all of the rest (for example, campus service and research), albeit not unimportant, is secondary, and some (for example, campus politics and publish-or-perish for its own sake) can be superfluous fluff.

Specific Pointers and Cautions:

The following are specific pointers and cautions for NEE, senior faculty, and administrators in minimizing the rescuer from afar phenomenon.

1. Administrators must be careful during the interview and hiring process of NEE, and their first year(s) on the job, to not say or imply disparaging things about the program and its faculty and staff, unless a fully factual critique has direct, needed relevance to the NEE’s specific job duties. Even then, such a comment should be presented in as positive a light as possible, and never issued as a personal criticism of an individual (even if true). The NEE should be made aware of the need for respect, deference, and cooperation for/with senior faculty, unless a specific problem requires resolution through the assistance of the administrator. The NEE and the other faculty members should be advised that the formal chain-of-command will be followed, end run-arounds and shenanigans will not be tolerated, and true teamwork will be recognized and rewarded more than self interest, even when the individuals are separately personally productive.
2. Chairs, directors, and/or deans must validate respect, courtesy, and support for the NEE among the other faculty at an early opportunity, say, at the first faculty meeting after the NEE’s arrival, and then at every opportunity. They should introduce the NEE and his/her background, capabilities, and responsibilities in a favorable light. They should publically state that they will expect the faculty to make the NEE feel welcome, and work with them toward fulfilling departmental and college goals and specific NEE responsibilities.
3. A formal mentor/mentee relationship should be established between the NEE and a carefully selected senior faculty member, with a formal protocol established. It

- should be made clear to all faculty members by the chair or director that the mentor will not only guide the mentee, but also run interference for him/her when needed; that this, that both unreasonable attacks and valid criticism upon the NEE will also be upon the mentor, and will be addressed by such. Conversely, praise upon the mentee will be praise upon the mentor. This will both discourage attacks, and also motivate the mentor to do a good job in the mentoring process.
4. For programs hiring their own alumni, the issue of how the NEE should address former instructors, now as colleagues, should be addressed up-front by the director or chair, with a formal announcement that it will be expected that the NEE will address other faculty by their first names (if this is the norm among existing faculty). On the other hand, the NEE (as well as all faculty) should address other faculty as “Dr./Professor so-and-so” in the presence of any student or staff member; otherwise, students and staff may start to address faculty by their first names, a poor situation. Students and staff sometimes try to be too familiar with young, inexperienced NEE in a variety of ways, and this must be thwarted.
 5. If possible, salary information for individual faculty should be kept confidential. Frequently, NEE are hired with salaries close to, if not exceeding, those of some senior faculty. Although common, this can give NEE an inflated sense of value, since they may not recognize the underlying market pressures and think that it’s all due to their qualifications. It can cause resentment among usually underpaid senior faculty, and prematurely establish a “get even” mindset. Administrators should keep senior faculty as well paid as possible, and not grossly overpay NEE (particularly those for whom higher administration may approve or even advocate generous salaries). Similar cautions apply to distribution of perks. Standard startup resources and facilities are reasonable, but excesses will smack of favoritism, and irritate senior faculty. Reapportionment of existing facilities or resources, for example, laboratory space, corner offices, or equipment, from senior faculty to NEE, even if marginally justified, is a recipe for trouble.
 6. The administrator(s) or mentor should address any excessive problems with the NEE rescuer from afar syndrome promptly. A little of the syndrome is to be expected and tolerated, but simmering problems had better be extinguished early or things may get out of hand. They should be careful to not do anything that smacks of favoritism to the NEE, or contempt for senior faculty. They must balance this with the standard open door policy, and discourage excessive audience with the NEE. Senior faculty members need to be firmly reminded to cooperate with NEE.
 7. Senior faculty should follow the advice as 1., but be even more careful to not sensitize a NEE to “political” camps within academic units. Such issues can be communicated as a matter-of-fact caution, but should not be emphasized. Senior faculty should not try to get the NEE involved in such squabbles, and should encourage them to be equally respectful to and cooperative with all faculty and camps in a neutral mode (sometimes easier said than done). Disgruntled senior

faculty members commonly try to involve NEE in the fray, sometimes because they know that NEE have the director's, chair's, or dean's ear. This pours fuel on any simmering fires. NEE thrust into the frontline of battles without the armor of experience, restraint, contacts, and tenure often get figuratively shot.

8. Senior faculty should try to remember how it was to be a NEE, namely the newness, uncertainties, worry about promotion and tenure, sense of ambition, and trying to make a mark. They should cut NEE a little slack and tolerate a mild degree of the rescuer from afar syndrome. A little is part of the territory. If becoming problematic and unbearable, they should confidentially discuss it with the director or chair, and not in the faculty gossip mill. They should look for opportunities to gently mentor NEE, as much by example and gentle hints as by strong words or sabotage.
9. NEE need to realize that they, although well educated and intelligent, are among many comparable individuals in engineering education. They should put themselves in the senior faculty members' shoes (and vice versa), and apply the Golden Rule and principles of good human relations and teamwork. They should understand that their hiring may have been as much a function of need, time, chance, and circumstance, as due to their abilities. They should realize that they are not indispensable, and that they must conform to certain standards of behavior as well as productivity, if they are to survive and prosper in academia. They must avoid vanity, pay their dues, and respect their (academic) elders, even if some of these are less than world-class or pleasant. The same applies to senior faculty who should serve as good role models.
10. NEE must consider how their attitudes, actions, words, circumstances, productivity, and rewards will be perceived by others. Although they should never scale-back their productivity solely to not "show-up" senior faculty, they had better apply tact, diplomacy, and empathy, and, as justifiably possible, try to include senior faculty when the praise and rewards are distributed. Some NEE may have an independent streak and want to "go it alone", as though they have to prove that they don't need anyone else. A better approach is to include appropriate senior faculty in their research and scholarship activities, and certainly in program and curriculum development. This will serve as a lubricant in bringing things to fruition, particularly a well respected and accepted fruition.
11. Although needing to be aware of departmental, college, and campus politics, NEE should do their best to stay clear of political drama, at least, until they are tenured. They should rarely-to-never criticize a senior professor, particularly in public (say, at faculty meetings) or in writing (including e-mail which can be forwarded to the world with the click of the mouse). They should be conservative in going to the chair or dean, or doing anything that might be perceived as trouble-making, favoritism, or prima donna-ism by senior faculty.

12. NEE need to cheerfully accept and even volunteer for mundane tasks and responsibilities. They should accept and do their best with teaching large sections of lower-level courses (sometimes even outside of their specialty) and sections of laboratory courses. They should not be surprised to have above-average teaching loads, at least, initially. They should do their best with mundane tasks in service work, and not expect to immediately be given committee chair positions or prestigious roles. They should realize that they were hired to assist the director, chair, dean, and senior faculty in a contributory, service manner, not to be (or even perceived as) solely self-promoting. Good stewardship with such tasks, when coupled with the necessary quantity and quality of teaching, research, service, and professional development, will not only generate a record of accomplishment on curriculum vitae, promotion/tenure applications, productivity reports, and grant proposals, but also generate the goodwill, indeed true respect, among senior faculty and administrators that will propel these onto success. A superstar CV cannot overcome ill will, but a solid, even if not stellar, CV can work wonders when undergirded by the support of colleagues and superiors.
13. NEE with a strong research capability must not be misled into thinking that bringing big research dollars, generating a litany of papers and presentations, and building a broad off-campus or consulting contact network¹⁷ will, by themselves, establish their place and security in the local academic community, even if this was implied by administrators. Although these are important, and critical to promotion, tenure, and job mobility, they will not necessarily make brownie points with local faculty colleagues. They can even generate envy, particularly if overly advertised, recognized, and rewarded. Senior faculty colleagues are more impressed with a good team member who consistently carries his/her weight in departmental responsibilities and does a good job of teaching and mentoring students. A university is much more than a profit center, and big overhead/indirect cost dollars brought-in, although popular with administrators, only indirectly enhance the program's primary mission of providing students an education of true quality. NEE in conventional academic units (versus purely research units) need to be excellent educators and student mentors (as per "new engineering educator") first, and then, second, excellent researchers, not the other way around¹⁸. Although teaching and research/scholarship are synergistic, it is too easy to lose balance and end-up with the cart (research, grantsmanship, and publish-or-perish¹⁹) in front of the horse (students).

Hopefully, all of this will come together at institutions having a system of performance reviews, and, at least, one pre-tenure review. Even if not previously addressed, any simmering problems with NEE can be formally addressed with these. The first performance review is particularly critical in that it will set the tone for the next few years. Conscientious NEE will be hungry for formal feedback on their initial performance, and the director or chair had better be sure to be frank (yet gentle), accurate, and precise with such, both positive and negative, and any specific needed improvements. This is not a time to gloss over problems, hoping that they will simply go away, nor is it a time to withhold truly deserved praise and

encouragement. The NEE should frankly express whatever questions or concerns that are on his/her mind. Feedback provided to the NEE during that first year, when topped-off with the first performance review, bends the twig a certain direction toward which the academic/professional tree will subsequently grow. This will help maximize the academic wealth²⁰, professionalism²¹, balance²², and vision/impact²³ of the NEE as he/she grows into a full member of the academic community.

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