

**Lucas, C. & Murry, J. (2011). *New faculty: A practical guide for academic beginners* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Palgrave MacMillan. Pages: 316. Price: USD \$26.00 (paper), \$95.00 (hardcover). ISBN: 978-0-230-11486-9**

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Are you a graduate student considering a career in academia or a new faculty member seeking practical advice about navigating the context of your workplace? If so, Christopher J. Lucas, Professor of Higher Education, and John W. Murry, Associate Professor of Higher Education, both from the University of Arkansas–Fayetteville, offer a thorough understanding of the pertinent issues and practical advice about how to succeed in higher education. In *New Faculty: A Practical Guide for Academic Beginners* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), they cover the most significant concerns to new faculty members and provide the reader with a comprehensive guide to understanding and navigating the main components of academia, and many of the associated expectations and challenges inherent within each component.

The purpose of the book, as outlined in the preface, is to provide new faculty members with advice that will help them find success in academia. Lucas and Murry explain that faculty newcomers have already proven their self-assurance and independence through their graduate work, and therefore, it is often incorrectly assumed that they have everything they need to prosper; however, “there is abundant evidence to suggest otherwise” (p. xi). They point out that for recent graduates the “environment may seem superficially familiar, but the role new faculty play within it is quite different” (p. xii) from their experience as graduate students. Furthermore, many new faculty members are hired into programs that are significantly different from the program in which they were enrolled. Lucas and Murry concede that their practical advice will not work in every situation or for every individual. However, they have endeavoured to include several suggestions for success in each area, and they encourage readers to try a number of different ideas and to select the ones that they find beneficial.

The first section of the book, “Preliminary Considerations,” covers four global topics: organizational cultures, norms that govern performance expectations, citizenship and collegiality, and mentoring. These topics define the working environment that is created by the socio-political context of the university as a work place. In the second section, “Faculty Work Activities,” the authors focus more specifically on outlining the various responsibilities held by faculty members. The tasks and expectations covered in this sec-

tion include teaching, active learning, student advising, getting published, grant writing, faculty service, and legal issues. This comprehensive list of topics ensures that the book addresses most, if not all, of the concerns of new faculty members.

Although not tightly structured, each chapter includes a discussion on more general understandings about each particular topic and practical advice on how to negotiate successfully through this new environment. In addition, each chapter includes a series of bordered text boxes that illustrate the points made within the chapter (more on these later). Finally, each chapter ends with a set of “Points in Review” that summarize the critical information that has been covered.

The chapters begin with a thorough discussion of a variety of perspectives and tensions that surround different faculty responsibilities and activities, and how they relate to the role of new faculty. The authors seek political balance by presenting and supporting several competing perspectives, leaving the reader to decide which position is most agreeable. For example, the section on publishing begins with a discussion about the struggle that faculty members often have when attempting to maintain a balance between teaching and research. The authors provoke the reader’s attention by framing it within the perspective that universities over-emphasize publishing and, as such, contribute to a vast collection of writing for writing’s sake—“a veritable avalanche of articles, research publications, technical reports, scholarly books, and new academic journals—the whole of almost stupefying proportions” (p. 133). They explain how some in higher education believe that teaching and research have a reciprocal relationship, where research enlivens teaching and teaching provides a forum to share and discuss current research. Then, the authors confound that perspective with accounts from those who believe that over emphasis on research actually detracts from a strong culture of teaching and learning. As evidence they point out that most faculty research is so specific that, while it might be appropriate to share it with graduate students studying in the same field, it is rarely applicable to the more general undergraduate outcomes. As an illustration, Lucas and Murry present the reader with a broad range of issues that surround each of the topics selected for this book. This description of the dynamics around each issue provides the reader with an opportunity to situate him- or herself within the political context of the topic. Once the context has been established the authors begin to detail practical suggestions they believe will help the readers to succeed in that area of their work.

In addition to comparing and contrasting an array of political ideologies, the authors dispense advice on how to successfully navigate through each of the responsibilities associated with faculty positions. In the philosophical part of the chapter, Lucas and Murry challenge the traditional values that surround the work of faculty members. However, when the authors shift their focus to giving advice, they step back and explain the reality of the traditional institution and clarify how new faculty can succeed in that environment. In most chapters, they also go one step further and make suggestions about how newcomers can respond to some of the less traditional perspectives while staying grounded within more traditional practices. For example, in the section on student advising, the authors describe how faculty members often feel that advising takes time away from teaching and research, and that many feel ill prepared for the extensive knowledge of the program that is needed to respond to student needs. Having presented the challenges that are often inherent within the role of student advising, Lucas and Murry step back, explain the

importance of having faculty members in the role of advisors, and establish that quality advising is critical for student success and student satisfaction. Finally, they provide the reader with a number of practical suggestions for achieving greater success when working as mentors for students in the program.

The advice they provide includes both the more philosophical ideas of how to think about the specific responsibilities and the extremely practical to-do lists for each area. After leading the reader to consider how university teaching has not changed for decades, the authors examine the lecture as a teaching strategy, offer advice for improving lectures, pose a list of questions for evaluating the effectiveness of lectures, and offer a list of interrupters that will help students to learn more from the lecture experience. As the text progresses, Lucas and Murry challenge new faculty members to consider thinking and planning for their lessons in ways that go beyond the lecture. An entire chapter is devoted to active learning. They explain the benefits of having students actively engaged in learning activities and provide an array of practical examples like a list of group activities that professors can pair with any topic. Below is an example from the list:

Play “The ball’s-in-your-court.” Bring a rubber ball (or a beanbag or a soft stuffed animal) to class. Pitch the ball to (at) a student. He or she has one minute or less to pose a relevant question. The student then throws the ball to a classmate for an answer. The person who asked the question indicates whether or not the answer is satisfactory. If it is, the person who caught the ball and answered the question may throw the ball to someone else. Once again, the catcher must pose a question and, by throwing the ball, select someone to respond to it. (p. 80)

By combining both the philosophical understanding and the practical application, Lucas and Murry create a comprehensive guide to thinking about and performing each of the duties that are regularly assigned to faculty members.

As noted earlier, Lucas and Murry have used bordered text boxes, which function independently from the text. The boxes contain excerpts from pertinent sources, related research, testimonials from experienced faculty members, anecdotal experiences, and practical advice that they don’t want the reader to miss. These text boxes are included in all sections of the book. Although the information within the text boxes exemplifies the information in the chapter, it is written to stand alone. For example, the first text box, located in the preface, contains an anecdotal account by an experienced faculty member who remembers how early in his career he and a group of other new faculty members at the same institution met together every morning at a doughnut shop to visit. The author recalls that although senior faculty members in his department were exceedingly busy he was unsure of what he should be doing. So, the daily doughnut shop meetings served to fill his time (p. xv). It is a good story and one that most faculty members would find relatable. Furthermore, it fittingly illustrates the point of the preface that although new faculty members have the skills to be successful professionals, they are often unsure about how to apply those skills to this new environment.

*New Faculty: A Practical Guide for Academic Beginners* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) is written as a how-to manual for new faculty members as they struggle to understand the landscape and the context of new academic positions. In my opinion, Lucas and Murry succeed in sharing the knowledge that they have gained through personal experience and through lead-

ing transition workshops for new faculty members. I appreciated their frank discussions about the components of an academic career and I was pleased to see that they challenged the status quo. Yet, when it came to giving advice to new faculty members they recognize the current realities and advise newcomers about ways they can push gently against the status quo, without offending the more traditional values of the institution. The topics are addressed in a way that provide an informative, yet provocative, discussion of the major perspectives, the salient understandings, and the field-tested solutions for surviving and thriving in the world of academia. 🍁