

Sustaining Faculty Careers: A Retrospective Review

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Abstract

Faculty often manage their careers by focusing on the next level to be obtained. For some that will be tenure or promotion through the ranks, for others it might be the relative security of a longer contract. To progress, individuals align their work and goals according to the criteria sanctioned by their departments and universities, seeking to meet or exceed the requirements for research, teaching, and service necessary for continued employment or advancement. This article addresses how the sustainable career perspective can be applied to faculty seeking long, productive, and fulfilling careers. It introduces the three intersecting dimensions of sustainable careers (person, context, time). Five key concepts of sustainable career development (fit between person and career, continuous learning, renewal, employability, and integration of home, work, and community) are highlighted through a retrospective analysis of the experiences of the authors, providing examples of each along with pitfalls to avoid. Implications and conclusions include recommendations for applying sustainability to faculty career paths and suggestions for further research.

Keywords: *career development, faculty, sustainable careers, retrospective*

This article combines reflection and theory, using our personal work experiences as a backdrop for exploring how academe might reconsider and update career development for faculty and retirees. Career development is a topic we have researched and written about for over two decades, but we have rarely incorporated our own backgrounds into the discourse. We chose to explore our career trajectories by applying the lens of our faculty emeritus status to the sustainable career perspective. De Vos et al. (2020) observed the potential advantages of a retrospective approach for this type of analysis, noting:

Both retrospective and prospective longitudinal studies are relevant in empirically studying

sustainable careers.

Retrospective designs, for example focusing on individuals when they retire, can provide further insight into the long-term processes of how (non)sustainable careers have developed over time, the factors that affected these, as well as their inter-relatedness. (p. 11)

A key characteristic of sustainability is longevity, and our relatively long and productive careers as professors (Linda as a faculty member for 24 years, and Kim for over 30) reinforce the logic of this approach. However, we understand faculty often do not experience sustainable careers in the academy. The scarcity of tenure-track jobs,

increased use of contingent instructors, additional demands on faculty time, and competitive publishing and funding environments can result in unsustainability (Castro et al., 2020; Kindsiko & Baruch, 2019). Additionally, following the COVID-19 pandemic, some campuses closed or eliminated programmes and many jobs were lost or hours reduced, disrupting careers, and disproportionately impacting contingent workers who typically are women and people of colour (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2022, p. 4). In some sectors, faculty are also facing restrictions on what they are allowed to teach, books they are permitted to assign, and topics they are sanctioned to discuss with students. In parts of the US, educators also must consider laws that allow students to bring guns to campus or into classrooms (Rock, 2023). It is a demanding time to be a faculty member. All the more reason to consider how the best talent can be recruited and retained and how sustainable career development can bolster that process. We will explore some ways we were able to facilitate sustainable careers – at the same time recognizing that numerous elements such as unplanned events, home and organizational circumstances, and even luck, play a role in career sustainability.

This exploration begins with some background information on ourselves to set the context, including the benefits we gained by working as practitioners before becoming full-time faculty members. The theoretical foundation of sustainable careers is reviewed and illustrated through examples from our own career paths. Discussion of potential pitfalls and limitations of our retrospective approach are followed by implications and recommendations for theory and practice and concluding thoughts.

While there are differences in our paths that we will discuss later, we also share similarities in our backgrounds, so we

will address them first. Both of us are first generation college (university) students from small towns in the midwestern US. That meant that when we considered potential careers, our views of options were somewhat limited. At that time, the internet was not available to introduce occupations beyond what we could see in our own communities or on television. As we were growing up, our fathers were blue-collar workers who held second jobs to make ends meet and our mothers were stay-at-home moms and homemakers. We both have siblings, and we learned early the importance of sharing and of stretching a paycheck. Those early examples and messages instilled in each of us a strong work ethic, a drive to achieve, and a commitment to seek higher education. However, neither of us started out with the goal of becoming a college professor in leadership. Kim's graduate work was in communication and adult education, and Linda's in college counselling and student services. Our degrees prepared us to be practitioners in our respective fields, and even at the doctoral level, we were not groomed to be academics. What we did acquire in our different graduate studies was knowledge of people and how they interact and insights into organizational systems. Our additional experiences added understanding of training and development in adults. Although we still faced a steep learning curve regarding research once we were hired into faculty ranks, we each had a foundational skill set that could be adapted to our new role.

Our practitioner credentials and little evidence of research success meant that we did not look like typical first choice hires for faculty positions, and it is unlikely either of us would have been selected at a primarily research-focused institution. This was perhaps an early example of “luck” that was suggested earlier. We joined the faculty

ranks at a regional campus of a large university in the midwestern US that was committed to both teaching and research. Faculty were expected to teach their full load of classes, without graduate student assistants, while maintaining a research agenda that showed continuous progress. The organizational leadership department we joined also had a history of hiring faculty members who had been employed outside of academe. The intention was to provide students with educators who could relate to challenges leaders faced in business, industry, and service and to reinforce putting theory to practice. The result was a cadre of faculty with boundary spanning skill sets and knowledge derived from our other jobs to better inform research and teaching. This work environment was one aspect of building our sustainable careers.

The Sustainable Career

According to De Vos et al. (2020), there are three important intersecting dimensions of sustainable careers: the *person*, who owns the career and therefore must take responsibility for it; the *context* in which a career unfolds and is enacted; and *time*, which suggests that careers evolve and change through the years. In practice, these play out as individual agency in managing a long-term career trajectory that is influenced by multiple contextual factors. Additionally, several attributes have been used to describe sustainable careers. We focus on five that are frequently used in the literature and that apply most readily: fit between person and career, continuous learning, renewal, employability, and integration of home, work, and community. When enacted well, these dimensions and attributes help to maintain the indicators of a successful sustainable career: happiness, health, and productivity (De Vos et al., 2020). Our goal in relating some of our experiences is not to

provide a template, but rather to encourage faculty to explore opportunities to build their own sustainable careers, as well as to provide recommendations to universities and colleges regarding ways to help faculty navigate those careers.

In explaining their conceptual model of sustainable careers, De Vos et al. (2020) emphasized the need for a “strong **person-career fit** over time” (p. 4). While fit is important when considering all aspects of one’s life, our focus here is the alignment between our career interests and goals with the organization’s needs and goals. For both of us, there was a clear fit with the instruction portion of being a professor which was reinforced by the strong focus on teaching at our university. We had experience in training and teaching adults and knew that having a longer time span to help students gain knowledge and skills was important to us (rather than the brief amount of time allotted for training in most organizations). There were additional university and departmental characteristics that created this fit as well.

Linda: After several years of employment in university student services and earning my doctorate as a part time student, a move to a new city required I change direction. I took a position as a human resources trainer for a large manufacturing defence contractor. Once there, I struggled to see how my values and world view meshed with the organization. It was also a culture shock, acclimating to a workplace that was hierarchical and transactional, even in the human resources division, in sharp contrast to the transformational, participative work environments I had known previously. I learned to adapt but never felt I belonged and stayed only three years. Returning to a university when offered a faculty position, I rediscovered that sense of fit in a workplace that valued learning and development and

remained there until I retired. This example in no way suggests all corporate settings are difficult or all academic environments are ideal, but rather to illustrate how fit mattered in my career.

Kim: I appreciated the interdisciplinary nature of the leadership programme and felt it fit well with my academic training. The faculty were an eclectic group with varied degrees and backgrounds which made for interesting discussions and often, better solutions to problems. I also think working at a regional university contributed to this feeling of “fit”. Given the applied nature of my doctorate, the research requirements imposed on junior faculty at a research-intensive university would have been challenging for me. Additionally, our university attracts a lot of first-generation students and non-traditional students. I could easily identify with both groups given my background and perhaps felt I could help more as they pursued their degrees. Additionally, many of the faculty were first generation college students so there was comfort in working with individuals with similar university experiences.

The importance of **continuous learning** is also a hallmark of sustainable careers (Heslin et al., 2020). As untenured assistant professors, we relied heavily on colleagues and external professional organizations for assistance regarding how to be effective faculty members. When we began our tenure-track appointments, our university had very few internal professional development programmes established. There was no new faculty orientation, no centre for teaching, no writing for publication workshops, and no training for academic administrators. Fortunately, times have changed, and the university now provides many opportunities for faculty to grow and develop in their roles. From the beginning, we were proactive in seeking out learning

opportunities by attending and presenting at professional conferences, applying for research/instructional grants, and taking on new projects that challenged us to develop new competencies and knowledge.

Particularly noteworthy were the efforts of a small group of tenured female faculty who offered a summer institute on integrating gender studies into the curriculum and who developed internal networking events for women faculty. These opportunities provided meaningful ways to connect with other faculty across campus and resulted in gaining access to strong experienced women who provided support and encouragement through the years.

Most individuals will experience tedium, boredom, burnout, or stagnation periodically during their working lives, suggesting the need for **renewal** at various times throughout their careers to promote sustainability (Kossek et al., 2014; Newman, 2011). One way we experienced renewal was by assuming new roles within the university. For Linda, this involved serving as interim director of women’s studies while the director was on sabbatical or filling in as an assistant dean of students for a year to help with their workload. Later opportunities lead to a year as a fellow in the office of academic affairs and as graduate director for the department before becoming chair. Kim was tapped to serve as assistant chair of the department for a year which led to a long stint as chair and eventually moving to an associate dean position. Each of these jobs provided a broader view of the campus and a greater understanding of our colleagues and our students. Within all of those roles, we continued to fulfil our faculty responsibilities of teaching (at a reduced load) and doing research, offering us a wider variety of tasks and enriching learning experiences. While these administrative appointments and the varied types of work were rejuvenating for us, we recognize that

teaching a new class, undergoing a new research project, or chairing a committee might be other ways for faculty to feel reinvigorated.

Of course, as tenured faculty members, we also had the luxury of sabbaticals to replenish our spirits and ignite interest in new projects. Unfortunately, many faculty – particularly those on a limited contract or part of the growing number of contingent faculty – are not eligible to receive this benefit (Byrd, 2020). While it may not be popular for universities wanting to cut costs, the benefits of offering sabbaticals to a broader base of faculty could make a difference in commitment to work and maintaining sustainability.

Taking on new roles, sabbaticals, and engaging in other developmental opportunities facilitated our sense of **employability**, another key element in career sustainability. Employability is the perception that one has the capacity to obtain employment (Harari et al., 2021), and continued employability throughout life is an indicator of a sustainable career. Our perceived employability was heightened due to a number of factors. For example, entering academe after holding other jobs provided a knowledge and skill set to fall back on if needed. This was particularly important in our pre-tenure years when we experienced job security anxieties. Taking on other roles on campus increased our understanding and expertise, helped further develop our leadership capabilities, and deepened our networks. We also engaged with professional organizations and became active by serving as reviewers, journal editors, conference planners, and board members. These activities enhanced our external networks and also provided access to other job opportunities. These investments in both human and social capital resulted in an increase in perceived employability.

While we did not doubt our employability, we were aware of some gender disparities when we became faculty members. For example, there was no maternity leave, there was very little female representation in some departments (e.g., engineering, technology, chemistry, physics), and the female full professors across campus could fit in one restaurant booth. As chair, Kim was the only female in administration in the College of Engineering Technology, and Computer Science and was the first (and to date, only) female associate dean for that college. Improvements have occurred. Faculty now have maternity benefits and many female faculty have obtained the rank of full professor. Yet more work needs to be done within our university (and others) to ensure women can obtain and sustain faculty employment.

The **integration and interconnectedness of work with home, community, and other life sectors** is another important dimension in sustaining one's career (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014; Valcour, 2017). While both of us have always been keenly aware of work-life issues and the impact they have on careers, our experiences navigating private life domains and work were very different.

Linda: *Of all the aspects of sustainability we discuss, integration of home, work and community presented the most challenge for me, although I did not realize it at the time. I had seventeen years of professional work experience when I became a tenure-track faculty member at age 40. Despite, or perhaps because of, the renewed sense of fit I felt in the academic setting, I wanted to prove to the department and myself that I could successfully transition from practitioner to scholar, working hard to hone my research skills while mastering my teaching load. Despite scheduling flexibility, I often put in more hours per week than I had at other jobs. One*

reason was likely impostor phenomenon. As Hutchins and Rainbolt (2017) indicated, this tension regarding measuring up recurred periodically in my academic career, particularly when I took on new administrative roles; so, I often felt the need to prioritize work. Perez (2021), observed that the flexible schedule inherent in academic positions also can lead to overwork, constantly striving to make sure one is doing enough. Not having children, our household did not require boundary-setting to allow for family time and events. That made it easier to let our respective jobs assume a bigger part of our lives. The university became my community, so most of my service and volunteer efforts were on campus or in professional organizations, which worked well for building networks and providing different perspectives. Often those responsibilities linked with my research or teaching, so that integration was welcomed. It is only in retrospect that I acknowledge my work focus was a limitation as well as a benefit.

Kim: I was pregnant with my second child when I became a tenure-track faculty member so integrating work and home life was a constant challenge and goal. I am fortunate to have a very supportive spouse who took over all the care-giving responsibilities when I was teaching at night, attending conferences, etc. Parenting responsibilities were often a welcomed reprieve from grading, writing lit reviews, and administrative paperwork. Home duties provided me with an excuse to not focus on work at times, which I needed. While I often brought work home, I felt fortunate having the flexibility to leave work for our sons' activities and to volunteer at their schools occasionally. This flexibility (and being tenured by then) also allowed me to coach track and field at my sons' high school for several years. Coaching connected well with teaching in a leadership programme; many

students could relate to examples I used from my 11 years engaged in this activity. Coaching for me resulted in positive spillover. It allowed me to spend more time with my sons, sharing an interest that remains today. At the same time, like many leisure activities, it helped sustain my career as I learned new things and experienced some success which increased my self-efficacy (Kelly et al., 2020).

While we have described these five characteristics of sustainable careers as separate entities, they are interdependent. For example, the career fit we found with our academic department and organization greatly impacted our life outside of work. Continually being in a learning mode led us to perceive greater employability, and the opportunities that renewed us resulted in learning new things. Additionally, all of the examples provided were a result of individual agency (e.g., being proactive and adaptable) and contextual factors such as supportive individuals (e.g., spouses, supervisors, colleagues), organizational practices and policies, and community involvement (e.g., professional associations, volunteer opportunities).

Potential Pitfalls

The activities described in this retrospective as ways of sustaining our academic careers have potential pitfalls as well. Certainly, adding on more roles and taking on various projects can result in overextending oneself. Learning to say "no" is important at times, particularly for those who are in their pre-tenure stage. When feasible, negotiate a course release or a reduction of other duties when accepting new responsibilities.

Taking on administrative roles might be perceived as being less focused on research, a particular pitfall if research is prioritized in the organization. Depending on the culture of the university, it also may be seen as moving to the "dark side" (Fuster,

2020). In our situations, the benefits of doing something new outweighed these possible negative perceptions. Additionally, all our administrative roles required us to keep our faculty duties, so we were able to maintain our research agendas and keep our identities as faculty members.

Even leisure activities have their limitations in terms of career sustainability. Leisure activities that are too similar to academic work and/or are demanding may result in resource depletion (e.g., burnout) rather than renewal (Kelly et al., 2020). This suggests that the interplay between home and work life is individually driven, and faculty will need to make adjustments based on their unique situations at various times in their careers.

It is also important to note that what we perceived as activities and strategies that sustained our careers may not work for others. We realize we speak from the perspective of two White female professors whose faculty careers occurred at one regional university in the US Midwest. As a public university with limited resources, there were opportunities available to retain our faculty roles while taking on administrative duties. Unlike some institutions, we also still have a tenure system and the option to apply for sabbaticals post tenure. There are a multitude of contextual factors that suggest our experiences may be different from many readers.

Our final caveat: any retrospective involves individuals' memories, which can be unreliable at times (De Vos et al., 2020). We feel confident we have accurately described our activities and roles we were involved with as faculty. However, our feelings about some of those experiences have possibly changed over time. So, as noted in our opening, while there are benefits to using retrospection, we also recognize the limitations of this perspective.

Implications and Recommendations

Career trajectories are influenced by many factors, some the result of planning and strategy (e.g., earning degrees, seeking promotions) while others rise out of happenstance (e.g., opportunities offered and taken - or not, jobs that fit or did not, choices made at one point in time that may have long-lasting impact). Career self-management then becomes an exercise in balancing planning and flexibility. The intent of a sustainable career is to include a process of renewal and growth, inventing and reinventing over time to build a fulfilling lifetime of work-related activities. While individuals have agency to manage their own careers, a sustainable approach involves "the dynamic interplay between the person, their context, and changes over time" (De Vos et al., 2020, p. 11). In higher education, that context includes the campus environment and how well it fosters (or frustrates) career development.

Inclusive Sustainability

One aspect of sustainable careers to explore at the organization level is inclusion and equity, which relates to employability, fit, and integration of home, work, and community. For example, data suggest there is reason for concern about career progress for faculty from underrepresented groups. Research in the US shows proportionally fewer women and fewer Black and Hispanic faculty in full professor or upper administration ranks compared to their White and Asian/Pacific Islander male counterparts and relative to their own higher representation in lower ranks (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Similarly, regarding gender inequities, women in the EU hold disproportionately fewer spots at the Grade A or full professorship level and in the highest leadership positions in higher education

(European Commission, 2021), compared to their overall representation.

There is a social justice and responsibility element to sustainability that promotes an inclusive perspective, seeking to sustain all individuals in their career development (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2017). As partners in the sustainable career process, organizations can offer support to help level the playing field for faculty from underrepresented groups who have the qualifications but may need additional guidance in negotiating an environment where they are in the minority. Institutions can promote more equity in opportunities through several options, including reviewing promotion and pay criteria for potential biases that might pose barriers for non-majority group members, implementing formal mentoring for all faculty to provide guidance and support, taking the stigma out of family leave and extended tenure clock options, and resisting the tendency to choose new hires that reflect the demographics of their predecessors. Scholars can advance the progress of sustainability from an inclusion and equity perspective by delving deeper into the career progress of underrepresented faculty members to learn more about how and why so many get stalled on their way to higher level positions, derailing the potential for sustainable academic careers. While this is not entirely new territory for research, the persistent disproportionate lack of non-majority group members in upper academic ranks, compared to their numbers at lower levels, suggests a need for more data, both qualitative and quantitative. Ideally, since evidence suggests non-majority group members also are more likely to hold contingent faculty appointments, the research scope should be broad enough to include them as well as their tenure-line counterparts.

Engaging Mid-career Faculty and Reclaiming Retirees

Another facet of building a sustainable career culture relates particularly to continuous learning and renewal, as well as employability. Most universities have some developmental support for beginning faculty, recognizing that for new tenure-track hires as well as for those on renewable contracts, demonstrating individual contribution and scholarship early and consistently is key to retaining employment. However, sustainable careers progress over time, so how might institutions provide continuing opportunities for faculty to achieve the health, happiness, and productivity that are the hallmarks of successful sustainability?

Although campuses invested in faculty development are likely to provide resources and assistance to new faculty, that type of support often drops off post-tenure, leaving mid-career faculty, themselves at pivotal points in their careers, without support (DeFelippo & Dee, 2022). Similarly, academic discourse offers little on faculty at this stage, although they represent the “largest segment of the academic profession” (Welch et al., 2019, p. 23). As a result, mid-career faculty are often left on their own to determine next steps for reaching their goals as teachers and scholars, while often being expected to take on heavier service loads (DeFelippo & Dee, 2022). Zacher et al. (2019), addressed this concern:

Given the noted trends in workforce age demographics (i.e., an increasing number of older workers, generally), the lack of attention paid to the development of later career academics seems like a missed opportunity. In many countries, such as the United States, academics can

feasibly work well past the traditional/normative retirement. With the vast amount of human capital present in the older academic workforce, it would seem prudent to focus attention on those factors that might support continued life-long career development. (p. 366)

Some institutions respond to this need better than others, providing opportunities for faculty support and renewal at all levels. In addition to sabbaticals, which offer time away from campus to focus on teaching or research, initiatives could include leadership development programmes for those in (or contemplating) administrative roles, research networking groups that meet periodically for support and input, as well as teaching and learning communities that encourage innovation and excellence. Other recommendations reinforce the value of interdisciplinary collaborations across all faculty ranks and career stages (Frasch et al., 2019). While post-tenured faculty are repeatedly asked to serve as mentors for junior members, Welch et. al. (2019) also noted the importance of consistent mentoring for mid-career academics, finding it valuable for helping more experienced mentees cope with concerns stemming from increased responsibilities.

At a time when higher education budgets often are tight and resources limited, recommendations like these to add services for mid-career faculty may encounter resistance. However, institutions also are facing competition for enrolment, with success in drawing students depending in part on the excellence of their faculty. It is imperative that they “attract and retain academics of high calibre and excellent reputation” (Ramsaroop & Subban, 2022, p. 169). Yet, current practices can jeopardize

retention when mid-career faculty face expectations of increased workloads and more administrative responsibilities with compensation that many see as inadequate to match the tasks and sacrifice of time away from their own scholarly work (DeFelippo & Dee, 2022; Ramsaroop & Subban, 2022; Terosky & Baker, 2021). The resulting pressures, role overloads, and perceived lack of sufficient recompense contribute to low morale and dissatisfaction that can reduce productivity (Ramsaroop & Subban, 2022) and diminish commitment to the organization and the profession.

While the workload may not always be negotiable, career development initiatives can help revive the level of faculty interest and investment critical for maintaining an engaged cadre of academics. As noted in the previously mentioned observation by Welch et al. (2019, p. 36), mid-career faculty mentoring “appears most productive in alleviating tenured faculty’s concerns regarding too much service, dissatisfaction with teaching loads, and lack of time to complete research”. In their study of maintaining vitality (considered a driver for engagement, energy, and productivity), DeFelippo and Dee (2022) found that a collegial work environment fostering respect and community as well as perceptions of institutional support for faculty development helped to sustain vitality. Research outside of academe reinforces the value of perceived organizational level support to enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and retention (Chen et al., 2004; Sturges et al., 2010; Yogalakshmi & Suganthi, 2020). While many career development initiatives require minimal financial backing (e.g., encouraging networking groups, mentoring assignments, grants from external sources); it behooves higher education to make the investment in mid-career faculty, even when it involves a commitment of money and resources, to bolster an encouraging, supportive

workplace and to foster a learning environment that energizes students and faculty to do their best work.

A sustainable career is long lasting, and is not destined to end with retirement, particularly as many leave their full-time jobs while still in good health and invested in continuing to make a contribution. However, every year, universities readily give up years of knowledge and experience when faculty retire. While some retirees happily shift to other, non-academic pursuits or move to new locations, others remain both committed to and interested in their research and the work of the campus where they have so much history and so many connections. Frasch et al. (2019, p. 1) recognized that while universities often treat faculty retirees as if they are invisible, completely disengaged from their academic past, some in emeritus status are ready to begin “a new phase of scholarly life” with the flexibility to focus on what they most enjoy. They often want to keep some of their academic identity and seek to continue their professional endeavours. Miron et al. (2022, p. 92) reinforced this idea, observing that while some faculty retirees choose to give up academic pursuits entirely once they leave campus (e.g., focusing on family, taking on or expanding investment in hobbies), others transition into an “academic-minded” identity, that maintains interest in research and education. The latter group provides an opportunity for retaining some of their expertise and energy by keeping them meaningfully connected to their universities. Goldberg and Baldwin (2018) noted some campuses already do this and suggested varied roles, beyond the obvious recommendation of teaching, that include, but are not limited to: alumni engagement or fundraising, mentoring of students or junior faculty, tutoring, consulting (on student, faculty, or administrative projects), serving on review

committees, and guiding preparation of research grant proposals. It is an irony of higher education, that while full time faculty frequently struggle to make time for campus service or special projects, many retirees have the time, knowledge, and skills, and would be willing to volunteer; but they are rarely called upon to fill those gaps. Universities or departments could help themselves and their talented retirees by implementing retirement programmes that maximize this untapped resource (Goldberg & Baldwin, 2018).

While these suggestions may be most applicable for career development implementation, scholars can support these initiatives and help devise others by turning a research lens on experienced and retiring faculty. Adding to the limited discourse on mid-late career faculty and retirees with longitudinal and internationally based studies can be particularly valuable to reinforce evidence-based practice and to expand the sustainable career literature. Individuals, institutions, and the academy would benefit from the insights gained from this research.

Concluding Thoughts

The principle of equifinality suggests that many paths can lead to the same end, providing a valuable lens for considering sustainable careers. The combined components of unique individuals, varied contexts, and the myriad of changes that are inevitable over time result in very different pathways to careers that are long and fulfilling, yielding health, happiness, and productivity. While health and happiness are certainly key outcomes, the productivity aspect is important to note here to avoid the impression that career sustainability can be a pretence for any tenured faculty members who choose to stay on the job but stop contributing.

Although individuals remain the primary drivers for their careers, sustainability is a mutual initiative, with responsibilities and benefits for the organization as well as the person. The role of the academic institution is to provide developmental opportunities and support, investing in all faculty throughout their careers, including into retirement, for those continuing in that academic mindset. What those opportunities are and how they are implemented may vary depending on the university and the needs of the individuals. Since faculty career development may be the responsibility of an academic administrative unit, rather than the human resources department, some initiatives will benefit from coordinated efforts.

As this retrospective has demonstrated, sustainable career trajectories in academe can take different forms and do not demand large expenditures of university resources, but commitment to supporting these endeavours does require attention and intention. The potential rewards for individuals, systems, and the future of higher education are worth the investment.

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