

Guidelines from the College of LSA

Junior Faculty Mentoring: Principles and Best Practices

December 18, 2002

The interests of the departments and programs, of the College and the University, and of individual faculty members are best served when the people we hire are constructively mentored and reviewed. Constructive mentoring and reviewing of tenure-track faculty works to help such faculty meet high standards of rigor, depth and innovation in scholarship, and to realize their full potential as scholars, teachers, and members of the academic community. When we grant tenure to a faculty member, we acknowledge the high contributions that person is making to our scholarly and learning community; we also acknowledge the institution's wise choice in hiring and wise and enabling mentoring of the new faculty member. Given all that is at stake, both personally for the candidate and institutionally, in hiring and tenure, the mentoring and reviewing of tenure-track faculty is some of the most important work we do.

Principles:

1. It is the responsibility of departments and programs in which new faculty hold tenure-track appointments to mentor those faculty in ways that help them to reach their full potential in teaching and research and to be successful in the tenure process.
2. Mentoring of new faculty is a responsibility of all tenure-track faculty members, and a particular responsibility of the chair or director.
3. Mentoring is both a formal and an informal activity and it is about the substance of teaching and research in the academy as well as about external measures of success such as which journals one publishes in.
4. Tenure-track appointees should have the opportunity to review formally with their chair or director at least once a year their teaching and research in relation to their progress towards tenure. These reviews should be constructive and diagnostic. That is, without predicting success in the tenure process, they should address areas of strength and areas for improvement in the faculty member's teaching, research and service and should make suggestions about goals and strategies for improvement.

5. Chairs and directors should conduct reviews of tenure-track appointees' work in a friendly and constructive spirit. The aim of these reviews is to communicate clearly the requirements for tenure, and to help candidates meet those requirements; it is not to intimidate candidates.
6. Chairs and directors should recognize that some candidates may in some contexts (e.g., women or minorities in departments/programs with very few such people) face special challenges in being fully accepted into the department/program and in receiving the kinds of informal mentoring that both help their careers and make them feel comfortable. In such instances, the chair or director may wish to work with the College to find mentoring structures outside as well as within the department/ program. And s/he will wish to pay particular attention to ensure that departmental/ program behavior in both formal and informal settings is fully and respectfully inclusive of such candidates and of the scholarly interests for which they were hired.
7. Department or program members should conduct themselves, in both formal and informal settings, in ways that mentor by example. We should not be mentoring anyone in our community, be they students or new faculty, in old strifes, uncivil debate, personal arguments, reputational slaughter by innuendo, etc.

Best Practices: Department

1. As soon as a candidate is offered a position and accepts, the chair or director should work with his/her colleagues to develop a mentoring plan for the new faculty member. The prospective faculty member should be consulted in developing this plan. The plan should include attention to teaching, graduate supervision, and research and should be predicated on being helpful rather than authoritarian. Care should be taken not to be unintentionally coercive in the formulation of the mentoring plan and to ensure that it yields reasonably consistent advice for the new appointee. This mentoring plan should include participation by several members of the department/program during the six years of the candidate's progress towards tenure.
2. Departments and programs should work to develop a "climate of mentoring" in which all members of the department/program spontaneously and informally mentor their new colleagues. Collegial conversations about the intellectual concerns of the department/ program are one of the best modes of informal mentoring. Departments and programs should take care to ensure that there are departmental/program events, such as colloquia and seminars, that include new faculty as both audience and presenters, make them welcome as members of the community, and serve as modes of informal mentoring.

3. Chairs and directors should work with the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) to ensure that new faculty take full advantage of the help in preparing for successful teaching that it offers. They should sponsor, or co-sponsor with other units, CRLT workshops, as well as “Climate Theatre” workshops in the department/ program as well as making sure that faculty are fully aware of extra-departmental/ program opportunities offered by CRLT.
4. Chairs and directors should support collaborative teaching and research, team teaching, and interdisciplinary teaching efforts on the part of junior faculty, both for the intrinsic value of such work and because collaborative work is itself a form of mentoring. This work should be given full credit.
5. Chairs and directors should have a friendly conversation in a formal appointment with tenure-track faculty at the end of each winter semester. That conversation should include discussion of the candidate’s research and his/her teaching experience for the year. It should offer advice and encouragement to the candidate and should seek to find constructive ways of addressing any emerging problems. In cases of joint appointments, the two chairs and/or directors may wish to meet together with the candidate to ensure that their respective advice to the candidate is consistent. In addition, the chairs and/or directors of their units should review each year their respective requirements of the candidate to ensure that they are not, together, demanding too much. Particular attention should be paid to teaching and service requirements to make sure that candidates are not doing “double duty” in, for example, teaching large introductory lectures or committee and advising assignments.
6. Regardless of whether tenure-track faculty hold single or joint appointments, their chairs and directors should review their work assignments carefully to ensure that they are not being unduly burdened by an excessive number of new course preparations, large classes, or demanding service assignments.
7. Tenure-track appointments should be given the opportunity to teach in the area(s) of their research at the senior undergraduate and graduate levels during their first five years. Such opportunities may include team teaching.
8. Service assignments to tenure-track candidates should serve as mentoring contexts in which the candidate learns about the values and operations of the University (e.g., the curriculum committee rather than the hospitality committee).
9. One is not born a mentor but learns to become a mentor. Faculty mentors in a department/program should meet occasionally, but regularly, to discuss problems and strategies around mentoring and to share their knowledge.

Best Practices: College

1. The College will sponsor a meeting at least once a year, announced well beforehand and with a follow-up reminder, and open to all tenure-track faculty to discuss the requirements for tenure and promotion and the tenure and promotion process. Chairs and directors are invited to this meeting and are to be very strongly encouraged to attend so as to introduce transparency into these proceedings.
2. The College pays particular heed to special needs for mentoring within particular groups—needs that may emerge through discussions with junior faculty or through patterns perceivable in applications for tenure. Where such needs emerge, it will set up special mentoring structures to address them.
3. The Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs are open to meetings with groups of junior faculty who wish to speak with them about particular issues.
4. The Dean asks of all chairs and directors that they include in their annual reports a section on mentoring and on diversity and this is part of the conversation between the Dean and chairs and directors in their annual review conversation.
5. The Dean will work with chairs and directors of departments and programs with very few women and/or minority hires to help make the “climate” in these departments and programs more collegial to such faculty (e.g., through addressing mentoring issues, issues of community, systemic discrimination, “climates” of intense internal competitiveness that may be unattractive to potential hires, etc.).
6. The Dean’s Office will make available to chairs and directors and to tenure-track faculty a list of resources available on campus to improve teaching, facilitate mentoring, provide information about progress to tenure, etc.
7. The Dean’s Office will sponsor an information session annually on effective mentoring for new faculty members and for chairs and directors.