



CHAPTER 4

Tips for Guidance of Departmental Mentoring

“I valued most the advice my mentor gave on research and how to move past obstacles to improve productivity. I also valued my mentor’s advice on how to balance the numerous responsibilities of being an assistant professor and how to balance life outside work with life at work.”

—Mentee comment

The material contained in this chapter is intended for department chairs/heads and is relevant primarily to one-on-one mentoring relationships. However, the guidelines in this part of the manual can be modified easily for two types of mentoring relationships—(a) mentors from within a mentee’s department and (b) mentors from another department within the same school/unit or even from another unit on the same campus. In fact, some universities report assigning mentors from outside a mentee’s university for various reasons, but most frequently because of a lack of a good match within the department in terms of gender, research area, and/or ethnicity. You will find that much of the material in this chapter can be modified easily to meet the specific needs of any of these one-on-one mentoring relationships.

Importance of Formal Mentoring of New Faculty

Essentially mentoring is viewed as senior faculty members assisting junior faculty members in their development on both professional and personal levels. As indicated in the literature review in chapter 7, many departments seek to increase the diversity of their

faculty in gender, ethnicity/national origin, and/or area of research and teaching expertise. More formal mentoring programs address the need to recruit and retain minority faculty.

When we interviewed a number of our university department chairs/heads who have had long-standing formal mentoring programs within their departments, several major themes emerged. These higher education middle managers noted how important formal mentoring is to creating a community within their departments that is welcoming, respectful, and inclusive of all faculty members. These chairs also spoke about the value of creating a mentoring culture within their departments in which everyone is viewed as being both a learner and teacher/supporter of others. By valuing the informal and formal mentoring of all faculty members, the department is seen as placing a high value on this role and then carrying it out intentionally to mentor junior faculty. It is interesting that these chairs also noted that the formal mentoring program within their respective departments has helped ensure that new faculty members are involved in most major decision making, which has facilitated the efficiency of the process.

Another way in which mentoring contributes to departmental culture is the practice of one senior



faculty member being responsible to protect and advocate for a new faculty member. Some of the department chairs noted that, over time, they have seen how much it means to their junior faculty members to know they have at least one senior faculty member on their side as they continue to orient themselves to the university and become more familiar with the expectations of their faculty position. In addition, some of the chairs reported that, because of their mentoring program, they believe there is more collaboration between junior and senior faculty in securing external funds, carrying out research, and publishing articles. Two chairs in particular also pointed out that formal mentoring ensured that new faculty members' progress toward tenure and promotion is always monitored. Readers are referred to Sidebar 4.1, which lists what Sorcinelli (2000) delineated as the 10 principles for

good practice within a higher education department. It is not surprising that these 10 principles further validate the tremendous multiple benefits of creating a formal mentoring program within a department.

Logistics for Establishing a Departmental Mentoring Program

Several components need to be planned and carried out for a department to have a successful mentoring program. First and foremost, chairs/heads should determine whether there is a policy statement at the university level and/or school level that allows for establishing a mentoring program. If such a policy does not exist, it is a good idea to create one, and then go through the usual steps to have it approved at either the university or school level. With a policy statement in place, chairs can be more assured that they have the endorsement of and resource support from the university's upper administration and/or their dean. In addition, some chairs may feel it would be important as well to have a departmental policy statement on their mentoring program so that the mentoring opportunity/support provided to all new faculty members is more consistent across the board. Such a policy should also include details about the mentoring support so new chairs will be able to continue the mentoring practice already in place.

A second logistical issue that has to be addressed is matching new faculty with senior faculty who will serve as mentors. Most researchers in this area advise that it is best that both the mentee and mentor have input into this matching. In addition, new faculty members should know that mentoring is optional so they feel they have a choice about participating in such a program. Departmental chairs/heads will have to decide how they will make match decisions. Sidebar 4.2 provides some helpful ideas on the qualities of effective mentors. Even though a number of authors in the related literature advise formally training mentors, often a departmental chair will not have the time, money, or expertise to provide such formal training. As a result, chairs may have to ask senior faculty members who already have some of the qualities listed in Sidebar

SIDEBAR 4.1

Sorcinelli's (2000) 10 principles for good practice

1. Good practice communicates expectations for performance.
2. Good practice gives feedback on performance.
3. Good practice enhances collegial review processes.
4. Good practice creates flexible timelines for tenure.
5. Good practice encourages mentoring by senior faculty.
6. Good practice extends mentoring and feedback to graduate students who aspire to be faculty members.
7. Good practice recognizes the department chair as a career sponsor.
8. Good practice supports teaching, particularly at the undergraduate level.
9. Good practice supports scholarly development.
10. Good practice fosters a balance between professional and personal life.



SIDEBAR 4.2

Characteristics of effective mentors

- Good listener
- Organizational skills
- Willingness to promote others
- Ability to support
- Ability to challenge
- Reliability
- Collaborative skills
- Insightful

4.2. If there is a university or unit policy on mentoring, training may be available as a resource. A mentor training session is outlined in Appendix I (p. 120).

As mentioned earlier, it is also a good idea to ask the new faculty member if he or she would prefer a particular senior faculty member as mentor. Department heads must also be sensitive to the challenges involved when they make cross-gender matches or matches where the mentor is not of the same ethnicity as the mentee. This point is delineated further in the section in this chapter under challenges of departmental mentoring. In brief, it is ideal, although most times not practical, to make mentoring matches where the pairs are of the same gender and ethnicity. It should be noted here, however, that most of our mentees over a five-year period did report they received effective mentoring from senior faculty who were not the same gender and/or ethnicity. It appears from the related literature that the area of mentoring that is not perceived as effective in such cases involves more of the psychosocial or personal needs of the mentee. In such cases, chairs may decide to match a new faculty member with someone from another department either within the same school or another unit on campus. Even though such a senior faculty member will have the disadvantage of not being as knowledgeable about tenure requirements and other procedures within the mentee's department, the benefits of matching a junior faculty member with someone

of the same gender and ethnicity may outweigh the disadvantages.

A third logistical issue involves the time commitment for a mentoring match within a department. Department chairs will have to determine, possibly with input from both senior and junior faculty members, how long mentoring matches should last. Much of the recent literature favors new faculty having multiple mentors while they work toward tenure and promotion. In addition, some studies have found that mentors prefer a shorter time commitment since they report having more energy and enthusiasm for a one-year commitment than a five-year one. It will be critical that chairs define the time commitment for making these matches so the mentor and mentee are clear on this point. If chairs decide to follow a one-year format for mentoring matches, then they will have to follow a similar process when making mentoring matches the following years until a junior faculty member is tenured and promoted. One of the many advantages of a junior faculty member being matched with several senior faculty members is that this gives the junior faculty member an opportunity to learn from the strengths of each person and even to consider some collaborative work with one or more of them. A second advantage is the input received will come from many of the people who will be participating in tenure decisions.

The fourth logistical issue that will need to be addressed is the chair's monitoring of the mentoring process. Even if the match is made for one year, the chair still needs to plan some intentional way of checking on the level of effectiveness of the mentoring before the end of the year. Department heads should check with the mentee and mentor at least at the end of each semester. Chairs can do this monitoring informally by simply asking each person involved in the match how well he or she feels the mentoring is meeting the mentee's needs and goals. Another option is a "Departmental Mentoring Checklist" (Appendix H, p. 108), which allows the mentoring pair to decide on goals for the year and evaluate progress. In addition to checking on the effectiveness of this mentoring, chairs need to ensure that there is regular contact between the mentor and mentee. During the first semester of mentoring a new faculty member, the mentor will need to meet once a



week with the mentee, at least for the first month or two. However, during the second and following semesters, there can be fewer of these meetings since the mentee may not need to consult with the mentor as often. Sometimes the chair may have to give the mentor suggestions for other ways to support the mentee, such as peer evaluations of his or her teaching, review of manuscripts, suggestions for others who could review grant proposals or manuscripts, and recommendations for journals to consider for submission of articles.

The fifth logistical issue that needs to be planned for a departmental mentoring program is evaluating its efficacy. Chairs will need to keep in mind that in many small departments it will be difficult if not impossible for new faculty members to feel comfortable enough to share their evaluation of their assigned mentors honestly. This is particularly true since senior faculty mentors from one's own department will ultimately vote on the mentee's tenure. Then, we suggest that department chairs work in collaboration with chairs from other departments and their dean so that evaluating the mentoring of new faculty can be done anonymously across the entire school or unit. A standard survey can be developed and then distributed to all new faculty who have mentors. When these surveys have been completed and collected, aggregated data can be analyzed, with the results reported for the entire school or unit rather than for a particular department. The larger unit can then take necessary measures, such as providing mentor training, to improve mentoring. Chairs need to be sensitive to the fact that mentees need to have a safe way to provide formal feedback on the effectiveness of their mentoring support at least once a year. If a school decides to use this type of evaluation method, then individual chairs should still meet separately with both the mentors and mentees to ask more informally how they evaluate the mentoring experience. Chairs will need to use data gathered from all evaluation methods to inform how they proceed with each new faculty member's mentoring in the future.

Benefits of Departmental Mentoring for Junior and Senior Faculty Members

In the chapter 7 review of the literature, many benefits are reported from providing a formalized mentoring

program to new faculty members. Benefits that primarily address current needs of most higher education institutions include, but are not limited to: recruitment of high-quality, diverse faculty members; retention of these faculty members; cost savings from not having to orient and train new faculty; and preservation of a department's mission, culture, and norms. In addition, formal mentoring can provide the following valuable benefits for a department:

- Assists minority faculty in addressing issues unique to their faculty role
- Enhances junior faculty members' teaching skills by providing peer reviews of their teaching, or allowing the mentees to observe the mentors' teaching
- Improves new faculty members' ability to secure external funding
- Increases new faculty members' skills in research, writing, and publication of manuscripts
- Increases the overall productivity of new faculty members
- Improves new faculty members' skills in preparing online courses and teaching them
- Increases junior faculty members' career satisfaction and ability to raise their profile
- Provides assistance so new faculty members are able to find a satisfying work/personal life balance
- Assists new faculty members in assimilating into a department and finding a sense of community within this setting, thus ensuring the continuity of a culture within the department
- Provides much-needed guidance in prioritizing and balancing the many demands on a new faculty member
- Creates more of a sense of community within a department
- Provides more built-in protection and advocacy safeguards for new faculty members
- Increases the potential of collaboration between colleagues within a department in securing external funding and publishing manuscripts
- Improves junior faculty members' success in attaining tenure and promotion, often

Tips for Guidance of Departmental Mentoring

assisting them with the preparation of their three-year and final-year dossier

- Provides a safe place for new faculty members to air their concerns, questions, and/or challenges
- Regularly informs senior faculty about how they are supporting new faculty and what changes, if any, could be beneficial

Refer to chapter 7 for specific literature citations supporting many of these benefits of formalized departmental mentoring programs. Be aware, however, that some of the benefits listed here surfaced from our interviews with department heads/chairs who have had a long history of formal mentoring within their respective departments.

Challenges of Departmental Mentoring

There is no doubt that in most departments the benefits of providing a formal mentoring program to all new faculty members far outweigh the challenges involved in establishing and conducting this type of support. The following challenges are addressed in the literature (see chapter 7 for related literature) and/or were identified from our interviews with departmental chairs/heads.

- One of the most frequently reported challenges involves whether both the mentor and mentee are willing and able to make the time commitment for regular mentoring sessions. Chairs should check with senior faculty before making a match for a new faculty member, to ensure that a particular senior faculty member is able to make the time commitment needed to mentor someone effectively.
- Related to the first challenge, chairs need to advocate for recognizing the time and effort involved in mentoring. In terms of university service, it is important that this role is able to be documented in a mentor's annual report and also in his or her dossier when the individual is up for promotion. There is a signature sheet in Appendix F (p. 92) that can be used to clear a faculty member to participate in a school or university mentoring program that can also

document the mentoring service. If promotion and tenure documents are being revised, advocate for the inclusion of recognition for mentoring.

- Since there will always be a power differential when a senior faculty member mentors a junior faculty member, it is important to remember that the new faculty member may not always feel comfortable sharing his or her concerns, challenges, or problems honestly. For this reason, some chairs may decide to match new faculty with mentors from other departments within either their school or university, at least for the first year.
- Sometimes only a few senior faculty members are available to serve as mentors for a particular department. In such cases, a chair may decide to consider asking a senior faculty member from another department to serve in this role.
- Although it is ideal to rotate mentoring of new faculty members every year or two until they attain tenure and promotion, there may not be enough senior faculty members in a department to allow for this. In this case, chairs may want to seek a mentor for a new faculty member from another department.
- The mentoring match may not work well for any number of reasons, including lack of time commitment on either party's part, personality conflicts, and/or a match that involves different genders and/or ethnicities. Chairs must be sensitive to the possibility that a new faculty member, of a different gender and/or ethnicity from his or her mentor, may not feel comfortable sharing some things with a particular mentor. Sidebar 4.3 delineates some of the threats to promotion and tenure that Yoshinaga-Itano (2006) identified for minority faculty members who are often represented in small numbers in most departments.
- Not all senior faculty members are naturally good mentors and, in some cases, some of them could benefit from formal training on the mentoring role. One added challenge is that the literature contains very little information on what such a training program should involve. In addition, many chairs may

SIDEBAR 4.3***Threats to promotion and tenure of minority faculty members***

- More likely to have nontraditional areas of scholarship
- More likely to have nontraditional venues of publication
- More likely to be in applied areas of research that will take longer to complete
- Lack of adequate research mentors
- Lack of senior faculty understanding of scholarship challenges for minority faculty
- Lack of an equitable evaluation system
- Lack of knowledge of the political systems in a university and steps necessary to become tenured
- Lack of mentors for psychosocial supports
- Lack of senior faculty familiar with the challenges minority faculty face in the classroom
- Lack of awareness that minority faculty often have higher levels of service

not have the resources to provide such training. One alternative way to provide training of senior faculty for mentoring roles is for a chair to request that his or her dean address this issue from the school budget.

- Continuity and consistency in how a departmental mentoring program is conducted can be a challenge, particularly with changing department chairs. For this reason, we recommend that all senior faculty work together to establish a policy and related procedures for conducting mentoring within their department. If such information is in writing, and all involved senior faculty have agreed to it, there is less likelihood that there will be problems with continuity and consistency with a department's mentoring program even when new chairs are named.

- Another challenge involves getting regular feedback from a mentee about how the mentoring relationship is working. As indicated earlier, it is very important to plan ways to seek such feedback at the end of each semester and then at the end of each year. The checklist in Appendix H (p. 108) can be used both to plan the year's mentoring activities and report on accomplishments during the year. It is also essential that this feedback be elicited in such a way that new faculty members feel they can share honestly how the mentoring support is working from their perspective.

Stages of Professional Development

Obviously every new faculty member needs to be treated as an individual; however, we have found that there appear to be fairly common stages of professional development these professionals typically experience within a department. Following are those stages with some of the more common concerns and goals identified in each stage, along with the ideal way to make the mentoring matches.

Initial Year

Common concerns/goals for a new faculty member include:

- dealing with the imposter syndrome;
- having a fragile sense of competency for job responsibilities;
- wanting to feel a sense of belonging in a department;
- being overwhelmed with various tasks;
- experiencing challenges in balancing time for all role expectations;
- worrying about making mistakes and not doing well;
- publishing the dissertation; and
- setting the research agenda/setting up a lab.

The department chair has many opportunities to support a new faculty member outside of helping in



the search for a mentor. The single most important support the chair can give is protecting the new faculty member's time. New faculty should be guided to service assignments that are not time intensive (see "Time Commitment for Faculty Senate Committees," Appendix H, p. 110), and should be advised to respond to requests for their time by saying, "That sounds very interesting. I'll need to check with my chair on that."

The ideal way to match a new faculty member with a mentor is for the two people involved to decide mutually to work together. However, for a first-semester hire, this may not be possible. In this case the chair will make the decision while considering the many factors mentioned in this chapter. Most new faculty will not know senior faculty members well enough at this stage to indicate whom they would like as a mentor.

Years Two to Three

Common issues/goals for new faculty members during these next two years include:

- establishing a clear research program;
- becoming more competent as a classroom instructor;
- determining a balance and schedule for completing all that is necessary for progressing toward tenure;
- wanting to establish more of a work/personal life balance;
- increasing their network of connections within the department and in the wider university;
- often feeling ready for more autonomy due to increased self-confidence; and
- preparing a dossier for successful reappointment at the three-year mark.

During these two years, new faculty members should be asked to indicate whom they would like as their mentor. A chair may not always be able to honor this request, but it is important that these professionals have a say in the match during this stage. Mentoring pairs who participate in the choice will be more committed to spending the time and effort required to have a successful relationship.

Years Four to Six

Common issues/goals for new faculty members in this stage include:

- the need to increase their profile in the department, university, and research area;
- often a major push to secure external funds for research;
- high motivation to increase publications in preparation for tenure review;
- the need to have senior faculty/chair review curriculum vitae to see how they are progressing toward tenure in the department; and
- preparation of the dossier for successful tenure and promotion review.

Ideally by this point in a new faculty member's career, the chair should allow this person to determine again who would be his or her choice for a good mentor, whether someone inside or outside the department. Again, the chair may not be able to honor this request due to the workload of the prospective mentor, but it is most important to respect these professionals' perspectives on what type of mentor they need during these last years before they are up for tenure review.

Assessment of a Departmental Mentoring Program

As indicated earlier, it is most important for a chair to have access to or create both formative and summative methods for evaluating a new faculty mentoring program. Sometimes the formative evaluation can be done more informally, typically at the end of each semester, by the chair asking both the mentee and mentor how they view their working together. It is ideal to explore how this mentoring is working with both the mentee and mentor present so any issues of concern can be addressed immediately. In addition, this type of meeting provides mentees with an opportunity to provide positive feedback to their mentors; the same is true to enable the mentor to provide similar feedback to the mentee. A planning and assessment checklist of areas of focus during the coming year, as



well as for indicating that the work was addressed, is in Appendix H (p. 108).

It is also important that both mentor and mentee complete a more formal summative evaluation each year. This type of evaluation should be conducted at the school/unit level rather than the departmental level. The reason is that this method of assessment allows for new faculty members to provide feedback in a more anonymous way that increases their comfort level and makes them more likely to provide honest feedback. Included in Appendix G is a sample summative evaluation form for new faculty members and one for mentors. Chairs should feel free to suggest these sample evaluation surveys or modifications of them to their deans to assist with these assessments at the school/unit level.

Chairs should supplement these evaluations by continuing to seek more informal feedback from both mentees and mentors and from the most recently tenured members of their faculty. These last individuals can share the most helpful support they received as they worked toward tenure and promotion.

References

- Sorcinelli, M. (2000). *Principles of good practice: Supporting early-career faculty*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- Yoshinaga-Itano, C. (2006). Institutional barriers and myths to recruitment and retention of faculty of color. In C. Stanley (Ed.), *Faculty of color: Teaching in predominantly White colleges and universities*. Boston, MA: Anker.