

UNIVERSITY of GUELPH



NEW FACULTY MENTORING

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(a work in progress¹)

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by

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¹ The following suggestions, taken from current practices at the University of Guelph, are for the consideration of the stakeholders, and should not be considered to be all inclusive. As mentoring becomes a more deliberate activity, it is certain that additional best practices and recommendations will develop. It is hoped that you will share these with your colleagues.

Photo: Dr. Sunghwan Yi, Marketing and Consumer Studies, Dr. Maureen Mancuso, Provost and Vice-President Academic and Dr. Georgia Mason, Canada Research Chair, Animal & Poultry Science. **Photo Credit:** R.W.M. Gibbs.

NEW FACULTY MENTORING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Best Practices and Recommendations

This document arises from a research project conducted in Spring 2005, and should be considered in conjunction with a companion document, **“New Faculty Mentoring Research Findings Summary”**. It was established that a formal faculty mentoring program would not be appropriate within the overall organizational culture of this university. This acknowledges the diverse cultures between and within colleges and departments. However, faculty mentoring, particularly for new faculty, was strongly supported at all levels.

As one new faculty member commented,

“mentoring does not need to be formal but it does need to be explicit and supported.”

The consultative and collegial organizational culture of the University of Guelph supports a flexible, informal model of faculty mentoring, delivered locally at the departmental and college level. This ensures that the models and activities selected are most conducive to the unique culture of each department and academic discipline. The nature of mentoring relationships must be left to the individual partners to determine, i.e. focus on research, teaching, and general orientation or work life balance, frequency of meetings, format of meetings, etc. All faculty can benefit from mentoring, therefore it is important that all faculty, whether they are new, tenured or untenured, mid-career or established career, be included in mentoring initiatives.

The following suggestions, taking from current practices at the University of Guelph, are for the consideration of the stakeholders, and should not be considered to be all inclusive. As mentoring becomes a more deliberate activity, it is certain that additional best practices and recommendations will develop. It is hoped that these will be shared with your colleagues.

Senior Administration

Leadership is a critical issue in moving this initiative forward.² The leadership function of contributing to the development of others is one of the purposes of a university. The President and the Provost and Vice-President

² Capioppe, R. (1998). Leaders developing leaders: An effective way to enhance leadership development programs. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 19, 194-198.

(Academic) provide this leadership function in their continuing discussions with the Deans, urging implementation of culturally appropriate mentoring initiatives at the college and departmental levels.

Faculty mentoring is an important activity. The President and the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) support continuing and ongoing faculty mentoring at all career stages. This is highlighted annually in addresses at New Faculty Orientation. All new faculty members are strongly encouraged to attend this annual University level event, coordinated by Teaching Support Services and the Office of Faculty Recruitment and Support.

- Colleges and departments are strongly encouraged to offer similar orientation events, regardless of how many new faculty members have joined the academic ranks in the past year.
- Psychosocial mentoring is also encouraged. Collegial socializing and work-related social events can facilitate this.
- Mentorships should last at least one year, and optimally until the new faculty member attains tenure, then at the discretion of the partners.

In their leadership roles, the President and the Provost and Vice President (Academic) are open to further suggestions that will ensure the success of new faculty.

Suggestions for Chairs and Directors:

- Discuss faculty mentoring at Departmental Faculty Meetings, underscoring the department's commitment to new faculty, and the importance of developing and maintaining a departmental culture of collegiality and support.
- Consider having a departmental document covering mentoring activities appropriate within the departmental culture.
- Discuss the importance of mentoring with candidates during the faculty recruitment and selection processes.
- Discuss the importance of having a mentor as early as possible with the new faculty member, possibly prior to arrival or shortly after arrival on campus.
- Prepare a list of potential mentors for discussion with each new faculty member.
- Ask new faculty members what their primary mentoring needs are, i.e. departmental, college, university mechanisms vs. discipline based mentoring ("how do I get a grant", "how do I publish", "what are the teaching expectations?", "what is a teaching dossier", etc.) This will help determine appropriate mentors.

- Facilitate connection between new faculty and agreed-upon mentors. Encourage connection with mentors and peer mentors from outside the department.
- Do not wait for questions from new faculty members! They may not be aware of the questions to ask. Ensure they know who to approach for accurate information.
- Check in periodically with each new faculty member to see how they are settling in, answer questions, provide further orientation, etc.
- Provide exposure to administrative and service activities by assigning new faculty members to committee memberships.
- Protect new and untenured faculty from over-commitments, particularly in the early years.
- Avoid being judgmental when new and untenured faculty raise questions.
- Recognize and acknowledge mentoring as valuable activity.

Tenure and Promotion:

- Ensure that new faculty members receive departmental Tenure and Promotion and TAPSI Guidelines prior to or upon arrival. The Chair or Director should explain the significance of these documents.
- The Chair or Director should have individual discussions with new faculty about terms and conditions of employment, including distribution of effort, and the Tenure and Promotion and TAPSI processes.
- Provide consistent, detailed, timely, and repeated information sessions on tenure and promotion processes.
- Have annual sessions in the spring with all untenured faculty members, those going forward for promotion, and other new faculty to demystify the T&P processes.
- Demonstrate how to fill in the departmental forms, what to include, and how to present it. Have drafts of T&P submissions critiqued by a senior colleague, perhaps one of the mentors, before being submitted to the Chair, and subsequently to the Committee.
- Provide access to a departmental example of a successful T&P document, as well as a teaching dossier. Seeing the work of a peer who has recently achieved tenure may be more helpful than seeing the T&P documents and dossier of the most successful established full professor.
- Repeat T&P and TAPSI processes discussions in annual group meetings of all untenured faculty members. Include members of the departmental T&P committee in these discussion sessions. The College Representative on the Departmental committee should provide assurances of consistency across departments and could explain the college processes.
- Review the new and untenured faculty members' drafts of their T&P and TAPSI documents, or encourage a mentor to do so.

Teaching:

- Provide teaching support in early stages by reducing the normal teaching load, establishing shared or team teaching, encouraging established

- faculty to have a departmental policy to share lecture materials, expertise of staff, etc.
- Encourage new and untenured faculty to have a teaching mentor. Upon the new faculty member's invitation, the mentor might attend a few of the new faculty member's lectures to provide feedback and guidance.
 - Encourage accessing the expertise of Teaching Support Services on a regular basis.
 - Provide support for teaching administration issues, i.e. a knowledgeable contact person or a departmental handbook covering protocols, midterm tests, assignments, final exams, grades distribution, extensions of deadlines, contacts for classroom bookings, technical support, etc. This resource should be in addition to the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Research:

- Establish a departmental or college committee made up of those who have been on tri-council adjudication committees, to help new faculty develop ideas and review drafts of grant proposals. Encourage new faculty to use these resources in a timely manner.
- Have mentors help new faculty learn the mechanics of grant seeking.
- Encourage accessing Office of Research support services to aid in identifying funding sources and to assist with process inquiries.
- Provide examples of successful funding applications as guidelines to new faculty.
- Provide career coaching and emotional support to new faculty when funding applications are unsuccessful. Provide constructive critiquing of unsuccessful funding applications.
- Facilitate collaboration on major funding proposals, use of research resources, including labs and staff.
- Suggest that new faculty members have a mentor review and provide feedback on papers prior to be submission for publication.

Suggestions for New Faculty:

- Take responsibility for directing your own career development.
- Play a proactive role in determining your mentoring needs.
- Consider your mentoring needs during the recruitment process.
- Prepare a list of potential mentors for discussion with your Chair or Director.
- Take the Chair's offer to facilitate connections with a mentor(s) and mentoring.
- Discuss your mentoring needs with your mentor(s).
- Use your mentor(s) wisely and regularly.
- Make it your business to receive and understand the departmental T&P and TAPSI documents, and how the criteria apply to you. Direct your

- questions to your Chair or Director. Get additional information and feedback from members of the departmental or college committee, other faculty, and / or the Faculty Association.
- Proximity and access to mentors is important. Having a mentor within same building may be helpful.
 - Use the resources of Teaching Support Services, the Office of Research, the experience and expertise of the Professional Librarians and your peers.

Suggestions for Faculty Association:

- Encourage new faculty members to be active participants in their career success and partners in developing the structure and functions of their mentoring relationships.
- Encourage new faculty members to use the Association and its resources, particularly the grievance officer, to assist with understanding criteria for career success.
- Establishment of a Faculty Association managed university-wide mentorship pool in a parallel departmental and college mentoring initiative could be considered.

Suggestions for Deans:

- Highlight or profile the importance of mentoring in the offer letter, and encourage new faculty to contact their Chair to discuss the facilitation of Mentorships.
- Encourage Chairs to facilitate the establishment of at least one mentor for each new faculty member.
- Have an annual College Orientation event. This will facilitate cross-disciplinary collaborations and connections and peer mentoring.
- Provide mentoring in the form of meetings with new faculty to explain the Tenure and Promotion and TAPSI processes.
- Encourage inter-disciplinary collaboration by reimbursing the costs of lunches and other cross-departmental events.
- Provide research mentoring support in the form of central services such as an Associate Dean (Research) or College Research Grants Manager.
- Recognition of mentoring on T&P Service can be a powerful reinforcement.

Faculty mentoring provides an intellectually stimulating, mutually beneficial and pleasant environment in which to work and to feel at home with colleagues, including retirees. It is a valuable activity to pursue at all career stages, and contributes to collegiality, collaboration and job satisfaction. Mentoring relationships are strongly encouraged.