

# **A BRIEF GUIDE TO FACULTY MENTORING**

**IN THE DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**

**Prepared by Dietrich School Diversity Committee, March 2015**

The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences requires that each junior tenure-stream faculty member be provided with appropriate mentoring. If the Dietrich School's ambition for excellence is to be sustained, outstanding faculty must not only be hired, but supported as they develop their careers as teachers, scholars, and researchers. Mentoring also is essential to achieving long-term diversity by ensuring that faculty from groups underrepresented in a department are integrated into networks of information and receive collegial and informed career guidance.

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## **THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR**

The chair of the department is responsible for assigning a mentor (or mentoring committee) to each junior tenure-stream faculty member at the time of arrival and throughout the pre-tenure period. The role of the mentor is not to replace, but to complement, the chair's responsibility to advise tenure-stream faculty.

Mentoring is a relationship and it is important to ensure that these relationships continue to be productive over time. Each junior TS faculty member should be consulted annually about how well the mentoring relationship is working, whether s/he wants to remain with the same mentor or change mentors for the following year, and whether s/he wants assistance in identifying additional mentors from outside the department. If the department chair is the mentor, this inquiry should be made by a senior colleague. Consulting mentors about the success of the mentoring relationship will be useful as well.

Occasionally, it may be helpful to a new faculty member to have a mentor from another department. This may be the case, for instance, in a small department where there is no good match for the particular expertise of a new faculty member. Or, a woman in a department whose faculty are predominantly male might request that a female faculty member from another department be invited to join the departmental mentor. In such cases the chair, in consultation with the Senior Associate Dean, should make appropriate arrangements. However, the purpose of mentoring within the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences is primarily to ensure that new faculty have every opportunity for career success. Because tenure decisions are highly discipline-specific, outside mentoring can supplement, but not replace, the specific advice about tenure standards and practices which only senior departmental colleagues can provide.

In order to build a strong climate of mentoring in the department, chairs are encouraged to request and assess information about faculty contributions to the mentoring of more junior colleagues as part of annual faculty evaluations of performance in the area of service.

## CHECKLIST FOR MENTORING MEETINGS

### CAREER:

- Disciplinary, departmental, and University expectations for tenure and promotion.
- How to build networks with colleagues at Pitt and elsewhere.
- Building a career trajectory with short- and long-term goals and a plan for achieving these.
- How to become visible and respected in your field.

### RESEARCH:

- Feedback on scholarship and grant proposals.
- Sources of support for internal funding.
- Practices of the discipline in applying for grants/fellowships, publishing research, etc.
- How to create a research plan, where to publish and how often, and how to negotiate collaborations.
- The department's norms about presenting research in-progress, circulating published work to colleagues, asking colleagues to read drafts, collaborative research.
- Which conferences to attend.

### TEACHING & MENTORING:

- How to establish an excellent teaching record.
- Expectations about teaching, grading, and teaching evaluations.
- Sources of support for teaching at the University of Pittsburgh.
- Expectations for mentoring and supervising graduate students and serving on graduate student committees.

### LIFE IN THE DEPARTMENT:

- The informal norms of academic life, such as the department's academic culture, how to balance service, teaching and research responsibilities, and rebounding from publication rejection or poor teaching evaluations.
- Social dimensions of becoming a departmental colleague.
- Which department and university events it is important to attend.

### SERVICE:

- How to evaluate requests for service to the department and profession.

### LIFE OUTSIDE ACADEMIA:

- Where to turn for help and advice on achieving a good work-life balance or other personal and family concerns.

### THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP:

- Clarify unfolding expectations about what you want in the mentoring relationship.

## TIPS FOR MENTORS

### 9 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP:

- Treat private information from your mentee as confidential.
- Listen carefully and make suggestions rather than prescriptions.
- Help your mentee identify and build on his/her strengths.
- Be aware of differences between you and your mentee in terms of age, race, gender, and other attributes and sensitive to the different challenges and demands that your mentee may face as a result of these differences.
- Be forthright in your assessments, providing constructive criticism as well as praise and support.
- Provide advice as a representative of the department's senior faculty, not as your own opinion.
- Provide emotional encouragement as well as career advice.
- Be willing to discuss the social dimension of becoming a departmental colleague.
- If you are not comfortable providing advice in some area, suggest another senior faculty member who may be able to do so.

### 7 THINGS TO DO BEFORE THE INITIAL MEETING:

- Review the mentee's curriculum vitae.
- Assess what you can offer as a mentor and what you cannot.
- Ensure that you have current knowledge about your discipline's and your department's expectations for tenure.
- Make sure that you understand University of Pittsburgh's tenure and promotion practices.
- Acquaint yourself with [university policies](#) and resources for junior faculty, such as [criteria for promotion and tenure](#), [family medical and family leave policies](#), and [opportunities for internal and external funding in your field](#).
- Think about what enabled/hindered your progress as a new faculty member and what lessons might be useful to convey.

### 2 THINGS TO DO AT THE INITIAL MEETING:

- Discuss the expectations that each of you has for this mentoring relationship.
- Establish a regular meeting time and setting, perhaps for coffee or lunch. Meet at least once per term; preferably once per month.

### BEYOND THE MENTORING MEETINGS:

- Promote the mentee by introducing him/her to professional networks, collaborators, and opportunities.
- Nominate the mentee for appropriate editorial boards, professional committees, and awards.

## TIPS FOR MENTEES

### 10 THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP:

- Clarify your expectations about the mentoring relationship and discuss these up front with your mentor.
- Be an active participant in the mentoring relationship. Be proactive in expressing what types of knowledge, relationships, or advice would be most helpful to you. Provide feedback to your mentor on how the mentoring relationship is working.
- Seek advice from multiple people so that you fully understand the tenure process.
- Review the faculty handbook and policies (<http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies>) so you can ask informed questions.
- Seek help early about difficulties in the classroom or in your research.
- Make connections with other junior faculty in your department and outside. Be a peer mentor.
- Listen to advice, but remember that you are ultimately responsible for your career.
- Realize that your mentor might not address every issue. Expand your mentoring network beyond your mentor and beyond your department.
- If you do not find this mentoring relationship to be helpful or constructive, talk to the department chair about adding or substituting another faculty mentor.
- Thank and acknowledge your mentor's assistance when appropriate.