

Faculty Mentoring & Advancement

Mentoring is an important part of developing and retaining both new and more senior faculty. Through mentoring, critical information is passed along that helps a faculty member guide and advance his/her career to tenure and beyond. Especially important, mentoring enables cultural and political acclimation for new faculty, and often enables social networking, which helps faculty members feel welcomed and connected with the department and campus. All of these elements are crucial to a culture of inclusion for women and minorities in particular, who may experience more difficulty connecting with established social, political and informational networks.

Traditional Definition of Mentor

"...Individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing support and upward mobility to their protégé's careers."

(Ragins in Handbook on Gender and Work, 1999, Hunt & Michael, 1983, Kram, 1985)

Mentor vs. Career Advisor

Some campuses prefer to use the term "advisor" or "career advisor" because they feel that "mentor" connotes a relationship that is only suitable for junior/senior faculty pairs and implies a certain type of superiority on the mentor's part, similar to the relationship between a graduate student and his or her faculty "mentor". Some feel the term "advisor" is more neutral and collegial. "Advising" is appropriate at any career stage, not just for new faculty members who are not yet tenured. Use terminology that appeals to your department.

Mentoring Serves Two Different Purposes

The most commonly understood purpose of faculty-faculty mentoring is to help advance a faculty member's career. This can include advising on the tenure process and requirements for tenure within one's department, it can include review and comment on works in progress, it may mean recommending professional development workshops or providing individual advice on topics such as proposal writing, teaching, supervising graduate students, etc. All of these can be seen as direct interventions to advance a faculty career.

The other purpose for mentoring, which occurs just as frequently, is equally necessary and is more personal in nature, is providing emotional support and guidance on topics that directly relate to the work environment. Examples of this type of mentoring include advice about department politics, listening to and providing guidance regarding interacting with difficult colleagues, or helping a colleague work through issues of balancing research, teaching and family obligations. This type of advising is not as straightforward as specific recommendations to advance one's career, however, in many ways it can be even more valuable in terms of helping someone acclimate to a new academic environment and new job. For the colleague who has been in the department for some time, this kind of collegial support can make the difference in retaining a faculty member who is experiencing an interpersonal conflict at work or a problematic family situation.

Traditional Mentoring

The traditional mentoring relationship is a one-to-one relationship, often hierarchical in nature and typically internal to a department or organization. These relationships can be formal or informal and may be assigned or self-selected. The success of such relationships is heavily dependent on the mentor's willingness to commit time to the experience, interpersonal chemistry between the mentor and mentee, and a mentor with the ability to transmit his/her skill and knowledge in an understandable way to the mentee. Mentoring is not for everyone and there are some faculty members who will not feel comfortable acting as a mentor and who may not possess the interpersonal skills necessary for successful mentoring. When formally assigning mentor/mentee pairs, the chair must be cognizant of which faculty members will make the most successful mentors.

Traditional informal mentoring has worked in the past when the Academy was more homogeneous. Anecdotal and research findings, however, suggest that establishing these mentor/mentee relationships is more difficult today for women and minorities because, in part, they do not have the same access to existing networks as white males, other women and minority faculty members are in short supply and because everyone's overall workload has increased, leaving less time for mentoring. This changing environment makes it all the more necessary for the chair to step in and formally implement and monitor mentoring within the department.

Group Mentoring

In contrast to traditional mentoring, group mentoring is not one-on-one. Group mentoring can involve multiple mentors and multiple mentees meeting on a regular basis on one focused topic or multiple topics. An alternative is to have different groups of "mentors" discuss topics in which they have special expertise with a group of mentees, either the same group of mentees or different groups of mentees, depending on the topic.

Examples of group mentoring include:

- A panel of senior faculty who review dossiers to provide feedback and insight to a group of fourth year assistant professors to assist them in preparation for tenure.
- A cross-departmental group of minority faculty members who meet on a regular basis with a group of minority junior faculty to discuss issues related to navigating the politics of race and gender within the Academy.
- A group of senior women scientists who meet on a regular basis with pre-doctoral, post-doctoral and junior faculty women scientists to discuss issues relevant to academic women in science.
- Two senior faculty members who meet with a group of new faculty members to discuss approaches to finding and securing grant funding.
- A panel of senior faculty members who meet with new faculty members to discuss teaching techniques, best practices and common problems.

E-Mentoring

One of the newer areas in mentoring is mentoring via email. There are some national academic mentor networks that have formed, in which individuals can find mentors and correspond via email. Typically these organizations have a membership fee that is paid by the institution. Such e-mentoring may also be found through some professional societies and organizations. Such a mentoring program could be

Role of the Chair

- Take responsibility for overseeing mentoring at the department level.
- Communicate the importance of mentoring to senior faculty members and include recognition of their mentoring in their evaluations.
- Provide opportunities for senior faculty members to enhance their mentoring skills through professional development workshops, conferences or mentoring by the chair.
- Establish a formal mentor or multiple mentors for each new faculty member. (Even new faculty members who join the department with tenure may be paired with an “advisor.” The culture of the department and the UC may be different than what the faculty member is familiar with.)
- Ensure regular follow-up with departmental mentor/mentee pairs to make sure mentoring is occurring. (This can include individual, separate meetings with the mentor and the mentee, as well as short written mentoring evaluation forms.)
- Take an active role in addressing any issues discovered and make changes to mentor/mentee pairs as needed.
- Work with the dean and fellow chairs to establish interdepartmental or division level group mentoring programs.

formed within the University of California, even on an informal basis involving similar departments across campuses.

One Size Doesn't Fit All

The key to developing a successful mentoring environment is to provide multiple opportunities for mentoring and not to rely on a one-size-fits-all approach limited to formal traditional mentoring within departments. Instead, it is important to provide mentoring at multiple levels: departmental, divisional, campus-wide; and in different types: individual and group, formal and informal. By providing numerous options, the varying needs of individuals can best be met and it is more likely that efforts will reach everyone in some form.

Key Terms:

Internal Mentor – mentor who is in the same department as the mentee.

E-Mentor – a mentor who advises mentees via email, typically at a different institution than the mentee.

External Mentor – mentor who is not in the same department as the mentee.

Group Mentoring – two or more senior faculty members who mentor a group of faculty members, usually on a specific topic.

Peer Mentoring – a group of junior colleagues meeting to encourage each other and share their insights.

Conference Mentoring – a senior person from another institution helping junior colleagues think through career plans (may be formal or informal) and is likely to occur through conferences and professional societies.

Effective Mentoring

<https://www.apo.ucla.edu/guides/effective-mentoring>

Most junior faculty arrive at UCLA with only a vague idea of what is required to have a successful academic career. It is incumbent on departments and the University administration to provide new and junior faculty with counseling and career advice regarding the organization they have joined, its institutional processes, and their own career trajectory. One way of doing this is through formal and informal mentoring. Mentoring is most effective when it is both formal and informal, and when the process is regularly monitored. Formal mentoring involves the official appointment, by the department chair, of senior faculty as mentors who meet with junior faculty at specified intervals to review progress and future plans. Informal mentoring is more dependent on the naturally occurring discussions that take place among faculty.

There are a number of things that should be kept in mind to make the mentoring process as useful as possible. First, the selection of mentors should be made in consultation with the individual to be mentored and, importantly, with an eye to avoiding potential conflicts of interest or personality. All junior faculty should have at least one assigned mentor and required meetings should occur on a regular basis, with a recommended minimum of one meeting per quarter.

Second, the process of mentoring should cover multiple concerns that affect junior faculty. These include some of the following important areas (this is not meant to be an all-inclusive list): (1) How to balance the multiple criteria for advancement (research, teaching, professional engagement, and service); (2) Knowledge of the resources available to assist in improving teaching and/or research; (3) Knowledge of the criteria for evaluation of research, especially the importance of establishing a record of independent creativity; and (4) The criteria for achieving promotion, and how they are concretely applied in the department.

Third, successful mentoring is a process that involves a give and take relationship between the mentor and the individual involved. The mentor should establish a positive and non-judgmental atmosphere to build trust and openness in the relationship, providing feedback in a constructive manner. Mentors should make the right introductions to colleagues on the campus or in the discipline to help establish research collaborations.

There are pitfalls mentors should try to avoid. While one important goal of mentoring is to help determine the kind of career to be pursued, the mentors should be circumspect about imposing their own value judgments regarding a "correct" path to follow. Thus, mentors should not promote their agenda, but provide sound advice. The mentoring process can be problematic when those involved have dual relationships – for example if the mentor is a supervisor of the individual to be mentored or if the mentor is a co-author on a very large proportion of publications. Such circumstances should be avoided, but if that is not possible, the rule is to be on guard about the conflicts of interest. It often is difficult and even intimidating for junior faculty to articulate their questions and their needs under such circumstances; mentors need to be sensitive to this issue.

Finally, the process of mentoring works best when it is monitored. Mentors should provide brief summaries of mentoring discussions to the department chair, and the individual mentored should have access to the substance of these mentoring reports.

For additional information contact the office of the Vice Provost for Diversity and Faculty Development, Christine Littleton at ext. 67411.



Facilitating Career Advice:

Tips for department chairs and directors

Excerpt from “Giving and Getting Career Advice: A Guide for Junior and Senior Faculty” NSF ADVANCE at the University of Michigan <http://www.umich.edu/~advproj/career%20advising.pdf>

Department chairs and program directors set the tone for how many faculty in the unit – senior and junior – will view the issue of career advising. If the chair or director does not appear to truly value the practice, or merely gives it lip service, it will be clear to all concerned that it is not a valued activity in the unit. By taking career advising seriously, and consistently communicating that it is part of the responsibility of all faculty, chairs and directors can help create a climate in which better career advising takes place.

1. Build into the evaluations of senior faculty a share of responsibility for mentoring new colleagues. For example, during reviews for merit increases, chairs and directors can take into account the quality and quantity of career advising by asking explicitly for this information on the annual review forms. Have senior faculty document in their annual report their efforts to assist junior faculty in getting research grants, establishing themselves as independent researchers, and having their work published in peer-reviewed outlets. Collaborative research – especially when the junior scientist is the lead author – may also be a sign of a productive career advising relationship. You may also want to ask junior faculty to indicate which senior faculty have been helpful to them, as a sort of check on these self-reports.
2. Take multiple opportunities to communicate to senior colleagues the importance of providing career advice to junior faculty.
3. Ensure that the procedures and standards involved in the tenure and promotion processes are clear to junior faculty.
4. Ensure that all junior faculty know about University policies intended to ease the work-family conflict, such as stopping the “tenure clock” and modified duties.
5. Create opportunities that encourage informal interaction between junior and senior faculty. You might create a fund for ordering pizza, a lunch budget, a gift card for a local coffee shop for them to share, etc.
6. Provide a “tip sheet” for new arrivals. A tip sheet would include items such as contact people for key services around the Department or unit. More broadly, check to ensure that the newly-arrived faculty have access to the information, services, and materials (e.g., computing or lab equipment) needed to function effectively in the environment.
7. Recognize that senior faculty may not be completely certain how best to engage in career advising. Help them! For example, sponsor a lunch for senior faculty in which the topic of discussion is career advising and faculty can exchange information and ideas on the subject.
8. Provide the junior faculty member with a yearly review – in addition to a formal interim (4th year) review – of her/his accomplishments and discuss goals for the future. Recognize that junior faculty may find it difficult to assess the significance of criticism; be careful to frame criticism in a constructive way, but also be as clear as possible. Be sure to provide some written follow-up, summarizing the discussion (or to ask your junior colleague to do that, so you can review it).
9. Use email as a mechanism to ensure the entire faculty has equal access to key decisions, information, and career opportunities.

Council of Advisors

A Resource to Supplement Departmental Mentoring

A Council of Advisors is available to supplement departmental mentoring efforts. This council consists of former members of the Council on Academic Personnel (CAP) and Full Professors. If you have an Assistant Professor who might benefit from mentoring by senior faculty members outside of the department, please contact Diversity & Faculty Development at facdevelopment@conet.ucla.edu or call (310) 206-7411. You may also make this resource available to any Assistant Professor so that they may pursue this option on their own. The Council is always looking for full professors who are interested in mentoring junior faculty members. Please recommend this program to professors in your department who would be good mentors.

Goal of the Program

The goal of the program is to provide career advice and guidance to help Regular Rank and In-Residence Assistant Professors advance to Associate Professor.

Benefits of Career Advising

Career advising provides an opportunity to receive critical information to help a faculty member guide and advance his or her career. The Council of Advisors provides an opportunity to ask questions and receive career advice from faculty members outside one's department and from faculty members who have served on the Academic Senate Council on Academic Personnel (CAP).

How are Advisors and Advisees Matched?

Advisees will be matched with "teams of two" Council of Advisors members, with one member of each team being a former member of CAP. Matches will be based on information submitted by advisees and advisors to best meet the needs of the advisees. In some cases, two advisors may not be available, and if so, one advisor will be assigned.

What are the Expectations for Advisee/Advisor teams?

Advisee/advisor teams are expected to meet over the course of one academic year. A minimum of one meeting per quarter is expected, though more frequent meetings may be held if desired. At the first meeting, the advisee and advisors will establish mutually agreed upon goals for the advising relationship and complete a Council of Advisors Agreement, which will be filed with the office for Diversity & Faculty Development. This agreement will provide a basis for evaluating progress at the end of the year. If a team chooses to continue the advising relationship beyond one academic year, they may do so by mutual consent. If, for any reason, the advisee or advisor(s) need to terminate the relationship, they may do so. In such a case, new assignments will be made.