HANDBOOK

NEW FACULTY MENTOR PROGRAM

UAF
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS

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I. INTRODUCTION

MENTOR: from the Odyssey: the name of the Ithacan noble whom the goddess Athena chose to be the guide and advisor of the young Telemachus.

"The word courage is taken from the French word "cœur", which means heart. The Tao mentoring process instills courage, giving one permission to follow his or her heart and passion in all that one does ... Mentors can encourage mentees not to give up just when the oasis barely appears on the horizon. Encouraging others to continue the journey of heart at this point is the work of good mentoring."

"A mentor is a kind of guide who, despite having been far enough to know something of what's down the path, comes back to walk with you, and thus leads without leaving you to follow." – Boyd (1988)

The Office of Faculty Development sponsors a faculty mentoring program for the benefit of faculty members who will be in their first few years of teaching and scholarship at UAF. The director of the Office of Faculty Development directs this program and assists in working with designated faculty mentors in each department. The program is designed to offer each new faculty member an opportunity to work with an experienced faculty member throughout the year. Each new faculty will be requested to choose a mentor and encouraged to take advantage of the expertise and counsel of the mentor (or several mentors).

The aim is to help new faculty members better understand the University’'s goals, objectives, programs, and procedures and its academic, cultural, and social environment. The program also emphasizes the support of new faculty efforts to become excellent teachers and scholars and to successfully complete their pre-tenure years.

It is important that the senior faculty member care about and take seriously the role of mentor. This is an important university service as well as being crucial to the development of positive feelings and attitudes in the new faculty member towards colleagues and the university. Senior faculty make allocate one unit of their annual workload for this mentoring responsibility.

II. WHY A MENTORING PROGRAM IS IMPORTANT
(adapted from Perlman and McCann, 1996)

Think back to your first year as a faculty member. What made you stay in your first position or what made you seek greener pastures? Could your colleagues have better facilitated your adjustment to faculty life? In what ways? Did you have a mentor whose advice and support you remember to this day? What did he or she do to help you out? What can your department, college, or university do to maximize your new hire’s
satisfaction and productivity and to improve your chance of retaining a happy and productive new colleague?

Instead of expecting that a new faculty member, all on his or her own, achieve excellence in teaching, research and service, as well as complete familiarization with the department, college, and university, the mentoring program ensures that he or she has access to advice, consultation, and assistance in these endeavors. It is simply a matter of increasing the new faculty member’s chance of success in all of these areas.

Many new hires experience a similar developmental process. They face a number of challenges. The following represents some concerns of the new faculty:

- **The First Year** is marked primarily by isolation. The new faculty member is thrown into a complex set of new tasks with the implicit expectation that he or she will just “figure things out”. This creates feelings of insecurity and self-doubt as there does not appear to be a point of reference by which to judge one’s own performance. It would be particularly important for departments to find ways for new faculty to socialize and work with other new faculty as well as continuing faculty.

- **Lack of collegial support** in seeking senior faculty advice or input on teaching practices, research ideas, article reviews. Senior faculty have an important responsibility to assist new faculty with their teaching and research.

- **Frustration with a lack of time to pursue scholarly work** is often expressed because of initial preparation that is required for course development and teaching. This will be a continuing workload dilemma.

Additional common reports from new faculty include:

Learning the informal culture is a difficult task and one where the mentor is especially helpful. It is easy to learn formal procedures but understanding norms, traditions, and beliefs associated with the unwritten, informal culture is not always easy to comprehend.

Insecurity about teaching. Let’s face it, individuals with little or no teaching experience are thrown into a classroom with no way of judging their performance. For most, the first feedback comes in the form of student evaluations months after the course has been completed. And student evaluations rarely provide feedback that is detailed enough to translate into concrete teaching directives.

Reticence to “bother” other faculty members with a multitude of questions. If no mentoring relationship has been specified, it is difficult for the new faculty member to know whether he or she is annoying other faculty members with questions such as, “Is there a standard departmental grading scale? How do I submit grades? Are there any departmental syllabus requirements? etc.”

Expectation that other faculty will seek you out. The new person on the block often expects “neighbors” to come by, welcome them, and ask if they need anything. This does not
always happen as other faculty are busy and often do not know if this kind of contact is
desired by the new hire. When this does not happen, it is not unusual for the new faculty
member to wonder if he or she is liked or accepted into the culture of the department.

Difficulty finding time for scholarship in the light of new course preparations. For
most new faculty, graduate school or post-doctoral fellowships consisted mainly of research.
Suddenly, the research seems to be pushed aside for the seemingly more urgent task of
keeping those 100 students in the class engaged and busy. It is a shock for most new faculty to
discover how time-consuming teaching is, and quickly, anxiety about research productivity
sets in.

Wondering about the appropriate level of participation in departmental meetings. If the
new faculty members feel a little cut-off at the start, this is usually only worsened by their first
departmental meeting. Everyone but them is familiar with the issues, everyone has an opinion.
It is appropriate for them to offer theirs? Will the other faculty members take them seriously?
Will they be considered?

Not knowing what you are “supposed” to already know and what is “acceptable” to
admit ignorance about. One of the problems with being thrown into a situation with no point
of reference is that you are never quite sure what you were expected to know coming in. You
are new and you want to impress your colleagues. A common fear is that asking questions that
reveal your ignorance may be negatively perceived by people who have some power over
your future.

Disappointed expectations. It is rare that hands-on experience matches the seductive
experience of the interview process and your imagination those months before coming to the
job.

- **The Second Year** provides some relief, although new faculty still feel like newcomers
  with even more pressure to do scholarship. The urgency of time management now
  becomes clear. Things get worse before they get better. The end of the second year
tends to bring a new low, with feelings of social isolation and intellectual under-
stimulation and new faculty feel overwhelmed before their situation improves in the
third year. Generally those with mentoring feel acceptance into their new environment;
those without, often do not.

- **In the Third Year**, coping improves for new faculty, as some find social support from
  their colleagues. However, many remain isolated, but often feel better because they
  have mastered difficult talks such as course preparations. The entry period seems
  completed in the third year, although specific feedback on job performance may still
  be lacking. A mentor offering honest evaluative information can be helpful.

- **The Fourth Year** brings stability and intellectual stimulation for only half the faculty
  studied. By the end of the fourth year, faculty are settling in and their patterns are
  becoming fixed, for better or worse.
III. THE MENTORING ROLE

A mentor can serve many functions, although no one mentor is expected to fill them all. Chosen mentors should thus encourage new faculty to establish mentoring relationships with other faculty members as well. One may have many mentors - different individuals for different roles one is striving for in life. Some of the potential functions of a mentor are listed below.

**Teacher** - for inspiration and intellectual stimulation; to enhance and improve an individual’s skills and intellectual development;

**Advisor** - to share information about the profession; assist in developing a career plan;

**Sponsor** - to promote the mentee’s career;

**Role Model** - to model the qualities the mentee desires to achieve;

**Counselor** - for emotional, psychological, or spiritual support;

**Personal Friend** - to spend personal time sharing;

**Facilitator** - to encourage and support accomplishment of mentee’s goal;

**Host and Guide** - welcome individual to department community and acquainting person with customs, values, resources and key players in academic social world.

Although there is a wide range of roles that a mentor can serve, each mentor/mentee pair will have its own unique interaction. The nature of that interaction sometimes just develops organically over time or is formalized by the parties involved. The key is to have similar expectations and open channels of communication.

IV. SOME MENTORING PRINCIPLES

- The mentor relationship is one in which one person sees the potential for growth and development of another and assumes the responsibility and capacity for nurturing this potential.
- Mentoring is hard work. In many cases, mentoring is an endurance task and requires ongoing commitment to facilitating the mentee’s success.
- A mentor must be able to see the mentee as a separate person with different needs and goals and must be comfortable with those differences.
- The mentor has high expectations for mentee and gives the mentee assistance and self-confidence in reaching them.
- Mentors should be honest.
- Trust, respect and support, encouragement to risk, and effective evaluation are significant traits of good mentoring relationships.
- Mentoring is not managing others, it is helping mentees learn how to manage themselves.
- The nature of mentoring ultimately deals with identification and bonding (if you cannot identify with a mentee, you cannot bond with her or him).
• Aliens do not mentor – In order to mentor someone from a group other than your, mentors must become familiar with that group.

Effective mentoring is not, however, a process in which one person dictates to the other what he/she must do. Neither is it a means of cloning or replicating another individual to one’s likeness. Mentoring means providing, in a supportive, non-threatening way, advice, counsel, insight, and facts that the new faculty member can use in his/her development.

V. MENTORING GOALS

Regardless of the type of mentoring role adopted by the chosen mentor or others, there are some specific goals that should guide the chosen mentor. These are:

• Introduce new faculty to UAF and to the community
• Help new faculty make the transition to the Fairbanks area
• Introduce new faculty to departmental procedures and issues so that they can soon become active participants in the life of their department
• Assist new faculty in their quest to become successful candidates for reappointment, promotion, and tenure.
• Suggest forms of service that will not overburden them with committee meetings as they work their way to tenure
• Help improve instructional skills of new faculty – offer new faculty members classroom visitations and peer observation
• Propose effective ways of interacting with students and colleagues
• Encourage the submission of papers for presentation at professional conferences and publication of those papers
• Advise new faculty on time allocation for research, teaching, and service
• Provide advice on University, College, and Department policies
• Familiarize new faculty with the promotion and tenure process at UAF
• Acquaint new faculty with the various programs, service and research centers, Writing and Advising centers, Office of Faculty Development, and institutional aspects of UAF
• Informally monitor the level of satisfaction of new faculty so that problems can be addressed and we can improve the retention of new hires.

VI. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORING

• Be accountable to mentee and the mentoring program
• Make sure contacts with mentee are maintained on a regular basis
• Try to be compassionate, caring and mindful that these are tough times for junior faculty members (You cannot learn from tenured arrogance)
- Listen closely to mentees and respond to their comments and concerns (see Appendix II Strategies for Facilitating Learning)
- Remain open to learning from mentee
- Work with mentee to establish positive and realistic goals
- Acknowledge that change is possible
- Develop interactions with mentee that demonstrate sharing, caring, and empathizing
- Be creative in designing ways to assist mentee in teaching his/her goal
- Encourage mentees to become active participants, not spectators, in a range of university matters
- Follow up on commitments made to mentee
- Validate mentee’s achievements and give sound and constructive feedback
- Identify professional contacts and networking opportunities for mentee
- Respect diverse talents, approaches, and goals.

VII. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE “MENTEE-ING”

- Remain open to learning – your education is never really over
- Avoid constant comparisons to the way things were done where you came from
- Be respectful of mentor’s time and space
- Be cognizant that mentor’s time and effort is volunteered
- Maintain an open line of communication with mentor so that you feel comfortable sharing divergent opinions
- Do not be shy to introduce new ideas to mentor – they can also learn from you.

VIII. SOME PITFALLS TO AVOID

In the most generic sense, problems with mentors can be summarized with the following quotation that one respondent made of her mentor,

“It’s very rare, I think, that another individual can know what’s best for you for very long.”

A mentor should not:

- Attempt to handle situations with mentee for which you are not qualified
- Betray confidential information
- Break promises
- Become a crutch
- Condone negative behavior
- Force the mentee into anything
• Expect the mentee to be like you or to be always in agreement with you
• React negatively to mentee who do not take advice or desire to maintain the mentor-mentee relationship
• Attempt to manage or control the mentee

A mentor is not:

• A supervisor
• A parent
• A professional counselor
• A social worker
• A financier
• A playmate

A mentee should not:

• Run to a mentor with every daily hassle that they can deal with on their own
• Become dependent on the mentor
• Expect that the mentor will always be available to the same extent
• Complain about the mentor to other people – problems should be resolved face-to-face
• Feel that their job is to impress the mentor - the job is to be a good teacher, a good scholar, and a contributing member of the academic community
• Feel disapproved of if the mentor suggests a different way of doing something

A mentee is not:

• a student
• A child
• An underling
• Powerless

IX. CULTURAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE MENTOR/MENTEE RELATIONSHIP

Authentic collaboration is not possible between mentor and mentee without an understanding and appreciation of the forces that shape their interactions. A willingness to be open to individual differences is a vital step in improving the mentoring relationship. It is possible and even likely that you will be mentoring someone of a different race, culture, and gender from yours. Being sensitive to these differences and the ways in which these differences may play out in the mentor-mentee relationship can only enhance the process and result.
Throughout your experience as a mentor or mentee, take time to reflect on the following questions:

- To what extent am I knowledgeable about the degree to which race, culture, and gender may be affecting my interactions?
- Am I aware of how my words and behavior may affect individuals with a different cultural and gender identity?
- Is there any aspect of my body language that could mean something different to someone from another culture?
- Am I patient and kind and considerate when I am working with someone from another culture?
- Am I open to models of interaction different from the ones with which I am familiar?
- Is one party perceiving a power differential in the relationship due to prior cultural or gender-specific experiences?

If you ever feel that something you have done or said has been misinterpreted by the other party, the easiest solution is to ask. But we must also remain aware of the fact that misinterpretation may occur without one’s noticing. All we can do is remain sensitive to the possibility. And that’s a lot.

X. HOW TO GET STARTED

Every mentor/mentee pair will have its own interactive style and ways to proceed but here are some suggestions about how to get the ball rolling.

- Set up a first meeting to get to know each other and align expectations about the relationship
- Make it known that short questions and discussions may not require scheduled meetings. A phone call or a short chat in the hallway may suffice.
- Ensure confidential nature of the relationship.
- Pre-arrange to meet on a bi-weekly or monthly basis to go over issues or just to chat over coffee.

Again, there is no set way to engage in the mentor/mentee relationship or to proceed. Some people prefer to formalize interactions and others prefer to let it happen more organically. The key is to maintain contact and communication in a way that is suitable to both parties.

XI. CHECKLIST FOR MENTOR/MENTEE QUALIFICATIONS

- commitment to program goals
• sincere desire to build constructive, positive relationships with mentee
• excellent communication and interpersonal skills
• ability to listen
• openness to learning
• sensitivity to people of different educational, economic, cultural, racial, gender, and sexuality backgrounds
• creative problem solving skills
• positive attitude toward institution, college, and department
• dependability
• initiative
FOR FURTHER READING


Sorcinelli, M.D. (2000). Principles of Good Practice: Supporting Early-Career Faculty. AAHE. (available in Office of Faculty Development)

Wickman & Sjodin. (1997). Mentoring: the most obvious yet overlooked key to achieving more in life than dreamed possible. A success guide for mentors and proteges. BF637 S8 W47.


Appendix I

Collegiality

Collegiality may be defined as the ability to work productively with students, colleagues, and staff members. Irrespective of personalities, faculty are co-makers of department, college, university and System policies concerning such questions as standards for admission, graduation criteria, faculty vacancy announcements, faculty evaluations, tenure, promotion, merit appeals procedures, and search criteria for positions in higher administration. Each member of the faculty must interact with colleagues in accord with civility and professional respect.

Although a faculty member may not place high regard on another faculty member's teaching or scholarship, it is expected that all evaluations, positive or negative, spoken or written, to colleagues or to students, be made through the proper channels and not be expressed in personally harmful language. For example, it might be conscientious to advise a student not to take a colleague's class, but this judgment should be based on and articulated in terms of scholarly or curriculum reasons, not personal ones.

Collegiality encompasses the basics of the professional ethics of the academic world: respect for persons, integrity of intellectual inquiry, and concern for the needs and rights of students. Above all, collegiality means the overriding concern to establish and maintain the ethical conditions and moral climate that promote faculty interdependence and interaction. Collegiality is essential to maintain or improve the academic quality of the university. For these reasons, collegiality is a basic expectation of a faculty member, whether specified (as in bylaws) or not, and separate and apart from academic credentials. Bylaws, standards, goals, and initiatives of the faculty are paralyzed without collegiality.
Appendix II

Strategies for Facilitating Learning

There are specific things mentors can do to facilitate mentee learning. The 5 strategies listed below are useful:

**Asking questions.**
Asking questions causes an individual to reflect and thereby encourages learning. Asking questions that require thoughtful answers is helpful in getting mentees to articulate their own thinking and identifying questions to stimulate thoughtful reflection. The questions can open up a learning conversation or shut it down. Ethical questioning is a must (staying within the bounds of role-appropriate questions). Without it, it is easy to exceed limited of appropriateness and fairness.

What you can do
- Ask questions that support and challenge – for example: “That’s a nice way of describing the culture. How would you apply some of that thinking to the staff?”
- Ask questions to stimulate reflection – for example: “Could you tell me a little more about what you mean by ….”
- Allow time for thoughtful reflection – example: “It sounds as if we’ve only begun to scratch the surface. Let’s think about this some more and discuss it further in our next conversation.”

**Reformulating Statements.**
Mentors who rephrase what they have heard clarify their own understanding and encourage the mentee to hear what it is they have articulated. This offers an opportunity for further clarification.

What you can do.
- Paraphrase what you heard – for example: “I think what I heard you saying was ….”
- Continue the process of rephrasing and paraphrasing until you are clear and the mentee is no longer addition new information – for example: “My understanding is ….”

**Summarizing.**
Summarizing reinforces the learning, is a reminder of what has transpired, and allows checking out assumptions in the process.

What you can do
- Share the content of what you have heard, learned, or accomplished – for example: “We’ve spent our time today … during that time we … As a result, we achieved the following outcomes …”
- Leave judgments and opinions out when you summarize.
- Deal with the facts of the situation, not the emotions.
Listening for the Silence.
Silence provides an opportunity for learning. Some individuals need time to think quietly. Silence can also indicate confusion, boredom, or even physical discomfort.

What you can do
- Don’t be afraid of silence.
- Encourage silence.
- Use the silence as an opportunity for reflection – for example: “I notice that whenever we started to talk about … you get kind of quiet. I’m wondering what that is about.”

Listening Reflectively.
So often we heard but do not really listen. When you listen reflectively, you hear the silence, observe nonverbal responses, and hold up a mirror for the mentee.

What you can do
- Be authentic – for example: “What I’d like to see is …”
- Clarify – for example: “What do you mean by…?”
- Provide feedback— for example: “You did a great job with that. I like the way you…. I also thought that … Next time you might try …”

The role of the mentor is to facilitate learning in such a way that the knowledge, skills, or competencies connect to action in the present and possibility in the future. This requires building on the learner’s experience, providing a conducive environment for learning, and appropriately challenging, supporting, and providing vision for the learner.

When the mentor’s work is solidly grounded in the principles of adult learning, mentor and mentee are viewed as co-learners who both benefit and grow from the relationship. It is a process of becoming for both partners.

Checking In: A Framework for Conversation.

Use any of the following conversation starters to provide a framework for beginning discussions about the learning process:

1. Check in at the beginning of your meeting. Regularly ask the question, “How is it going?”
2. Share your observations about how things are going and what concerns you have about the learning process – for example, “I’ve noticed that our discussions are very general and theoretical. Are you finding them helpful?”
3. Take a step backward before you go forward – for example, “Let’s take a look at how we are doing. What is particularly helpful to you in your learning? What has been least helpful? What do you think is going well? What do we need to improve? What kind of assistance do you need?”