

Department of Psychology Mentoring Program

Background: The Department has traditionally relied on informal mentoring structures for junior tenure-track faculty. There is a general expectation in the department that senior scientists will engage in mentoring junior faculty, and that such mentoring is a service contribution to the department. These informal mentor relationships are critical to the development of junior scientists and should remain active in the department. The purpose of this formal mentoring program is to ensure that, in addition to the availability of these informal relationships, high quality mentoring is consistently provided for all junior faculty. Formal mentoring programs are available or being developed at most peer and aspirant peer institutions and these programs have typically documented improvement in the productivity of junior faculty and in their evaluation of the department. Such programs have the potential to facilitate the development and success of diverse junior faculty by “quick starting” the tenure process through informal advice on research, grants, teaching, and service.

Proposal:

Tenure-track Assistant Professors will be paired with three tenured faculty members to form a "mentoring committee" (preferably at least one member will be full rank). The mentoring committee will be established by the Department Head, in consultation with faculty in the area and the incoming faculty member, and should be in place before the arrival of the incoming faculty member. Ideally, each member of the mentoring committee will offer a unique skill or knowledge set that will be useful to the new faculty member during the early stages of career development. One member of the mentoring committee will be temporarily assigned as primary and will be responsible for initial contact and arranging meetings. It is recommended that contact between the assigned mentors and mentee begins before the mentee arrives at the university. After the first semester and at the end of each year thereafter, the mentoring committee and Department Head will discuss changes in the committee or primary mentor status within the committee. In addition, due to changing schedules or needs of the mentee, the committee members can change at any time in consultation with the Head. Tenure-track faculty in the department will also be offered mentors at the time this program is instituted.

Mentors and mentees will meet regularly (i.e., at least twice a semester) at least through midterm review (typically in the third year), either as a group or individually. In addition, the mentoring committee and mentee will meet once a year at least through the time that the mentee goes up for tenure, to discuss letters from the P&T committee. These are minimal expectations for successfully mentoring a faculty member through tenure, and the committee can meet more often as warranted or desired.

The mentoring committee is expected to facilitate the development of the mentee in several core areas (either directly or by helping the mentee identify an appropriate advisor):

- Provide informal advice on research, grants, teaching, and service.
- Encourage mentee to identify goals for development that are consistent with the priorities of the psychology department and discuss progress regularly. This might involve providing information about university and department culture and values.
- Review annual P&T materials and the resulting review/letters with the mentee and set goals to address any concerns. For mentees with a joint appointment, the review of P&T letters should involve a meeting that includes an assigned mentor or administrator from the other department/program. The point of including someone from the other department/program is to ensure that expectations are clearly and consistently conveyed to the junior faculty and that the two departments are not, together, demanding too much teaching or service from the mentee. In some cases, it might make sense to include the outside mentor as part of mentoring committee meetings on a regular basis.
- Provide feedback on grants and/or manuscripts, including dealing with reviews.
- Advocate for the mentee in obtaining space, funds, students, and resources required for research.
- Assist the mentee in networking with senior people in the department, university, and in their field of expertise. This could include introducing the mentee to editors of leading journals in the area.

Mentees are expected to promote the mentoring relationship by taking steps to fully utilize their available resources:

- Develop goals with the mentor and bring them up for discussion
- Inform the mentor of problems or concerns
- Leave sufficient time for review and critique of drafts when feedback is requested
- Approach potential advisors/mentors with expertise in different areas – identifying informal mentors and building those collaborations or relationships is critical to successful development as a scientist
- Remember that these are professional relationships and that mentors will be involved in evaluation meetings and decisions. In some situations, it might be best to seek advice from mentors outside the department.

The mentoring program will be monitored by the Department Head or an individual appointed by the Head. Monitoring will involve contacting the mentoring committee and mentee at least once a semester to identify concerns, issues, and successes. In the event that the mentoring relationship is not working well, for either the mentor(s) or mentee, this monitoring might involve working with the parties to resolve the issue or identify a new mentor.

Workshops will be held for junior faculty at least once a semester, organized by the Department Head or an individual appointed by the Head. These workshops can be focused on any topic that will facilitate the development of junior faculty toward tenure.

Merit Criteria: Senior faculty will be evaluated on their engagement in mentoring activities for yearly merit evaluations as part of the service evaluation.

Outstanding merit:

Serving on the mentoring committee of an assistant professor

Organizing a department workshop session that involves the development of junior faculty

Merit:

Participation in department workshop sessions that involve the development of junior faculty

Attending a training workshop or session on best practices and/or development as a mentor

Effective Date: January 1, 2015. To be reevaluated after two years, with an updated policy to take effect September 1, 2017.