

Faculty Mentoring Program

Expand All

Introduction

This mentoring program is intended to be a useful way of helping new faculty members adjust to their new environment. Whether it is academe itself that is new, or simply the UC San Diego campus, assistance from a well-respected mentor can be an invaluable supplement to the guidance and assistance that a Department Chair provides during the early years at a new university. The program's success will depend on the new faculty members, their mentors and their department chairs all taking an active role in the acclimation process. An outline of the responsibilities of each is outlined below.

The Responsibility of the Department Chair

As soon as the appointment is made, the chair assigns a mentor. For faculty appointed as Associate Professor or Professor, assignment of a mentor is less critical, but highly encouraged, to serve as a means of acclimating the new faculty member to UC San Diego. The chair is responsible for advising new faculty on matters pertaining to academic reviews, and advancement. As the mentor may also be asked to provide informal advice, it is also the chair's responsibility to see that mentors have current information on UC San Diego's academic personnel process.

The Responsibility of the Mentor

The mentor should contact the new faculty member in advance of his/her arrival at the University and then meet with the new faculty member on a regular basis over at least the first two years. The mentor should provide informal advice to the new faculty member on aspects of teaching, research and committee work or be able to direct the new faculty member to appropriate other individuals. Often the greatest assistance a mentor can provide is simply the identification of which staff one should approach for which task. Funding opportunities both within and outside of the campus are also worth noting. The mentor should treat all interactions and discussions in confidence. There is no evaluation or assessment of the new faculty member on the part of the mentor, only supportive guidance and constructive feedback.

The Responsibility of the New Faculty Member

The new faculty member should keep his/her mentor informed of any problems or concerns as they arise. When input is desired, new faculty should leave sufficient time in the grant proposal and paper submission process to allow his/her mentor the opportunity to review and critique drafts.

The Mentor

The most important tasks of a good mentor are to help the new faculty member achieve excellence and to acclimate to UC San Diego. Although the role of mentor is an informal one, it poses a challenge and requires dedication and time. A good relationship with a supportive, active mentor has been shown to contribute significantly to a new faculty member's career development and satisfaction.

Qualities of a Good Mentor

Accessibility - the mentor is encouraged to make time to be available to the new faculty member. The mentor might keep in contact by dropping by, calling, sending e-mail, or extending a lunch invitation. It is very helpful for the mentor to make time to read / critique proposals and papers and to provide periodic reviews of progress.

Networking - the mentor should be able to help the new faculty member establish a professional network.

Independence - the new faculty member's intellectual independence from the mentor must be carefully preserved and the mentor must avoid developing a competitive relationship with the new faculty member.

Goals for the Mentor

Short-term goals

Familiarization with the campus and its environment, including the UC San Diego system of shared governance between the Administration and the Academic Senate.

Networking-introduction to colleagues, identification of other possible mentors.

Developing awareness-help new faculty understand policies and procedures that are relevant to the new faculty member's work.

Constructive criticism and encouragement, compliments on achievements.

Helping to sort out priorities-budgeting time, balancing research, teaching, and service.

Long-term goals

Developing visibility and prominence within the profession.

Achieving career advancement.

Benefits for the mentor

Satisfaction in assisting in the development of a colleague

Ideas for and feedback about the mentor's own teaching / scholarship

A network of colleagues who have passed through the program

Retention of excellent faculty colleagues

Enhancement of department quality

Changing Mentors

In cases of changing commitments, incompatibility, or where the relationship is not mutually fulfilling, either the new faculty member or mentor should seek confidential advice from his/her Chair. It is important to realize that changes can and should be made without prejudice or fault. The new faculty member, in any case, should be encouraged to seek out additional mentors as the need arises.

Typical Issues

How does one establish an appropriate balance between teaching, research and committee work? How does one say "no?"

What criteria are used for teaching excellence, how is teaching evaluated?

How does one obtain feedback concerning teaching? What resources are available for teaching enhancement?

How does one identify and recruit good graduate students? How are graduate students supported? What should one expect from graduate students? What is required in the graduate program?

What are the criteria for research excellence, how is research evaluated?

How does the merit and promotion process work? Who is involved?

What committees should one be on and how much committee work should one expect?

What social events occur in the department?

What seminars and workshops does the department organize?

What is the college system? What responsibilities come with appointment to a particular college?

Publications

The Department Chairperson's Role in Enhancing College Teaching, A.F. Lucas, Jossey-Bass, Publisher, San Francisco, 1989.

Information Brochure for Incoming Women Faculty, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Mentoring: Contemporary Principles and Issues, Bey and Holmes,
Association of Teacher Educators, Reston, Virginia, 1992.
Mentoring Means Future Scientists, Association for Women in Science
(AWIS), Washington, D.C., 1993.
New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 57. Jossey-Bass, Publisher,
San Francisco, 1994.