

Being a new faculty member is both exciting and stressful. The early years of an academic career involve getting oriented and integrated into the campus community; developing and enhancing teaching, research, and service skills; navigating the tenure track or non-tenure track position; creating work-life balance; and establishing professional networks.

faculty

NEW FACULTY RESOURCES MENTORING PROGRAM

Mentoring Program Confidentiality

Mentoring, both from senior colleagues and from near peers, is a key to turning these potential roadblocks into areas of advancement (Sorcinelli, 2004). Research shows that having mentors is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, more effective teaching, stronger records of scholarly productivity, and increased rates of retention, tenure, and promotion (Johnson, 2007; Cartwright, 2008; National Academy, 2010.)

Since 1997, WPI has offered a New Faculty Mentoring Program in order to provide new faculty members with professional and social support. The program is facilitated by the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center, and all first and second year tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty are eligible to participate. Participation on the part of both mentors and mentees is completely voluntary.

Elements of WPI's Program

New faculty are asked to complete an information form if they wish to participate in the one-on-one component of the mentoring program. New faculty may request mentors to assist with classroom teaching, project advising, scholarship, time management and priority setting, and/or other areas as needed. The Morgan Center will recruit an appropriate mentor(s), based on the objectives and preferences expressed by the new faculty member and with input from the individual's department head. The formal mentoring relationship is anticipated to last for the first year of the new faculty member's appointment, but may be extended or terminated at the request of any member of the team.

Each mentor-mentee pair schedules regular meetings, which typically range from biweekly to once per month. The Morgan Center funds one lunch per term at a local restaurant for each mentoring pair. The Director of the Morgan Center is available to meet with individual teams upon request, and will do so at least once at the beginning of each mentoring relationship.

WPI's mentoring program also has a strong "cohort" component, with regular gatherings of new and early career faculty focused on particular themes or for open discussion. All new faculty are invited to attend, regardless of whether they participate in the one-on-one component of the mentoring program.

Mentors also meet during the academic year to discuss effective mentoring practices.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

I prefer to find my own mentor(s). Is that OK?

Absolutely. We offer this "facilitated pairing" option since it can take a while to get to know other faculty members on campus whom you might like to collaborate with in various ways. This program offers the assurance of having a faculty colleague to turn to immediately in the first weeks and months with questions and concerns. All mentors agree to the time commitment and are given resources about mentoring, which is another benefit of program participation.

Should I ask for a mentor inside my department or outside?

Mentoring from inside the department is essential. Your department head will serve as an important mentor, but others are beneficial for particular questions and concerns. Many departments have a size and culture such that there will be plenty of informal mentoring from colleagues. In these cases, being paired with a mentor outside the department makes a lot of sense to get a broader perspective of the university. In other departments, it may help to be formally paired with an inside-department mentor through this program. Some departments have traditions or preferences for inside- or outside-department mentors; department heads are consulted about potential matches for that reason.

Can I have more than one mentor, one inside the department and one outside?

Yes. If you are interested in getting paired with two faculty members, please indicate that on the information form.

What Participants Say

Following are some comments from recent participants:

The program really helped with understanding WPI's institutional and teaching culture. I also found it helpful in getting to understand my department and becoming familiar with tenure and promotion criteria.

My mentor was the most helpful resource for me during my first year. I would highly recommend the program to new faculty members!

I think a mentor is important for social adjustment to WPI, professional guidance, and personal guidance.

In many ways WPI is not a typical university; mentoring helps new faculty get acclimated.