

## **Introduction:**

Mentoring is a productive way of helping new and junior faculty members adjust to their new environment. Whether it is academe itself that is new, or simply the new campus climate, assistance from a respected and experienced mentor can be a valuable supplement to the guidance and assistance that a Chair/Supervisor provides during the early years of a person's career. The success of a mentoring relationship depends on the mentee, their mentors and their Chairs/Supervisors all taking an active role in the acculturation process.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors:**

Successful mentors are committed, influential and experienced faculty members that are familiar with the university system. They are recognized as good teachers and scholars in their field. Mentors are interested in and committed to the growth and development of their mentee(s), are willing to commit time and attention to their mentees, can and do give honest feedback, and are willing to act on behalf of the mentee to provide connections and direction on questions that come up. *Mentors are not expected to listen to grievances and frustrations nor are they expected to be on call or automatically a friend to the mentee.* These relationships take time and will strengthen over time if both are committed to the effort and a good fit is established at the beginning of the process.

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 he or she should approach for which task. The mentor should treat all interactions and discussions in confidence. It is best when there is no evaluation or assessment of the new faculty member on the part of the mentor, only supportive guidance and constructive feedback. If a match does not work out for the mentee there should be an understanding of a no fault approach to terminating the relationship. It is important to note that mentoring is a skill and tenure status does not necessarily equate to good mentoring skills.

*Mentors are responsible for:*

- Taking the initiative for contacting their mentees and staying in touch with them.
- Devoting time to the relationship and be available when requested.
- Assisting new faculty with their various questions, needs, or concerns.
- Sharing their knowledge and experience to benefit their new faculty and following up on their progress.
- Maintaining confidentiality of the information shared by their new faculty colleagues.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of New Faculty:**

New Faculty can take on various roles such as friend, protégé, new colleague, or collaborator depending on their needs, academic experience, and the nature of their mentoring relationship.

*Mentees are responsible for:*

- Devoting the time to the mentoring relationship and interacting with the mentor often.
- Making use of the opportunities provided by the mentor.
- Keeping the mentor informed of academic progress, difficulties, and concerns.
- Exchanging ideas and experiences with the mentor.

Both the mentors and new faculty colleagues have the responsibility for gaining each other's trust and confidence, interacting in a collegial manner so as to value each other's time, and professional and personal commitments, and engaging in activities that support the mission and strategic goals of the university.

## **Duration of the Mentoring Process**

No set duration is required for the mentoring relationship between a mentor and a junior faculty. It is recommended that mentors and new faculty interact regularly during the first two years. At the end of the second year they can decide if it is necessary to continue the mentoring relationship at the same pace, or on an as needed basis, or conclude it if individual goals have been met by the intensive review.

At any point during the mentoring process, if a mentor or new faculty feels that the relationship is not productive, the supervisor should be informed so that a different mentor or new faculty can be assigned.

Mentors and new faculty should provide feedback on the progress of their interactions at the end of each year so that the supervisor can evaluate the program and improvements can be made.

## **Benefits to the Mentee and Mentor:**

The primary purpose of a mentoring experience is to provide ample support for the junior faculty member to be successful in his or her new role, but there are additional benefits. The mentoring effort can benefit the faculty member, the mentor and the university. Following is a list of potential benefits to the mentee.

- Assistance in understanding the structure and culture of the unit and developing a professional network.
- Individual recognition and encouragement
- Honest feedback

- Advice on professional priorities and responsibilities (e.g., P & T, teaching, research,).
- Receive insider's knowledge about university, college and unit culture.
- Career planning and advancement
- Opportunities for collaborations
- Jumpstart into understanding the surrounding community and what it offers
- Learn about tried and tested methods of balancing your professional life with family life.
- Reduce isolation
- Advocacy and support among peers

The mentors also profit from the relationship and have the potential to gain the following benefits.

- Satisfaction of being able to contribute to the growth and potential success of a faculty member.
- Collaborative feedback and interaction with a junior faculty member.
- Expanded network of colleagues and collaborators
- Refreshed motivation on their own work and research
- Investment in the work environment desired

The university commitment to mentoring benefits with increased productivity and commitment among the faculty, decreased attrition among hard to retain faculty, increased collaboration across and within divisions, and an increased understanding and respect leading to improvement in university climate.