Mentoring of Junior Faculty

A Guide for Faculty Mentors (and Mentees) in the

College of Chemical and Life Sciences[1]

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[1] Written by Arthur N. Popper, February 2007.

The purpose of this document is to serve as a brief "guide" to how one might pursue the role of mentor to a junior faculty member in your department. This is a critical role in the development of our new faculty, and one that can strikingly impact the success of these people. We are providing this document to all faculty since at any time each person might serve as a mentor or a mentee, and it will be useful for all of us to think through both roles, and how they might interact.

The basis for this document is the observation made over the past several years that every mentor has a different view of what constitutes the mentoring role, and that no two mentors undertake this important task in the same way. Similarly, no two junior faculty have the same understanding of mentoring, nor have the same idea of what they should expect of the mentor-mentee relationship.

Since, as discussed below, the mentoring relationship is critical for success of junior faculty, it is the goal of this booklet to give mentors some "food for thought" about what might constitute how they function as mentors. It is not expected that every mentor will undertake every suggestion we give, but it is our hope, and that of the chairs and dean, that mentors will perhaps develop an informal structure to their mentoring to ensure that they not only work with their mentees in areas such as research, but also extend mentoring, as appropriate, to other aspects of the mentees professional lives. And, of course, the ultimate goal of the mentoring relationship is to assure that the new faculty are given guidance that will ultimately lead them to successful careers as investigators, and recognition nationally and internationally for their scholarship.

Background

Over the past several years, the University of Maryland has begun to realize that a critical component of the growth of a junior faculty member, and a critical component of his/her achieving success (as measured by timely receipt of promotion and tenure, and then moving on to full professor) is learning to "navigate" the complexities of the life of a faculty member. These complexities not only include teaching and research, but the myriad of other things that are expected such as committee service, mentoring of students, getting grants, setting up labs, etc. And, all of this comes at a time of life when young faculty often have young families, and the faculty are trying to balance their interests and responsibilities professionally with their interests and responsibilities in their personal lives.

It has also become clear at UM, as it has at so many other institutions, that an excellent mentoring program for junior faculty is one way to help these people achieve success on campus, and most importantly, as scholars recognized for their excellence by peers outside of the university. Indeed, in revising the UM APT document two years ago, an added component in evaluation for promotion and tenure was an evaluation of the nature and quality of the mentoring program provided for the junior faculty member.

A recent report that was jointly produced by a Task Force set up by the Provost and University Senate strongly supported a much enhanced set of mentoring programs on campus, and provides the background for each unit to develop a mentoring program that will meet the campus APT requirements and, more importantly, help to ensure success of our junior colleagues. You can find the report linked at: http://www.faculty.umd.edu/index.html.

The report calls for three levels of mentoring[2]:

- Tier 1: Unit – provide developmental and evaluative mentoring (including senior developmental mentors), and support.
- Tier 2: College level – oversee unit/programs and provide workshops and seminars on topics such as grantsmanship, how to mentor students, how to run a lab, etc.
- Tier 3: Campus level – provide developmental mentoring programs on topics such as the tenure review process, assure that faculty, particularly members of underrepresented groups, are provided adequate mentoring, and coordinate meetings of senior administrators with junior faculty.

The College of Chemical and Life Sciences has initiated Tier 2 mentoring programs for all new faculty. These programs include topics such as "research integrity," "mentoring of students," "how to run a lab," and "teaching tips." Additional programs are planned over the coming years.

While the programs at the college and campus are valuable in helping faculty navigate broader issues, it is the departmental level one-on-one mentoring that is perhaps the most crucial.

Faculty Mentors

A mentor is defined as a wise and trusted counselor/advisor/ guide to a less senior person. The word "mentor" was first used by Homer in *The Odyssey* for Mentor, the wise elder to whom Odysseus entrusted the care of his son, Telemachus, while he (Odysseus) went off to Troy. To quote from the Task Force report, "within academe, mentors demonstrate a road map for career success and help faculty members gain the skills necessary to travel their own career path successfully. Mentors also provide professional socialization including entry into a disciplinary network. Ideally, the mentor also becomes a sounding board and supporter, who teaches the "tricks of the trade" and survival strategies to the mentee. Most often the mentor serves to help the mentee become successful at his/her academic institution. It is also possible that the mentor will be able to serve as a guide and resource in dealing with the broader scholarly and academic community, both nationally and internationally."

The report goes on to point out that "the unit chair … is a very important evaluative mentor, and is also in the position to provide developmental mentoring as well…Conversely, as the junior faculty member's supervisor, conductor of performance evaluations and key player in the tenure review process, the chair cannot typically serve as a fully effective developmental mentor. [In contrast] a developmental mentor must be someone to whom the junior faculty member can turn with the knowledge that interactions with the mentor will not become a basis for important decisions on the person's career. For this reason,…many institutions stipulate that conversations between mentor and mentee are confidential…Further, given the previously mentioned crucial role of the chair, it is very helpful for junior faculty to have a mentor to whom they can turn for advice on dealing with his/her chair."

Clearly, this definition of the expectations for a mentor may go beyond what most of us think about. However, as pointed out in the Task Force report, it is critical for the success of the mentee that the mentor consider expanding his/her role, and develop a relationship with the mentee that is supportive, confidential, and open. While it is not the goal of this short document

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[2] These three items are paraphrased from the Task Force report.

to give specific advice, we do offer a number of things to think about in developing the mentoring relationship. This material is taken almost verbatim from Appendix II of the Task Force Report

Expectations of Senior Faculty Mentor

A senior faculty member chosen to be a mentor should be a caring individual with interpersonal skills to whom the junior faculty can relate and whose assistance is private between the mentor and the junior faculty. The mentor has to be proactive and cannot wait for the junior faculty to reach out for assistance. The mentor should not only reach out to the mentee initially, but should continue to do so over the years prior to the granting of tenure (and beyond, if appropriate). If a relationship cannot be established, the chair of the unit should be so informed and possibly a new mentor appointed.

There are a number of basic areas in which senior mentors should be particularly cognizant as they work with their mentees. In all cases, the relationship between mentor and mentee should be kept *confidential* so that the mentee does not feel that discussing issues with his/her mentor could impede academic growth.

1. Shape scholarly activities and guide in advancement of the mentee's career, with the goal of helping them achieve national and international peer recognition for their scholarship.
2. Introduce the mentee to colleagues and students across campus.
3. Provide insight into funding and help in access to funds.
4. Provide career guidance.
5. Provide guidance on campus politics (at all levels).
6. Work with mentee as they start to mentor their own students.
7. Provide significant feedback on teaching.[3]

It is particularly critical that the mentoring of a junior faculty member be open, two-way, and fluid. The mentor should be available to the mentee, perhaps at regular meetings, and, more importantly, at most any time at the instigation of the menteee or the mentor. "Dropping in" on the mentee the mentor for a chat from time to time is certainly acceptable, and encouraged.

Comments on Mentoring from Other Institutions

Just to give some additional thoughts, here are suggestions from various universities as they have considered the same issues as we are concerned with at UMD. The material is taken directly from the sites for which the URLs are given.

http://www.uwosh.edu/mentoring/faculty/benefits2.html
Benefits for a new faculty member in having a mentor:
- Expand your view of the University
- Receive honest and informal feedback

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[3] At the same time, the College mentoring effort includes development of a group of "teaching mentors" who are expert teachers and will be working one-on-one with young faculty the first term they do large class teaching to help them improve their skills. Senior mentors are also encouraged to attend classes and provide feedback, but the teaching mentors will perhaps do this on a more regular basis.

- Receive advice on how to balance teaching, research, and other responsibilities and set professional priorities
- Obtain knowledge of informal rules for advancement (as well as political and substantive pitfalls to be avoided)
- Obtain knowledge of skills for showcasing one's own work
- Understand how to build a circle of friends and contacts both within and outside one's department or team
- Provide a perspective on long-term career planning
- Connect you closer to the University and to other employees
- Increase communication about what is happening in other areas of the University
- Expand growth in your sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness as a professional
- Provide an outlet to discuss concerns
- Increase your value to the university
- Learn to cope with the formal and informal structure of the University
- Provide a successful and productive integration to the University

Mentee responsibilities:
- Meet regularly with the mentor
- Maintain confidentiality
- Keep yourself informed in regard to the requirements for tenure and promotion and your progress toward meeting those requirements
- Ask for and give feedback
- Take responsibility for own growth and success
- Follow through on referrals from mentor to appropriate office for specific information
- Listen actively
- Ask your mentor for guidance and assistance whenever it is needed
- Present needs in an articulate way

http://provost.wsu.edu/faculty_mentoring/guidelines.html (This site at Washington State University also has interesting material regarding mentoring of minorities and women.)

Mentors
Successful mentors are generally influential and experienced faculty members familiar with the university system. Mentors are mature or recognized teachers/scholars in their field and usually higher up the organizational ladder than their mentee. Mentors should be interested in the mentee's professional growth and development, be willing to commit time and attention to the relationship, be willing to give honest feedback, and be willing to act on behalf of the mentee. A mentor is not automatically a friend, "exclusively" assigned to a mentee, nor expected to be "on call" to listen to grievances and frustrations.

http://www.lhup.edu/provost/mentor-project.htm
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 network within and outside the campus with professionals in the field.
- 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 to ensure new faculty members can effectively fulfill their responsibilities.
- Educating new faculty members about the … system of shared governance between the Administration and the faculty.
- 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.
- Helping to sort out priorities—budgeting time, balancing research, teaching, and service.

Long-term goals:
- Constructive criticism and encouragement, compliments on professional growth and achievements.
- Developing visibility and prominence within the profession.
- Achieving career advancement through tenure, promotion, scholarly publication, and conference participation.

Benefits for the mentor
- Satisfaction in assisting in the development of a colleague which in turn demonstrates one's own professional development.
- 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.
- Enrichment of program.

The Successful Mentee
The primary characteristics of successful mentees include the ability and willingness to:
- Seek advice/suggestion from mentor.
- Clearly articulate career needs.
- Assume responsibility for their own professional growth and development.
- Set goals and make decisions to achieve those goals.
- Spend time reflecting on the achievement of goals.
- Be receptive to constructive feedback.

The Successful Mentor
The primary resource of successful mentors is knowledge of the norms, values and procedures of their institutions. This knowledge is essential to mentees in meeting their objectives, but there are also personal characteristics which contribute to effective mentoring. These include the ability to:
- Value the mentee as a person.
- Develop mutual trust and respect.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Listen both to what is being said and how it is being said.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Help the mentee solve his or her own problem, rather than giving direction.
- Focus on the mentee's development, and resist the urge to produce a clone.