

Early Career faculty mentoring program

Department of Geosciences, October 27, 2020

The goals of this mentoring program are to provide advice on T&P issues, provide support on issues regarding work-life balance; and support the overall development of early career faculty within the Department of Geosciences. The long-term development of early career faculty is vital to the success and health of the department, as the benefits continue to accumulate throughout the faculty's career. Mentoring is a proven and rewarding strategy to facilitate faculty success. As the Columbia *Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Mentoring* notes, "Mentoring has been shown to enhance research productivity (Bland & Schmitz, 1986; Bland et al., 2002; Byrne & Keefe, 2002), to enhance teaching effectiveness (Williams, 1991), and to increase faculty retention, recruitment, productivity and satisfaction, as well as to decrease faculty attrition. In addition, mentoring may promote a more positive organizational climate (Corcoran & Clark, 1984; Melicher, 2000)." This program is based primarily around the Columbia Guide, with additions from other resources listed in the appendix.

Desired outcomes of the Mentoring Program

This mentoring program is written to enable the following desired outcomes:

- Increase the scholarship and research productivity of early career faculty
- Support teaching performance
- Aid early career faculty in building their professional network
- Identify and enable professional goals for early career faculty
- Aid the early career faculty member's understanding of governance and finances within the university
- Identify avenues for sponsorship (e.g. nominations, recognitions, strategic opportunities)
- Help early career faculty identify determinants (both formal and informal) for their advancement in the department and in the university and leadership in the scientific community
- Give proactive recognition and mitigation to factors that disproportionately affect faculty from marginalized communities.
- Support a collegial departmental culture that supports the success of all its faculty.

The Program

The Department Head selects an appropriate mentor for each early career faculty in consultation with both parties and is responsible for overseeing the program and making sure that regular meetings between the mentors and mentees take place. Early career faculty are also encouraged to approach the Department Head if they wish to unpair themselves with originally selected mentors. The Department Head will also serve as additional mentor to all early career faculty as necessary. The main program is as follows:

- **Senior-Early career Mentoring.** Soon after the early career faculty begins their position, the new faculty and the Department Head, should decide on a primary mentor. The early career faculty is welcome to seek out an additional external mentor outside the department (within the U of A) in consultation with the Department Head. The Department Head will help identify potential

additional mentors. If an external mentor is selected, this mentor should be willing to meet the early career faculty once per semester perhaps over the phone or at a national meeting to discuss their impact in the scientific community in the context of promotion to tenure. This connection provides an opportunity to get advice on how an external letter writer might view the early career faculty's work, explore service opportunities outside the university (i.e. on a society committee such as the AGU fall meeting program committee), and grow connections in the scientific field in general.

- **Mentorship Training.** The end of this guide lists resources related to faculty mentor training for both senior faculty and early career faculty. Upon entering a mentoring relationship it is recommended that participants assess their own skills (mentor) and needs (mentee), and familiarize themselves with the appropriate best practices. This has been shown to make these relationships more successful (Pfund et al., 2006). This preparation is especially relevant for the formal senior-early career mentoring described above. Columbia's guide lists the key characteristics of successful mentoring (page 11), which are all intended to maintain the productivity of the relationship. The University of Arizona's Mentoring Toolkit includes best practices for participants in mentoring relationships. Mentors and mentees are recommended to discuss these items at the beginning of their relationship.
- **Group meetings.** The department will organize periodic (e.g. once per semester) informal meetings between all mentors and mentees on topics related to skills acquisition and tenure. Early career faculty are encouraged to suggest topics of interest to be discussed. Suggested topics can include:
 - How much effort should faculty be putting into their teaching and general guidance on matching that effort with expected performance.
 - General strategies for managing a lab and lab members to encourage productivity in a collegial and collaborative environment.
 - What is an appropriate level and type of service commitments for the pre-tenure career stage? Departmental vs external?
 - Best practices for managing financial accounts at the University. How much attention should we pay to transactions or quarterly summaries from the front office?
 - Strategies for successful proposal writing to federal agencies (NSF, NASA, DOE, etc)
- **Peer Mentoring.** The early career faculty should meet as a collective group once per semester to discuss issues that affect them. Demographic groups (i.e. women, non-whites, etc.) within the faculty are also encouraged to periodically collectively meet to discuss the unique issues that affect them. The department recognizes that these meetings often take on outsized mentoring responsibilities within and outside their cohort, such as to graduate students and undergraduates. These extra service contributions by the mentees should be taken into account by the Department Head in the annual planning of upcoming departmental service (i.e. committee assignments). These service contributions should also be noted and rewarded in

departmental annual performance reviews (see specific section on recognizing mentorship service).

- **Annual Informal Review.** Once per year the Department Head will arrange a meeting between the pre-tenure early career faculty, the most recent chair of the Tenure and Promotion committee, the most recent chair of the Annual Performance and Evaluation committee, and a full professor mentor of the early career faculty's choosing (typically someone in a similar or adjacent sub-discipline). The purpose of this meeting is to have an informal discussion on the early career faculty's academic progress toward tenure. Both the mentor and mentee are recommended to keep an informal record of the meetings as a measure of progress and for reference. Suggested topics of conversation can include:
 - Areas of success and excellence of the early career faculty member.
 - Areas which may need additional improvement.
 - The department's criteria for tenure and promotion. The College of Science's criteria for tenure and promotion.

- **Sponsorship.** The mentor and the Department Head are expected to act as the mentee's sponsors and promote the mentees for awards, when appropriate, through the department nomination committee. In contrast to mentoring, which provides ongoing guidance and feedback, sponsorship provides specific strategic opportunities to an individual at a particular time (Ibarra et al., 2010). Award nominations are one form of sponsorship. Other forms include for example:
 - Helping someone get on an AGU (section) program committee.
 - Helping someone become a journal associate editor.
 - A strategic introduction to a key person in a discipline.

- **Proposals.** The department should compile a dossier of recently funded (and/or recently rejected) external proposals by faculty members (with their permission) and make these available to early career faculty so that they can read them as examples in advance of writing their own proposals.

- **Peer annual performance evaluation.** The DH will preferentially assign services at the department level such as serving on annual departmental annual review evaluation committee so to provide an opportunity for the faculty to review successful colleagues within the department.

- **Tenure and promotion package.** faculty are welcome to ask a faculty, through the DH if they wish, who recently went through the tenure process for her/his tenure review package, so that they can read them as examples in advance of submitting their own 3rd year review and tenure packets.

- **Essential Documents.** The department should compile a dossier of “Essential Documents for Early career Faculty” and make these available in the front office to early career faculty. This dossier can include:
 - Guide to the proposal submission process in the department (how to put together a budget and steps to submission).
 - Guide to resources available at sponsored project for help with federal agencies such NSF Fastlane etc.
 - Dept. guidelines and templates for tenure and promotion (including a checklist)
 - College of Science guidelines for tenure and promotion
 - University of Arizona guidelines for tenure and promotion
 - A document outlining the procedure and requirements for creating a new course.

- **Departmental recognition of mentoring service.** The department should recognize and celebrate the importance, value, and successes of mentorship.
 - Mentorship should be incentivized in ways such as making mentorship an integral part of service and the annual evaluation process.
 - Attention should be paid to the equitable distribution of the work of mentorship among the senior faculty.

Resources

Columbia University *Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Mentoring*, Aug. 2016

<https://provost.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/MentoringBestPractices.pdf>

Mentoring resources from the University of Arizona. Includes a mentoring toolkit with instructional resources for mentors and mentees.

<https://diversity.arizona.edu/mentoring-resources>

Brown University guide for one-to-one mentoring, developed by the ADVANCE program at NSF

https://www.brown.edu/research/projects/advance/sites/brown.edu.research.projects.advance/files/uploads/mentoring_guide.pdf

Information about the University of Oregon’s faculty external mentor program. They fund faculty to establish an external mentoring relationship.

<https://inclusion.uoregon.edu/facultyexternal-mentor-program>

Examples of best practices in a faculty mentoring program from Penn State University.

References

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