Best Practices for Faculty Peer Mentoring at the University of St. Thomas

The Mission of the Mentoring Program

The Faculty Development Mentoring for Success Program (MSP) is inspired by the principles of Catholic social teaching to foster a high quality mentoring culture at UST. We strive to promote faculty well-being and success through a mentoring process that is illuminating and supportive. The Mentoring for Success Program reflects three University of St. Thomas convictions: dignity, diversity and personal attention.

Definition of Mentoring

Many scholars have attempted to define mentoring. One of the best definitions of mentoring is the following by Bernice Sandler:

> Mentoring involves teaching, coaching, advising, supporting, guiding and helping mentees achieve their goals. Mentors should teach mentees what they need to know and what they should avoid.

UST Faculty Handbook Mentoring Expectations Chapter 9 Section 5

V. Mentoring

Mentoring is designed to support the successful integration of new faculty members into the campus community and to promote continual professional development. The chair/director is responsible for ensuring that mentoring occurs. The mentor must be someone other than the department chair. The process of mentoring is seen as supportive, informal, and individualized. In order to ensure its supportive nature for mentees, it is separate from their summative evaluation and supervision. Minimally, the mentor could provide guidance in the creation of appropriate goals for the Annual Reports and portfolios. Examples of other areas where the mentor might provide assistance include
• assisting with understanding the university structure and culture;
• reviewing syllabi and other course materials;
• providing feedback on teaching through classroom visitation;
• familiarizing the faculty member with campus resources, including Faculty Development, library resources, and the like;
• assisting with introductions to other faculty and staff members with similar interests;
• reviewing proposals for conference preparation or including the mentored faculty member in proposals;
• acknowledging and celebrating professional successes and development;
• providing encouragement and inspiration;
• reviewing manuscripts or co-authoring materials;
• giving suggestions on materials prepared for performance reviews.

http://www.stthomas.edu/media/academicaffairs/pdf/FacultyHandbookChapter-9-1-23-2013.pdf

Strategies for Department Chairs and Directors

1. Before junior faculty members arrive to the department, you should remind senior faculty of their shared responsibility for mentoring new colleagues (see next section on strategies for senior faculty). When selecting mentors for junior faculty members, it is important that mentors embody some of the following traits: willingness to share information and knowledge, willingness to share personal challenges, committed, reliable, resourceful, culturally competent, flexible, open-minded, and demonstrates effective communication and interpersonal skills.

2. Once junior faculty members arrive to the department, they should receive some type of resource with contact information for important departments and services on campus that would help new faculty navigate their environment (see Faculty Development website for new and adjunct faculty resources **http://www.stthomas.edu/fdc/newfaculty**). In addition, they should receive specific information for department liaisons for IRT, libraries, etc.

3. Review and clarify the tenure and promotion requirements and make sure junior faculty understand policies that can minimize work-family conflicts such as understanding when it might be appropriate to modify the "tenure clock". See Faculty Handbook sections on parenting leave, family emergency policy, chapter 11 section 6C **(http://www.stthomas.edu/media/academicaffairs/pdf/FacultyHandbookChapter-11-2-25-2013.pdf)**, and stopping the clock, chapter 4 section 3 **(http://www.stthomas.edu/media/academicaffairs/pdf/Chapter-4--Tenure-June-7,-2013_REVISED.pdf)**

4. During the first year you should meet with junior faculty to review their achievements and discuss guidelines and answer questions about how to write an annual report (this should not be connected with the formal annual review process). If possible refer them to other members of the department who are willing to share sample annual reports with them. For example, you could meet with faculty at the end of the fall semester to prepare them for their annual report in the spring semester (you could follow the same process for their triennial review).

5. You should have an informal separate one-to-one meeting with junior and senior faculty members to get their feedback on the mentoring process (at least one meeting each semester until the junior faculty member is granted tenure and promotion).

6. Create a mentoring culture within the department and program by having structured activities that encourage formal interaction between junior and senior faculty (e.g., research/teaching brown bags). Promote collaboration not competition among junior and senior colleagues (e.g., work together as a team on goals for the major, assessment, and outreach). In addition, promote an understanding of the challenges faced by faculty from underrepresented groups in your discipline (some general readings on this topic are listed below).

7. Support professional development mentoring opportunities for senior faculty and reward them for their service as mentors.

Strategies for Senior Faculty

1. Establish clear expectations with your junior colleagues. Be explicit about what personal or professional topics you are willing to discuss with your colleagues and how frequently you will be able to connect with them.

2. During your meetings with your colleagues be fully present with them. Many junior faculty members do not like to ask their mentors questions because they believe you have more important things to do than mentor them.

3. Review the current written policies related to tenure and promotion. In addition, provide guidance on how to understand, decode and interpret the unwritten rules of the department and institution.

4. Provide opportunities for your junior colleagues to build their social capital within the university and profession (e.g., introduce junior colleagues to senior colleagues in other departments and universities, recommend junior colleagues for committees that are aligned with their strengths and interests). Promote your junior colleagues' research in your professional social networks.

5. Become familiar with the literature on faculty from underrepresented groups. If your mentee is from an underrepresented group in your discipline, become aware of the potential challenges and identify relevant supports (see reading list below on this topic).

6. Give honest feedback to your junior colleagues regarding their teaching and research. Communicate criticisms with concrete suggestions on how to make improvements in the future.

7. It is important to share your personal teaching and research challenges and the strategies you used to overcome your own professional obstacles.

8. Focus on developing open communication with junior colleagues because it is essential for establishing and maintaining effective mentoring relationships. Treat junior faculty as peers and give advice without sounding parental.

Strategies for Junior Faculty

1. Read and review carefully the procedures and polices of the tenure and promotion process in the faculty handbook. Create a checklist of requirements for tenure and promotion and monitor your progress each year by comparing it to your achievements listed in the annual report. Go over your checklist with your department chair and mentors.

2. Recognize that there are unwritten rules within the departmental and institutional culture and you need to ask mentors to help you decode and interpret these rules in order to thrive at the university.

3. Carefully organize documents related to your teaching, research and service activities. Allow your mentor to review and evaluate your CV, annual report and other tenure and promotion documents.

4. Be open-minded to the honest feedback you receive from your mentors. You do not have to follow all your mentors' suggestions but you should demonstrate that you value their feedback and follow through on some of their recommendations.

5. Actively seek out opportunities to develop social capital with multiple senior faculty members inside and outside your department. Show genuine interest in the personal and professional backgrounds of your senior colleagues.

6. Establish a network with other junior colleagues to provide each other with encouragement and support during the tenure process. Share your joys and challenges with one another to minimize alienation at the university.

7. Focus on developing open communication with senior colleagues because it is essential for establishing and maintaining effective mentoring relationships. In order to thrive as a professional, it is important to be vulnerable and express your fears, insecurities and weaknesses with your mentor.

Sources used for this document

Sandler, Bernice R. (1995) "Women as Mentors: Myths and Commandments." *Educational Horizons,* 105-107.

University of St. Thomas-Faculty Development Center
(http://www.stthomas.edu/fdc)

University of St. Thomas- Faculty Handbook
(http://www.stthomas.edu/academicaffairs/publications/facultyhandbook)

University at Albany State University of New York –Mentoring Best Practices
(http://www.albany.edu/academics/mentoring.best.practices)

University of Michigan-The ADVANCE Program
(http://sitemaker.umich.edu/advance)

Recommended Websites

Association for Women in Science (AWIS)
(http://www.awis.org)

National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity
(http://www.facultydiversity.org)

University of Massachusetts at Amherst- Office of Faculty Development
(http://www.umass.edu)

University of Michigan- Center for Research on Learning and Teaching
(http://www.crlt.umich.edu)

Recommended Readings on faculty in underrepresented groups

Basow, S. A. (1995). Student evaluations of college professors: When gender matters. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 87,* 656-665.

Erickson, C. D. & Rodriguez, E. R. (1999). Indiana Jane and the temples of doom: Recommendations for enhancing women and racial/ethnic faculty's success in academia. *Innovative Higher Education, 24,* 149 – 168.

Etzkowitz, H., Uzzi, B, & Kemelgor, C. (2000) *Athena Unbound: The Advancement of Women in Science and Technology.* Cambridge University Press.

Hendrix, K. G. (1998). Student perceptions of the influence of race on professor credibility. *Journal of Black Studies, 28,* 738-764.

Kogan, L. R., Schoenfeld-Tacher, R., Hellyer, P. W. (2010). Student evaluations of teaching: Perceptions of faculty based on gender, position, and rank. *Teaching in Higher Education, 15* (6), 623-636.

Rockquemore, K. A. & Laszloffy, T. (2008). *The black academic's guide to winning tenure – without losing your soul.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner Publishers

Stanley, C. A. (2006). *Faculty of color: Teaching in predominantly white colleges and universities.* Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company.

Recommended Readings on faculty mentoring

Bensimon, E.M., Ward, K. and Sanders, K. (2000) *The Department Chair's Role in Developing New Faculty into Teachers and Scholars.* Bolton, MA: Anker.

Boice, R. (2000) *Advice for New Faculty Members: Nihil Nimus. Needham* Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon*.*

Crone, Wendy. (2010) *Survive and Thrive: A Guide for Untenured Faculty.* Morgan & ClayPool Publishers.

De Janasz, S. C. & Sullivan, S. E., (2004) "Multiple Mentoring in Academe: Developing the Professional Network." *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 64(2): 263-283.

Goldsmith, J.A. Komlos, J. & Gold, P.S. (2001) *The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career: a Portable Mentor for Scholars from Graduate School through Tenure.* Chicago, Illinois University of Chicago Press.

Smith, Judith O. et al. (2001) "Peer Networking as a Dynamic Approach to Supporting New Faculty." *Innovative Higher Education* 25: 197-207.