Faculty Mentoring Program

“We don't accomplish anything in this world alone... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something.” – Sandra Day O’Connor

The mentoring program for new assistant professors is one of several initiatives through which Iowa State University supports new faculty. In particular, the mentoring program is coordinated with the New Faculty Orientation for faculty members’ first year at ISU. The mentoring program is most crucial during the new faculty members’ first three years, as faculty become familiar with department expectations for faculty work. Also, it is desirable that mentoring continue through the promotion and tenure process. This program formalizes an important relationship among the new faculty member, senior faculty, and the department chair. There are two types of mentoring under this program. Individual faculty mentoring, and the newly created peer-to-peer small group mentoring with a designated coordinating mentor from each college.

Selecting a Mentor

Process for Faculty Mentoring
The department chair formally recommends the mentor, in consultation with the new faculty member. This recommendation may consist of one or more mentors depending on departmental structure and the range of the faculty member’s areas of responsibility. Both the Dean and the Provost must approve the mentor(s) appointment.

Mentor qualifications
• A mentor has professional stature and success, and ideally has commonalities with the new faculty member’s expertise and professional goals.
• A mentor is selected from among tenured full and associate professors.
• Ordinarily, a mentor has experience with the department to acquaint the new faculty member with departmental culture and expectations for performance in research, teaching, extension/professional practice, and service.
• A mentor is on campus during the new faculty member’s first year and is willing to continue the mentoring relationship beyond the first year, at least through the probationary review.

Options in selection
• The mentor may have expertise in teaching, research, extension/professional practice, grant writing, or a combination of these responsibilities.
• New faculty typically prefer working with a mentor who is active in the same professional or disciplinary subfield.
• Faculty members in another department or in the new faculty member’s cross-disciplinary program also may be selected.
Newly-tenured associate professors are valuable mentors with experience in the contemporary realities of the tenure and promotion process.

Two faculty members may share mentoring responsibilities, especially when the new faculty member is involved in interdisciplinary teaching and research activities, or shares other career interests.

When multiple mentors collaborate, good communication and additional planning are needed between mentors and the department chair. In such cases, the professional development support is shared.

**Process for Peer-to-Peer Group Mentoring**
The Office of the Provost also is coordinating a peer-to-peer mentoring program, whereby small groups of new faculty interact. The selection of a coordinating mentor for these groups is done in consultation with the department chairs and deans. The goal is to provide opportunities for new faculty to meet and network with peers across Colleges and the University.

**Calendar**

**Individual Faculty Mentoring**

**September.** By the end of September, the department chair will have forwarded the mentor recommendation to the Dean and Provost after consultation with the new faculty member and prospective mentor. After approval, the chair should arrange a meeting with the new faculty member, the mentor(s), and the chair to clarify expectations. Even though the designated mentor assumes a special collegial role with the new faculty member, the chair will continue to have primary responsibility for the new faculty member’s review and professional development.

**October to December.** During the faculty member’s first semester, the mentor and the new faculty member should meet at least monthly in formally scheduled meetings, and as frequently as needed to acclimate the faculty member. The mentor and new faculty member should attend the Provost’s luncheon meeting for new faculty and mentors. The peer-to-peer mentoring groups also will be organized during this time.

**January to June.** During spring semester, regularly scheduled meetings should continue, and both should attend the Provost’s meeting on promotion and tenure. The mentor should help the new faculty member prepare materials for annual review.

**Peer-to-Peer Mentoring**

It is anticipated that two meetings of peer-to-peer mentoring groups will occur during the fall and again in the spring semester. These will be facilitated by the Office of the Provost.

**The new faculty member’s review meeting with chair.** During the department chair’s annual review with the new faculty member, the chair should receive a candid assessment
of the effectiveness of the mentoring. If the mentoring match is not serving the new faculty member’s needs, the chair should appoint a new mentor to provide support beyond the first year. The status of the mentoring should be known by the Dean and Department Chair.

**New faculty member’s remaining years until tenure review.** The mentoring relationship should continue into the new faculty member’s second and third years, to ensure the faculty member has a collegial resource to approach with concerns and questions. While the nature of the mentoring relationship is likely to change over time, the new faculty member will be able to use the mentor’s experience and expertise for several years, and if possible, until the promotion and tenure review.

**Mentoring Activities**

Mentoring should center on the primary position responsibilities of the new faculty member.

**Research/Creative activity.** Mentors share information about professional opportunities internal and external to the university (funding sources, potential collaborators, publication outlets). Several mentoring relationships have provided joint authorship opportunities including writing papers, articles, and grants. Mentors frequently review research and provide advice on placing the results of research.

**Teaching.** Mentors provide advice on preparation of course syllabi and on teaching strategies. They often visit the new faculty member’s classrooms and laboratories.

**Extension/Professional practice.** Mentors help establish external contacts and assist new faculty to understand the needs and expectations of external audiences. They provide advice on preparation of materials and formal presentations.

**Professional achievement.** Mentors provide guidance for documenting activities and professional achievements. They may review the new faculty member’s vita and offer advice on goal setting and on developing materials for annual and third year reviews. Ultimately, the new faculty member is responsible for his/her own professional achievement, but the mentor can facilitate this process.

**Department culture.** Mentors assist new faculty members in understanding the prevailing departmental and institutional cultures. As advisors and counselors, they can be relied upon to provide information about time management, institutional procedures, computing, budgeting, working with graduate students, assessment, and use of facilities.

While the mentoring program is designed to support the work of new faculty members, mentors also benefit from the insights and expertise of the new faculty. Mentors often report becoming more aware of the pressures new colleagues face in the academy.
**Provost Office Support and Assessment**

The Provost’s Office coordinates the formal assignment of mentoring appointments, as well as the New Faculty Orientation Program at ISU. The Provost supplies a modest professional development stipend to the mentor for the first year of mentoring, which is shared in the case of more than one mentor.

A vital part of the program is assessment. The Office of the Provost requests that each mentor and mentored new faculty member complete a confidential annual survey. This information will be used for continuous improvement of the mentoring program.

**Resources:**
- http://www.provost.iastate.edu/faculty/newfaculty/mentoring-program.html
- http://facultymentoring.stanford.edu/
- http://www.crlt.umich.edu/faculty/facment.html
- http://www.uwosh.edu/mentoring/faculty/links.html
- http://academic.cuesta.edu/academy/mentoring.htm
- http://www.nmsu.edu/~advprog/mentoring.html

**For additional information, please contact:**
The Office of the Provost, 294-6410, jtarbox@iastate.edu