

Faculty Mentoring Guide
Department of Political Science
Auburn University

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The Department of Political Science at Auburn University is committed to the career development of all faculty members within the department. One way to support the advancement of a successful academic career is through faculty mentorship. Mentoring takes many forms and originates from a variety of sources. In the Department of Political Science, new faculty members are not formally assigned a mentor; they are encouraged to talk freely and develop relationships with several senior faculty members. This guide offers suggestions and recommendations intended to help junior faculty develop relationships with senior faculty who can provide mentorship and career advice.

The mentoring process can improve the prospect of earning promotion and tenure through success in research, teaching, service, and outreach. Mentors help junior faculty attain their career goals by providing advice related to specific areas of research and teaching, providing information about the promotion and tenure process, offering insight into department and university culture, giving constructive and critical feedback on career progress, providing general encouragement and support, and helping create important connections within the university or discipline.

The mentoring process may occur through a number of different interactions and relationships. One-on-one mentoring is a way for a senior faculty member to give specific feedback and direction to a new member of the department. Junior faculty members will likely rely on the department chair and program directors to aid the transition into their new position at a new institution. Junior faculty should also consider developing relationships with other senior faculty members that have similar scholarly interests to their own. Mentoring can also occur in a group setting with several senior faculty members and the junior faculty member. New faculty members may also want to develop relationships with other junior faculty members to share their own personal experiences, information, and knowledge of department and university resources.

There can also be variation in the setting where mentoring takes place. In addition to arranging formal meetings with your mentors and advisors, contact can also be made through informal office visits, e-mail, phone calls, campus events, lectures and other presentations, meals, conferences, and workshops.

Suggestions for junior faculty:

- Junior faculty should feel that they are in charge of establishing and maintaining mentoring relationships. If a relationship is not working, they should seek

alternative relationships that are more helpful.

- New faculty should try to identify senior faculty in the department who may have helpful advice. Junior faculty should feel free to initiate a meeting. The department chair and program directors should be ready to assist junior faculty who might be having trouble identifying a suitable mentor.
- Junior faculty should actively seek feedback from senior faculty and the department chair. Also, recognize that other junior faculty are often sources of valuable advice and help as well.
- New faculty should become familiar with the rules and criteria regarding promotion and tenure. They should read and discuss any written policies about promotion and tenure with your mentors.

Suggestions for senior faculty:

- Senior faculty members can help shape careers and encourage successful outcomes. They know and can explain the system, pointing out pitfalls, shortcuts, and strategies. Often, junior faculty need to learn what they may not even know to ask in terms of research, teaching, and service.
- Senior faculty should recognize that it is often difficult and intimidating for junior colleagues to articulate their questions and needs. Every effort should be made to encourage conversations with and questions from junior colleagues. Discussions can occur on just one occasion or on a frequent basis. Senior faculty should inform junior faculty about how frequently they will be able to meet. Everyone should be aware of heavy travel schedules, sabbaticals, or administrative assignments.
- Senior faculty should provide specific information about as many topics as possible, from the informal rules of the profession to navigating departmental and university processes and policies.
- Senior faculty, but especially the department chair and program directors, should help junior faculty learn what kinds of institutional support is available and discuss how it might further their own career development. This includes special events or workshops, travel funds, seed grants, or release time for special projects.
- Feedback should be provided—including criticism or praise—whenever possible.

Questions that could be considered during the mentoring process:

- What are appropriate ways to raise different kinds of concerns or issues and with whom?

- How do people find out about and get nominated for awards and prizes?
- What organizations are important to join?
- How do I get grants?
- Are there research projects being developed by other faculty in the department that I can or should get involved with?
- What conferences should I attend?
- Are there people that I should collaborate with?
- What are the journals to publish in? Have any colleagues published there?
- Am I publishing enough?
- How can I increase my visibility in the field?
- What classes do I need to teach?
- How do I get a good teaching schedule?
- How do I deal with difficult situations or problems with students?
- How do I encourage graduate students to join my research project?
- Can I serve on dissertation committees?
- How are teaching evaluations handled and weighted?
- What are the important committees to serve on?
- How can I get nominated to be on them?
- How is service work documented?
- What are the department's formal and informal criteria for promotion and tenure?
- What or who can clarify these criteria?
- What would you have wanted to know when you began the tenure process?
- How does one build a promotion or tenure file?

- Who sits on the tenure committee and how are they selected?
- How should I prepare for the annual review?
- How should I prepare for the third year review?