

University of Houston College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics
Mentoring and Faculty Review of Tenure-Track Faculty
Principles and Best Practices

The interests of the college, departments, and faculty are best served when the people hired are constructively mentored and reviewed. Constructive mentoring and reviewing of tenure-track faculty allows our colleagues to realize their full potential as scholars, teachers, and members of the academic community.

Given all that is at stake, both personally for the candidate and institutionally, in the success of our colleagues, the mentoring and reviewing of tenure-track faculty is one of the most important tasks departments can carry out.

Principles:

1. It is the responsibility of departments and schools in which faculty hold tenure-track appointments to mentor those faculty in ways that help them reach their full potential in teaching, research, and service. While most of the points presented here are most appropriate for non-tenured faculty and recently hired NTTs, mentoring is important for faculty at all stages of their careers, pre-tenure and post-tenure.
2. Mentoring of junior faculty (pre-tenure) is a responsibility of all tenured faculty members and a particular responsibility of the department and college senior leadership.
3. The most effective mentoring is both formal and informal. It is about clearly presenting the internal expectations for teaching, research, and service, as well as about external measures of success such as publications and awards. Additionally, it is about assistance in identifying and mitigating departmental and institutional impediments to the faculty member's success.

Best Practices for Faculty Mentoring

1. As soon as a candidate accepts a position, the chair should work with his/her colleagues to develop a mentoring plan for the new faculty member. The prospective faculty member should be consulted in developing this plan. The plan should include attention to teaching, graduate supervision, research, and service obligations. The plan should be predicated on being helpful rather than authoritarian.
2. Mentoring plans may include participation by several members of the department/school, as well as external faculty as appropriate. In many cases, this may be the department executive committee. Inclusion of an associate professor who has recently gone through the process of tenure review is advised. Over time, the plan may be reviewed and mentors added who the new faculty member is particularly comfortable with.
3. Departments should work to develop a "climate of mentoring" in which all members of the department spontaneously and informally mentor their new colleagues. Collegial conversations about the intellectual concerns of the department are one of the best modes of informal mentoring.

4. Departmental leadership should take care to ensure that there are events, such as colloquia and seminars, which include new faculty as both audience and presenters, to make them welcome as members of the community, and serve as modes of informal mentoring.
5. Chairs should support collaborative teaching and research, team teaching, and interdisciplinary teaching efforts on the part of junior faculty, both for the intrinsic value of such work and because collaborative work is itself a form of mentoring. This work should be given full credit.
6. Tenure-track appointees should have the opportunity to annually review with their chair, and appropriate departmental committee, their teaching, research, and service in relation to their progress toward tenure. These reviews should be constructive and diagnostic. They should address areas of strength and areas for improvement in the faculty member's teaching, research, and service and should include suggestions about goals and strategies for improvement. These meetings should be conversations where the faculty member can voice concerns about department and institutional issues that may be hindering their progress.
7. Chairs/deans should conduct reviews of tenure-track appointees' work in a friendly and constructive spirit. These reviews should aim to communicate the requirements for tenure and to help candidates meet those requirements; it is not to intimidate candidates.
8. Chairs/deans should recognize that some candidates may in some contexts (e.g., women or minorities in departments where they are under-represented) face special challenges in receiving the kinds of informal mentoring that both help their careers and make them feel comfortable in the department. In such instances, the chair/dean may wish to seek mentoring resources available on campus outside the department such as the Women and Gender Resource Center or the National Center for Development and Diversity. Departments should pay particular attention to ensure that faculty behavior in both formal and informal settings is fully and respectfully inclusive of such candidates and of the scholarly interests for which they were hired.
9. Where tenure-track faculty hold joint appointments, the chairs/deans of their units should review each year their respective requirements of the candidate to ensure that they are consistent with the expectations placed on faculty without joint appointments. Particular attention should be paid to teaching and service requirements to make sure that candidates are not doing "double duty" in, for example, teaching large introductory lectures or holding demanding committee assignments in both departments.
10. Irrespective of whether tenure-track faculty hold single or joint appointments, their chairs/deans should review their work assignments carefully to ensure that they are not unduly burdened by an excessive number of new course preparations, large classes, or demanding service assignments.
11. Service assignments to tenure-track faculty should serve as mentoring contexts in which the faculty learns about the values and operations of the University.
12. One is not born a mentor but learns to become a mentor. Faculty mentors in a department/school should meet regularly, to discuss problems and strategies around mentoring and to share their knowledge.

Adapted from the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LS&A) *Junior Faculty Mentoring and Third-Year Reviews: Principles and Best Practices: A report to chairs, directors, and faculty* from Dean Shirley Neuman, June 18, 2001, and from UC Berkeley Principles and Best Practices.

Useful Resources

Resources to Support Work-Life Balance

<https://www.uh.edu/provost/faculty/current/benefits/work-life-balance/>

National Center for Development and Diversity

<https://www.uh.edu/provost/faculty/current/fed/services/ncfdd/>