

Biology Department Faculty Mentoring Program

Revised 12-3-21

Overall goals:

The Biology Department Faculty Mentoring Program specifies that each newly hired faculty member is to be paired with a tenured faculty mentor. The mentoring program is designed to support the professional development of junior faculty and promote their integration and inclusion in the culture and activities of the Department and the University. This is done by:

- clarifying Department and University expectations, especially but not exclusively for the fourth-year review and tenure.
- providing guidance and support to achieve professional goals, including helping faculty balance their professional activities and suggesting ways to promote excellence in research and teaching.
- helping junior faculty build connections within the Department and across the University.
- providing information about resources and opportunities on campus and helping faculty navigate University and Departmental systems and processes.

On a broader, Departmental level, the mentoring program also serves to enhance the Departmental climate and transparency, promote communication among faculty, and encourage the mutual sharing of ideas. The program is intended to nurture the Departmental community.

Specific Components of the Mentoring Plan:

Assignment of mentor: Prior to the arrival of junior faculty and in consultation with them, the Department Chair matches the junior faculty with one (or occasionally two) tenured mentor(s). Selection of the mentor may be based on overlap in research or teaching interests or on other points of affinity. The mentor may remain in the position through the tenure decision year, or the position could rotate between different tenured mentors in the Department, depending on mentoring outcomes and the preferences of the mentee. Faculty mentors report this effort in their AFRs and are credited for their contributions to the Mentoring Program in the area of Service to the Department. In addition to the primary mentor, Department members who are especially effective teachers are encouraged to coach and advise junior faculty on their teaching activities.

Mentoring expectations: It is hoped that informal meetings and conversations between mentor and mentee occur on a regular basis. However, at a minimum, mentors are expected to meet with their mentees at least two to three times per semester during the first year, and then at agreed-upon intervals in subsequent semesters, with a minimum of one meeting per semester.

Role of Biology Chair: All of the mentoring activities are overseen by the Chair. In addition to assigning the mentor, the Chair acts as a general point-person for new faculty, ensuring that they

have adequate space and resources, helping them to connect with other faculty, staff, and resources in the Department and University, responding to questions, helping to problem-solve, and overseeing the mentoring process, including suggesting changes in mentor-mentee pairs as necessary or desired.

The Department Chair meets with each junior faculty member on a regular basis (at least monthly) during the first year, and regularly as needed in subsequent semesters. Along with the mentor, the Chair discusses resources available for junior faculty and helps to guide them in their adjustment to their faculty position.

Establishment of research program and lab management: The mentor supports the mentee in learning how to set up and manage a research program and group. The mentor discusses research activities, publications, grant resources, and effective strategies to develop a productive and successful research program at the University.

Balancing research, teaching, and service: In addition to the themes addressed above, mentors also provide support around “big-picture” issues that typify integration into a professional academic appointment. For instance, mentors help their mentees to answer questions such as: How do I balance teaching, research, and service commitments? How do I set multi-year plans for work across these areas? (For example, the mentee might develop a multi-year teaching plan with their teaching mentor and a multi-year research plan with their research mentor, if these are two separate individuals.) How do I make choices about service requests and other responsibilities? In the Biology Department, junior faculty are encouraged to focus on the development of their research programs and their teaching, since in the sciences, the first five or six years in a faculty position are critical for establishing a sustainably fundable research program. The service load of new members of the faculty is considered carefully by the Chair and mentor to help the junior faculty avoid overcommitment in service activities.

Mentorship in teaching: Mentorship in teaching is provided by experienced tenure-track faculty who have taught courses similar to those that the junior faculty will teach and/or by faculty with particular expertise in pedagogy. The Chair of the Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Program Director also provide guidance in developing new undergraduate or graduate courses, respectively, as appropriate. Teaching mentorship covers all aspects of teaching, from course content to student issues. The mentor, Chair, and experienced instructors should inform the junior faculty member of resources available for teaching on campus (e.g. Center for Innovative Teaching, Faculty Development Office, etc.). Class visits are encouraged, and co-teaching opportunities are sometimes provided as necessary or desired.

Assistance in lab setup: The Biology staff assist the new faculty member in purchasing lab supplies and equipment (including by providing advice on equipment options, suitability, pricing), general lab set-up, and grant submissions.

Student advising: Junior faculty members are assigned undergraduate advisees starting in their second year. New faculty are trained in areas of student advising by the Director of Advising in Biology, who provides information on the Biology major, University curricular requirements, and the degree audit system.

Assessment of mentoring: To assess the effectiveness of the mentoring, the Biology Executive Committee will separately contact each mentor/mentee pair at the end of each semester to get information on the number of mentoring meetings, satisfaction with the relationship, and areas for improvement. If there are issues that cannot be remedied directly, they should be directed to the Department Chair. In addition, the Chair should also discuss the effectiveness of the mentoring directly with the mentee and mentor and make any adjustments as needed, including the assignment of a new mentor if necessary.