Department of Political Science and Geography
Faculty Mentoring Program—Guidelines and Policies (September 2015)

Background

Effective in Fall 2015, the Department of Political Science and Geography will implement a faculty mentoring program to assist our efforts in guiding our newest faculty toward tenure and promotion. Across the University all departments have been asked to advance beyond the original discussions about mentoring programs, undertaken in 2014, and to move toward department-level implementation in 2015. With an increase in our recent recruitment activities, it is recognized that we have many new faculty members who have joined us, most of whom were hired directly from their doctoral granting institutions and some from other college or university departments. Since the majority of the newly-hired faculty members are in the early stages of career development, the faculty mentoring program aims to smooth as many of the rough edges of that development in order to strengthen our total efforts in teaching, research, and service.

The University’s Faculty Mentoring Program is overseen by the Office of the Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Support. This brief document is in an initial step in carrying out directions of the Provost’s Office to establish department practices that contribute to the University’s focus on improving retention of assistant and associate professors. It draws heavily from the Provost’s Office guidelines, but it is significantly compressed, paraphrased, and focused on how the guidelines can work with relative efficiency in this department. Quotations appearing below indicate material drawn from University information documents. Faculty seeking additional information and guidance should refer to the “UTSA Faculty Mentoring Program Guidelines” published on the Provost’s web site. Interested faculty can also Google ‘faculty mentoring programs’ to find all sorts of guidance and insights useful in making effective mentor-mentee relationships.

Program Objectives in this Department

In addition to improving all new faculty retention, the program is particularly focused on assisting new assistant professors in getting to know the institution, excelling in teaching and research, understanding tenure and evaluation processes, creating a work-life balance, and developing professional networks (internally and externally). ‘Mentors’ help ‘mentees’ with the kind of grounding assistance they may need in both career and university life to speed the pace of adaptation and advancement of mentee progress toward promotion.

The practice of mentoring is both emotional and content based. It is best if it occurs naturally and informally, but it is likely to be aided by some measure of formality and structure. The basic idea, therefore, is to have a consistently available contact among colleagues (i.e. a mentor), especially in the pre-tenure stages of career development. A formal mentoring policy (like this one) merely puts a plan in place to provide a modicum of structure and consistency. Mentoring activities are anchored in “one-to-one” pairing of pre-tenured faculty with tenured faculty, but it also may include “departmental social events, invitations to professional conferences, teaching and research collaborations, and assistance
with developing individualized career plans. Ideally, pre-tenure faculty will have a network of peers and more senior colleagues as mentors and advisors to get a complete overview of the requirements for academic success.” Participation in the mentoring program in this department is strictly voluntary.

In this department, mentoring should offer (but may not be limited to) some or all of the following types of information: recommended entry-level skills, our department’s academic environment, career advancements in Political Science or Geography, balancing work, family, and personal lives, and recommendations about competencies in teaching and service work. Exclusive of these topics, other topics should also be selected in discussions with mentees, such as information about and insights concerning tenure and promotion processes and timelines, achievement of a strong publication record through the use of strategic approaches, grant writing skills, assessment of student learning and strategies for effective teaching, and how to think about participation in department, college, and university service activities.

Following are some basic practices this department will follow in establishing the mentor program.

**Basic Outline of Department Practices**

- During interview stages of any recruitment search (for a position(s) in the department), the department chair and the search committee chair are responsible for informing all applicant/interviewees about the faculty mentoring program and how it operates in our department.

- As new assistant or untenured faculty members join the department, the department chair meets with them to outline the practices for mentor-mentee selection. The chair should indicated that program participation is strictly voluntary for new faculty but that it is recommended to begin after a new person has had an opportunity to associate with tenured faculty in the department.

- The department chairman develops a list of only tenured faculty members by rank whom he/she believes can be paired most effectively as mentors for untenured new colleagues. Untenured associate professors are mentored by full professors. New, untenured assistant professors are mentored by either associate or full professors. The chair determines the pairing of possible mentors based on whether or not effective mentoring can occur and based on a particular set of skills and a desire to help new colleagues. The chair contacts possible mentors to determine willingness to serve and availability as mentors and secures verbal agreement to serve.

- Faculty mentors must be from this department or from other COLFA departments (as agreed). Mentors are generally of the same gender as the new faculty member. “However, mentors of a particular gender, race, ethnicity, or background can be requested for multicultural development or other professional development reasons.”

- The department chairman is responsible for distributing information to faculty mentors concerning required or voluntary mentor training opportunities within the University. “Mentor training is available through the Faculty Center upon request. This is still under development,
but as the need arises, formal training of mentors and mentees is expected to be developed and implemented."

- Upon completion of pairing of mentors and mentees, a meeting should occur between the two persons to develop an understanding of the expectations that each person has of the relationship so that misunderstandings or miscommunications can be avoided. The voluntary relationship between mentors and mentees is generally planned for one year duration, but mentors and mentees can decide thereafter if it should last beyond the first year.

- Mentors and mentees are expected to agree to meet at least monthly during the first year of the mentoring relationship. During these meetings, it is recommended that the following basic topics (in addition to others of choice) should be discussed as appropriate: Navigating an increasingly demanding career; job preparation – managing your time and commitments; developing and preparing courses; managing student issues; navigating relationships with co-workers and colleagues; engaging in campus or off-campus service work.

- Mentors should also be proactive in discussing various aspects of coping with the pulls and stresses of professional life in an academic setting, such as balancing personal/professional life; unrealistic expectations; guarding against unreasonable self-expectations; expecting high levels of initial success; expecting close collegial ties; expecting high intellectual stimulation; experiencing feelings of isolation and/or colleague indifference; expecting a endless flow of support from chair or supervisor; unfamiliarity with institutional processes and culture; lack of access to information; inadequate feedback and recognition; poor student feedback or evaluations; lack of clear expectations about performance; little participation in department/unit decisions; perceptions about salary matters; securing funding or other support for research; writing and publishing papers; participating in committee activities at department, college, and university levels; engaging in community and professional service activities.

- As needed, the department chair may hold meetings during the year to develop an understanding of how respective mentor-mentee relationships are proceeding and to determine the need for any changes in direction or policy. As the first year of the mentoring process nears completion, the department chair should hold either a group or individual meeting with mentors and mentees.

- Before the end of the first year of the mentor-mentee relationship, mentors and mentees should meet and complete an evaluation of their activities using one of the “mentor” or “mentee” final evaluation forms included below. They should each sign the respective forms and exchange copies to be included the mentee’s file.

- The department chair should consult regularly with the DFRAC and with mentors to assess the effectiveness and progress of the mentoring program using all available data and evidence necessary to support any conclusions and proposed improvements.
Guidelines for Mentoring New Faculty

The Faculty Mentoring Manual appearing on the Provost’s website includes important additional guidelines and suggestions that mentors may find useful in preparing for mentoring duties. The details incorporated in that manual are far too numerous to summarize here. They explore such matters as etiquette for mentors; taking the initiative; making suggestions; clarity of explanations; remaining positive and neutral; confidentiality; fulfilling the relationship; and open door policy.

Mentees can also learn from the posted guidelines on such matters as: ensuring that the relationship remains positive; asking for advice and welcoming constructive feedback; consideration of the mentor’s time and other commitments; active listening to advice; active consideration of advice; examples of use of advice; showing appreciation for advice; remaining positive and neutral; keeping an open door.

Mentoring Resources

Following are mentoring resources drawn from the Faculty Mentoring Manual:


- University of Michigan (while this one pertains to graduate students, I believe a lot of the information is applicable to junior faculty)

  [http://www.crlt.umich.edu/faculty/facment](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/faculty/facment)

- Cornell University (This is a compilation of 5 exemplary mentoring programs)

  [http://www.advance.cornell.edu/documents/Exemplary-Junior-Faculty-Mentoring-Programs.pdf](http://www.advance.cornell.edu/documents/Exemplary-Junior-Faculty-Mentoring-Programs.pdf)

- Harvard University

  [http://www.faculty.harvard.edu/development-and-mentoring/faculty-mentoring-resources](http://www.faculty.harvard.edu/development-and-mentoring/faculty-mentoring-resources)

- Michigan State University

  [http://fod.msu.edu/resources-faculty-mentoring](http://fod.msu.edu/resources-faculty-mentoring)

- Northern Illinois University [http://www.niu.edu/facdev/services/newfacmentoring.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/facdev/services/newfacmentoring.shtml)

- The Center for Teaching and Faculty Development at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst – Mutual Mentoring, Mentoring Circles

  [http://www.umass.edu/ctfd/mentoring/index.shtml](http://www.umass.edu/ctfd/mentoring/index.shtml)

- University of New Mexico Mentoring Institute [http://mentor.unm.edu/home/](http://mentor.unm.edu/home/)

- Chronicle of Higher Education articles:

  - “The Difference Mentoring Makes”: [http://chronicle.com/article/The-Difference-Mentoring/147765/?key=SmNxIgZrZS9EHHhhMWpBMT4EPCZsNUU1aiM2an1zbl9QFg==](http://chronicle.com/article/The-Difference-Mentoring/147765/?key=SmNxIgZrZS9EHHhhMWpBMT4EPCZsNUU1aiM2an1zbl9QFg==)

“Why We Need ‘Reverse Mentoring’”:

“The Contributions of Mentees to Mentors”:

“Midcareer Mentoring”:

“How to Treat Your New Faculty Colleagues”:
http://chronicle.com/blogs/innovations/how-to-treat-your-new-faculty-colleagues/32789

“Why Not to Set Up a Formal New Faculty Mentoring Program”:

MENTEE FINAL EVALUATION (Example)
Mentee ________________________ Mentor ___________________________
Mentor Title ________________________ Phone ______________________
Number of Mentee Contacts with Mentor _____ Type of Contacts _________
Overall, how would you rate the mentoring experience?
5 – Excellent 4 – Good 3 – Satisfactory 2 – Fair 1 – Poor
Comments: ______________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
Rate the following statements on the scale of 1 - 5.
5 - Strongly agree 4 - Agree 3 - Disagree 2 - Strongly Disagree 1 - Don’t Know

MENTEE FINAL EVALUATION (Alternate example)
Mentee ________________________ Mentor ___________________________
Mentor Title ________________________ Phone ______________________
Number of Mentee Contacts with Mentor _____ Type of Contacts _________
Overall, how would you rate the mentoring experience?
5 – Excellent 4 – Good 3 – Satisfactory 2 – Fair 1 – Poor
Comments: ______________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
Rate the following statements on the scale of 1 - 5.

5 - Strongly agree 4 - Agree 3 - Disagree 2 - Strongly Disagree 1 - Don’t Know

I believe that I have reached all or some of my goals for personal growth. ____

I feel better about my potential for career and personal growth since completing the DWIA training and mentoring program. ____

I feel more self-confident since completing the DWIA program. ____

My mentor played an important part in my growth and development. ____

I plan to continue my training and education. ____

I plan to continue to work on reaching current and future career goals. ____

I feel the training I received had a positive effect on my career success. ____

I would recommend this program to others. ____

My mentor and I plan to continue our relationship. Yes ___ No ___ Don’t Know ____

I would like to serve as mentor in the future. Yes ___ No ___ Don’t Know ____

_________________________ ______________________
Mentee Signature and Date

MENTOR FINAL EVALUATION (example)

Mentor _________________________ Contact Number ______________________

Employer ______________________ Job Title _________________________

Number of Mentor Contacts with Mentee _____ Type of Contacts_________

Mentee _________________________ Contact Number ______________________

Overall, how would you rate the mentoring experience?

5 – Excellent 4- Good 3 – Satisfactory 2- Fair 1- Poor

Comments: __________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Rate the following statements on the scale of 1 - 5.

5 - Strongly agree 4 - Agree 3 - Disagree 2 - Strongly Disagree 1 - Don’t Know

I believe that the mentee reached all or some of his/her goals for personal growth. ____
I feel better about his/her potential for professional growth since completing the DWIA training and mentoring program. 

I see in the mentee a greater self-confidence since we began the mentoring relationship. 

I believe that I played an important part in career and personal development of the mentee. 

I think the mentee will become a long-term productive employee. 

I feel that I have gained from the mentoring relationship. 

I would encourage others to serve as mentors. 

I would like to mentor others in the future. 

I found the mentor role to be too demanding. 

My mentee and I plan to continue our relationship. Yes __ No __ Don’t Know ___

Mentor’s Signature and Date