

# ***MENTORING SUPPORT FOR NEW ASSISTANT PROFESSORS AT ISU***

Iowa State University recognizes the importance of supporting its faculty through both formal and informal mentoring. For new tenure-eligible faculty making the transition to ISU, formal support is anchored in the assignment of a mentor to each incoming assistant professor. This mentor and the new faculty member will continue their relationship through the faculty member's pre-tenure years, with the focus on ensuring a successful probationary review (third-year review). The university also supports new faculty through a series of orientation events during the first year, through a college-based peer mentoring program, and through the teaching partners program coordinated by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

## ***Individual mentoring program***

Building a successful mentoring relationship involves the new faculty member, a senior faculty mentor, and the department chair.

### **Selecting a faculty mentor**

The department chair formally recommends the mentor, in consultation with the new faculty member and reports it to the Executive Vice President and Provost. This recommendation may consist of one or more mentors depending on departmental structure and the range of the faculty member's areas of responsibility.

### **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 third year and the probationary review.

### **Options in mentor selection**

- The mentor may offer expertise in teaching, research, extension/professional practice, grant writing, or a combination of these areas.
- 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 interdisciplinary 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. The department chair should designate a “lead” mentor.

### ***Peer mentoring groups***

The Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost works with the colleges to coordinate a peer-to-peer mentoring program in which small groups of new faculty interact with others in their college. Each dean assigns a senior faculty member to coordinate meetings with the new faculty in the college. The goal is to provide opportunities for new faculty to meet and network with peers across the college.

### ***Teaching Partners Program***

The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) offers an optional Teaching Partners Program for faculty in their second and third years at ISU. The program consists in having a master teacher assigned to mentor a group of two to three tenure-eligible faculty who are looking for additional feedback on their teaching.

### ***The department chair’s role in mentoring***

The department chair is a key resource for every new faculty member and works with the new faculty member to ensure that s/he has the resources to succeed and the appropriate feedback on performance.

## ***Calendar***

### **With the individual faculty mentor**

**September.** By the end of September, the department chair will have forwarded the mentor recommendation to the Dean and Executive Vice President and Provost after consultation with the new faculty member and prospective mentor. After appointment, 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.

**September 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, with additional meetings 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 on October 28, 2009. The peer-to-peer mentoring groups also will be scheduled during late fall.

**January to June.** During spring semester, regularly scheduled meetings with the individual mentor should continue at least once a month, and both should attend the Executive Vice President and Provost's spring meeting for first year faculty on promotion and tenure March 1, 2010. The mentor should help the new faculty member prepare materials for his/her first annual review.

#### **With peer mentoring groups at the college level**

The college peer mentoring coordinator will meet with the new faculty at the August orientation and will schedule events for the new faculty during both fall and spring semesters.

#### **With the department chair**

**The new faculty member's review meeting with chair (spring semester).** During the department chair's annual performance 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 new mentor's review meeting with chair (spring semester).** During the department chair's annual performance review with the mentor, the chair should receive a candid assessment of the effectiveness of the mentoring.

#### **Mentoring after the first year**

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 with individual mentors***

Mentoring should center on the primary position responsibilities of the new faculty member as outlined in the position responsibility statement (PRS).

**Research/creative activity.** Mentors share information about professional opportunities internal and external to the university (funding sources, potential collaborators, publication outlets). Often 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 in understanding the needs and expectations of external audiences. They provide advice on preparation of materials and formal presentations.

**Institutional service.** Along with the chair, mentors help new faculty members manage a reasonable service commitment at Iowa State.

**Documenting 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, managing a research group, 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.

## ***Executive Vice President and Provost's Office support and assessment***

The Provost's Office coordinates the New Faculty Orientation Program at ISU as a complement to the assignment of the mentor at the department level and the coordination of peer mentoring groups in the college.

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

For other mentoring resources; please visit the ISU ADVANCE web site:  
<http://www.advance.iastate.edu/scholarprogram/scholarprogram.shtml>

**For additional information, please contact**  
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