

Designing and Implementing Mentoring Programs for Early Career Faculty

Center for Faculty Excellence, UNC–Chapel Hill
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Mentoring is vital to both individual and institutional success. Good mentorship is a hallmark of successful academic units. The department chair or school dean is responsible for ensuring mentoring is available and for establishing an environment conducive to and supportive of mentorship.

Report of the Provost's Task Force on Future Promotion
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This packet of materials was prepared for participants at a November 19, 2010, panel discussion sponsored by the CFE.

CFE welcomes your feedback on the usefulness of this material. Additional materials on the following mentoring topics are available:

- Finding a Mentor and Getting the Most Out of the Mentoring Relationship
- Designing and Implementing Mentoring Programs for Early Career Faculty
- Assisting New Associate Professors (Research Report)

To obtain additional materials or if you have any related questions or concerns, please contact Dr. David Kiel, CFE Leadership Coordinator, kiel@unc.edu.

Design Considerations for Mentoring Programs

In response to the Provost's mandate to support departments and schools in reviewing and strengthening their programs for mentoring early career faculty, the CFE is conducting a telephone survey of Chairs and Deans about mentoring practices. Approximately thirty Deans and Chairs have responded so far. This handout draws on insights gleaned from these interviews.

A standard format for design and implementation of a mentoring program includes these steps:

1. Determine the goals of the program.
2. Consider the mentoring structures and program activities that could accomplish those goals.
3. Select mentoring structures and activities that fit your unit's culture, available resources, and situation.
4. Formalize the plan to the degree that seems necessary.
5. Determine how you will assess the results of the program.
6. Implement your plan, periodically review its results, and, when appropriate, adjust your goals, structures, activities, and assessment measures.

In keeping with this format, this handout is organized as follows:

- The section "Setting Goals for a Mentoring Program" lists the different goals established by a number of UNC Departments.
- The section "Designing a Mentoring Program to Fit a Department" discusses several department-specific factors to take into account.
- The section "Assessing the Effectiveness of a Mentoring Program" discusses evaluation.
- At the end of the handout, lists of possible mentoring structures and program activities are provided in three appendices:
 - Options for Structuring the Mentoring Relationship
 - Characteristics of Effective Mentoring Programs
 - Group Mentoring Activities

Setting Goals for a Mentoring Program

What goals have you set for your mentoring program for early career faculty?

You might want to compare your goals with this list of goal statements chosen by several UNC programs. Some goals are stated in terms of the benefits for faculty members being mentored. Other goals focus on the benefits for the unit as a whole.

1. Provide accurate and timely information about the expectations and standards for renewal and/or tenure at UNC.
2. Provide timely assistance in developing effective packages for renewal and/or tenure.
3. Provide the support and guidance faculty need to reach their full potential as scholars, teachers, and university citizens.
4. Improve the retention of effective faculty members.
5. Create a competitive advantage in hiring the best faculty.
6. Strengthen general teaching skills and ability to work effectively with students.
7. Develop flexibility in use of teaching methods.
8. Reach a high level of research productivity.
9. Raise the research profile of the unit.
10. Develop skills in additional research methods in order to undertake new lines of inquiry.
11. Guide new faculty toward becoming independent scholars.
12. Develop skill in writing research proposals and acquiring research grants.
13. Assist early career faculty in taking on research projects of greater scope and impact.
14. Build the capacity for collaboration in teaching and scholarship.
15. Build supportive relationships with colleagues and staff in the department.
16. Become active and known in the discipline, both nationally and internationally
17. Develop a capacity for interdisciplinary work.
18. Assist faculty in developing skills in engagement and public service.
19. Help new faculty take on and learn department and university service roles consistent with their success in the tenure and renewal process.
20. Assist new faculty in developing connections and relationships with faculty across campus that will foster their research productivity and intellectual growth.

Several themes have emerged in conversations with UNC-Chapel Hill Deans and Chairs regarding the development of mentoring programs. Frequently, program leaders remark that an effective mentoring program must address the needs of faculty and fit with the unit's vision, mission, and situation. Programs often have multiple goals; in those cases it is helpful to prioritize the goals. In addition to being tailored to the needs of the unit and the faculty, a program's goals may reflect Carolina's commitment to being a great place for faculty to do their scholarly work and to grow professionally.

Source: In the fall 2010, CFE Leadership Coordinator David Kiel interviewed more than thirty UNC Deans and Chairs to learn about mentoring practices across campus. This list of goal statements was compiled based on these conversations and after a review of the documents of the various mentoring programs. The statements listed are sometimes paraphrases or summaries. The survey is ongoing.

Designing a Mentoring Program to Fit a Department

A successful mentoring program may be formal and structured, informal and unstructured, or a mix of formal and informal elements. The shape of a program is often influenced by a combination of factors, including the unit's size, culture, history, discipline, and mix of faculty.

A structured, formal approach may work best in large units with several divisions and programs. New faculty members in such a unit may need close guidance from faculty members within their own division but also may benefit from opportunities to gain exposure to other parts of the department or school. A formal mentoring team can help address that need for breadth. An informal approach may work better in a smaller unit. However, if that unit includes many faculty with joint appointments, relationships between mentors and mentees from multiple departments may need to be formalized.

The size of the cohort of new faculty members to be mentored is also important. If many new faculty members enter a relatively small department at once or if a department has few senior faculty, a group mentoring model may be the only way to meet the demand. In this case, it may be most efficient and effective to build on the strengths of specific faculty members when assigning mentoring roles. If a senior faculty member is a strong teacher, he or she may take on the teaching component of the program. Certain faculty members may be good writing coaches and could offer workshops for groups of new faculty.

In addition to considerations of scale and role assignments, a distinctive departmental culture may strongly influence the way the mentoring program operates. In some units, for example, faculty members firmly believe that it is largely the mentee's responsibility to find a mentor or make use of a mentoring committee. In other units, more responsibility is assigned to the mentor, and the chair of the mentoring committee may be required to convene meetings with mentors and mentees and submit reports on the progress of the mentoring program.

The unit's mix of faculty types is also an important consideration. A program designed to accommodate fixed-term research professors, fixed-term teaching faculty, and early career tenure-track faculty will need features that address the needs of each group and must take into account the relative numbers of tenure-track and fixed-term faculty. In some departments, fixed-term faculty have primarily teaching roles; in others they are research or clinical professors. The goals and activities of mentoring programs must match the roles mentees play in the department.

In different units mentoring may be an assigned responsibility or a voluntary activity. Typically pairing a mentor with mentee is a decision the chair or mentoring program director makes in discussion with the new faculty member and mentor. Chairs know their colleagues and often have a good sense of what makes a good match. In cases where the responsibility is placed on the new faculty member to find a mentor, the chair may advise the new faculty member about the best fit and ensure opportunities for new faculty to meet and interact with their senior colleagues. Senior faculty may be expected to mentor a certain number of junior faculty or may mentor none due to lack of interest, poor chemistry, or other commitments.

Once the goals and structure of the mentoring program have been determined, a decision must be made about which elements to formalize in writing. Some UNC units have formal mentoring program descriptions, manuals, and forms. Some have established written policies and procedures

each faculty member is expected to read. Other units rely on long-standing traditions and informal practices and have little in writing.

Assessing the Effectiveness of a Mentoring Program

One method to assess the effectiveness of a mentoring program is to list its goals, assess whether the goals specify all the desired outcomes, and establish a precise method for measuring progress toward each desired result. To evaluate the relationships, structures, and activities that comprise the mentoring program, ask this question: Do these elements lead to the desired goals?

Suppose a unit has these four goals for its mentoring program:

- A. Build the capacity for collaboration in teaching and scholarship.
- B. Build supportive relationships with colleagues and staff in the department.
- C. Become active and known in the discipline, both nationally and internationally
- D. Develop a capacity for interdisciplinary work.

Activities that reasonably support the above four goals might be as follows:

- A: Bring new faculty into collaborative projects with senior faculty.
- B: Establish periodic group meetings with peers and orientation sessions with unit staff.
- C: Provide financial support for attendance and participation at national meetings.
- D: Add mentors from other disciplines to the mentoring team.

All this is just to say that one way to assess the design of a mentoring program is to determine whether the goals fit the needs of the unit and its faculty, and then to inquire whether and how the program activities support the goals.

The last part of assuring that the mentoring program is designed effectively is the assessment of results. Even if the goals and the activities are aligned and address unit priorities, do the results actually meet or exceed expectations for the program? Are there problems of some kind?

An effective mentoring program has defined measures of success. According to Chairs and Deans at UNC, success of faculty in the tenure process is one of the most common measures of program effectiveness. Satisfaction with the program itself is an additional measure and can be assessed via surveys and interviews. For example, in some departments, faculty members are interviewed about their early career experiences once they are tenured. Improvement in teaching (perhaps measured by student evaluations or peer observations) and research productivity are also observable outcomes. In fact, these are the very measures that are used to make renewal and promotion and tenure decisions. Sometimes an associate chair or dean or a committee is asked to conduct a periodic program review of the mentoring program and assess results against goals and activities.

Appendices: Choices for Mentoring Programs

Appendix A. Options for Structuring the Mentoring Relationship

This list describes several mentoring roles and associated models for assigning mentoring responsibilities. A program may use one model or mix two or more.

General Mentor Model: A unit designates a general mentor whose responsibility it is to support pre-tenure faculty or any other defined group of faculty. The “general mentor” does not provide all services to all faculty members being mentored but is available for general advice or counsel and works to connect new faculty members to other helpful resources in the unit or on campus. This person might be considered a referral coordinator as well as a mentor. This model can be used where mentoring resources are dispersed across the unit or campus or where mentoring activities are designed for groups.

Primary Mentor Model: Each faculty member being mentored is assigned or asked to select a primary mentor with defined duties, which may include keeping the faculty member on track with the tenure process, trouble shooting, counseling, and providing general support and advice. This approach is often used in smaller units or when there is a close connection between the primary mentor’s research and/or teaching interests and those of the new faculty member.

Specialized Mentor Model: A unit designates multiple general mentors with narrow duties. For example, one mentor might be assigned to guide new faculty in teaching and another to provide research and grant writing advice. This can work well when there is a relatively large group of mentees and there are faculty members who are particularly good at particular kinds of mentoring.

Team Mentoring Model: A unit assigns a team of experienced faculty to each person being mentored. The team approach allows a mentee to choose whom to consult for different needs. The team may represent different specialties within a unit, or it may include different mentors for teaching, research, and overall career development. It may also include an external mentor. (See below.)

External Mentor Model: Some programs provide for an additional mentor outside the unit as a source of advice and help. This may be an important “safety feature” in case a faculty member being mentored is in conflict with a mentor or if an issue arises that seems too sensitive to discuss with someone in the unit before having a preliminary confidential discussion with a trusted outsider, such as an inter-departmental conflict or serious personal problem.

Cohort Mentoring Model: A group of new faculty meets on an ongoing basis with a faculty mentor, who answers questions and supports discussion about progress and concerns. The group may also invite speakers in to talk about issues of interest, such as tenure rules and processes, teaching, time management tips, or campus resources. Cohort mentoring groups sometimes mix brand new faculty and faculty who are farther along.

Provisional Mentors: A provisional mentor is assigned with the understanding that the person being mentored may identify a more suitable primary mentor within a few months of coming to campus. The provisional mentor provides an orientation and temporary support to the new faculty member. This approach is typically paired with the primary mentor model.

Source: This list of models was constructed based on responses to the CFE telephone survey of Deans and Chairs and a review of the major literature on faculty mentoring. (Bibliography available on request.)

Appendix B. Characteristics of Effective Mentoring Programs

Effective mentoring programs utilize some or all of the following practices:

- Have clearly articulated goals and measures of success.
- Offer an orientation for mentors that clarifies policies and describes mentor and mentee responsibilities.
- Provide training for mentors in how to be helpful, e.g., how to listen, advise and guide, provide constructive feedback, problem-solve.
- Provide training for mentors in carrying out expected mentoring processes, e.g., developing a plan for the first year with the mentee.
- Offer training for mentees on how to find mentors and get the most out of the mentoring relationship, e.g., how to learn from those whose perspectives are different from the mentee's.
- Encourage regularly scheduled meetings of mentors and mentees but also encourage mentees to ask for meetings as needed.
- Utilize the power of the group, e.g., joint discussions of mentors and mentees, meetings of mentor/mentee pairs.
- Provide recognition for those who serve as mentors.
- Make available multiple types of mentors, e.g., mentors both inside and outside the department or mentors for teaching, research, and service.
- Provide access to mentors of the same race, ethnicity, or gender when this is helpful.
- Pair mentors and mentees on the basis of assessed interests and needs.
- Include networking opportunities, e.g., resources on campus, possible research collaborators, peer social contacts.
- Build in ways that mentoring relationships can be assessed, changed, and renewed so that people are not locked into ineffective relationships.
- Have clear expectations about confidentiality.
- Make transparent what role the mentor will or will not play in promotion and tenure decisions.
- Provide a process for evaluation and review of program performance.
- Have an individual who is responsible for monitoring and trouble-shooting the operations of the program.

Source: Based on the presentation by Dr. Deborah DeZure, Assistant Provost for Faculty Development, Michigan State University, on the UNC Campus, April 9, 2010.

Appendix C. Group Mentoring Activities

Some additional group mentoring practices can supplement the one-on-one approach for early career faculty. One review of faculty mentoring studies, conducted between 2002 and 2007, concluded:

Early career faculty build robust networks by engaging “multiple mentoring partners” in non-hierarchical, collaborative, cross-cultural partnerships to address specific areas of faculty activity such as research, teaching, working towards tenure, and striking a balance between work and life.

The mentoring program practices cited in this study include:

- Workshops and forums to assist early-career faculty in building collegial networks in research and teaching.
- Peer mentoring research groups where faculty can set research goals, discuss scholarship, and share successes and challenges in writing and publishing.
- Peer mentoring groups focused on teaching.
- Mentoring panels at national and regional workshops and conferences to build mentoring relationships across campuses within the discipline.
- Groups in which first-year faculty are mentored by second- and third-year faculty.
- Pairing early and mid-career faculty in mentoring relationships.
- Creating and locating online mentoring resources.
- Creating specialized group programs focusing on the needs of minority and female faculty.

Source: Sorcinelli, M. D. & Yun, J. H. (2007). From Mentor to Mentoring Networks: Mentoring in the New Academy. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 39(6), 58–61.