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Faculty Mentoring @ RIT
A Guide for Department Heads

Development Team

Margaret Bailey

Renee Baker

Donna Dickson

Marty Golia

Chance Glenn

Lynn Wild

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Welcome from the Provost

Like many universities, RIT believes that partnering new faculty with an experienced faculty mentor can accelerate the process of integrating new faculty. There are a number of well documented benefits of faculty mentoring, including:

- Increased retention
- Improved time-to-productivity
- Increased faculty engagement (for both mentor and protégé)
- Positive effect on climate
- Positive contribution to effective recruitment of faculty

Protégés who receive mentoring also exhibit improvements in risk taking, political savvy, research productivity and professional skills[1].

RIT is committed to providing mentoring for all tenure-track faculty members by helping them build a constellation or network of mentors. This guide is designed to help you support faculty mentors and protégés in your department.

While you, as a Department Head, are not a mentor to new faculty in the traditional sense of the term, you do play a vital role in helping new faculty make an effective transition to RIT. Some of the material in this guide can assist you in this aspect of your role.

Thanks for your assistance in this important initiative.

Dr. Jeremy Haefner
Provost and Senior Vice President for
Academic Affairs

[1] de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004, Draine, Hyde, & Buehlman, 1999, Boice, 1993; Cameron & Blackburn, 1991; Corcoran & Clark, 1984; Didion, Fox, & Jones, 1996; Fagenson, 1989, as cited in Girves et al., 2005.

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Mentors and Mentoring Networks at RIT

Roles in Faculty Mentoring

The success of pre-tenured faculty is a shared responsibility, with different members of the RIT community supporting the mentoring process in important and distinct ways.

Provost and Dean

- Through the shared governance model, administer and interpret guidelines for tenure

- Set guidelines for scholarly productivity

- Establish a set of rewards, expectations and accountability measures to ensure that mentoring remains a priority

Department Head

- Provide a comprehensive orientation for new faculty

- Identify individuals to serve as mentors

- Help match protégés to mentors

- Manage Plans of Work to reflect mentoring-related activities and responsibilities

- Provide performance feedback and guidance to faculty

RIT is committed to providing mentoring for all tenure-track faculty members by helping them build a network or constellation of mentors. This guide is designed to help Department Heads provide some initial guidance so new faculty can begin to build their own mentoring networks.

Mentoring has long been recognized as an effective method for new faculty to learn the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors for teaching, and especially for learning about institution-specific norms[2]. This guide does not prescribe a required approach to mentoring; rather the ideas provided here may be used, as appropriate, to support the mentoring efforts in each College.

The traditional image of academic mentoring is of a long-term relationship between an experienced faculty member and a newer one in the same discipline—a relationship that may last for several years. But as the demands made on new faculty and the need to integrate more quickly have increased, the idea of a **mentoring network** has emerged as an efficient and valuable way for new faculty to come up-to-speed.

A mentoring network is based on the premise that no single individual possesses all of the experience and expertise that a new faculty member needs to plan and develop a successful career. In addition to working with a more experienced faculty member, new faculty at RIT are encouraged to also develop a constellation of "mentoring partners" who assist each other in nonhierarchical, collaborative partnerships—each contributing according to her/his own knowledge and experience. This mentoring model can be both broader

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[2] Ensher, Ellen A., Thomas, Craig and Murphy, Susan E., "Comparison of Traditional, Step-Ahead, and Peer Mentoring on Protégés' Support, Satisfaction, and Perceptions of Career Success: A Social Exchange Perspective," *Journal Of Business And Psychology,* Vol. 15, No. 3, Spring 2001.

and more flexible than the traditional model, able to provide "just in time" advice and guidance.[3]

At RIT, we are asking new faculty to take the initiative in building their own mentoring networks—but a more traditional one-on-one relationship with an experienced faculty member remains a critical part of this network.

A mentor usually does not have positional power over a protégé, so as Department Head you may not serve, for example, as a confidante to faculty, but you do play an important part in faculty development by:

- Orienting new faculty to RIT.

- Guiding new faculty to develop their individual mentoring network.

- Managing Plans of Work.

- Informing new faculty of the expectations and formal procedures of the Department, College, and RIT.

Roles in Faculty Mentoring

Faculty Associates to the Provost

- Assist in the implementation of an institute-wide mentoring program

- Provide guidance on navigating the promotion and/or tenure process

- Advocate for Women and AALANA Faculty

Mentor

- Help less experienced faculty members (protégés) develop in specified capacities (teaching, research, scholarship, service, etc.)

- Provide career advancement advice

- Offer support

Protégé

- Openly seek advice from mentors

- Clarify expectations from Dean, Department Head, and current mentors

- Obtain current tenure and promotion guidelines from the Dean's Office in your College

- Willingly participate in developmental activities

- Form an individual mentoring network

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[3] Sorcinelli, Mary Deane and Yun, Jung, "From Mentor to Mentoring Networks: Mentoring in the New Academy," *Change,* November/December 2007.

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Orienting New Faculty

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Elements of a Mentoring Network

A mentoring network may include…

- Peers or "near peers" (colleagues who are close in career level) who have been through similar experiences

- Peer mentoring groups brought together by similar needs

- Former professors or employers

- Mentoring groups led by one or two experienced faculty members

- Individuals who have specialized knowledge needed "in the moment," such as using an academic technology or working effectively with a book editor

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Research studies suggest that a comprehensive orientation program is a vital element of new faculty development and is valuable in helping new faculty learn the social and intellectual nuances of the university (Nastanski and Simmons, n.d.).

While new faculty orientation (NFO) programs have become standard in higher education, most universities think of NFO as a singular event and focus on using that event to tell new faculty about everything from tenure guidelines and use of course management systems to parking regulations and health benefits. The result is programs that are overwhelming, boring, and not very useful for new faculty. In fact, many new faculty comment on the lack of interactivity and poor instructional design of such orientations as sharp contrast to the conditions for teaching excellence to which they are being introduced.

One growing trend is approaching new faculty orientation as a shared process. This "onboarding" approach focuses on providing new faculty with information, resources, and support *throughout the first year* and closely links orientation to mentoring. Comprehensive orientation includes a traditional new faculty orientation event, but also includes events that range from routine activities such as office setup to professional development.

Upon Hiring…

Many weeks can pass between when a new faculty member is hired and the start date. By communicating with new faculty during this period, you can help her/him feel welcome. Items you might share include[4]:

- Her/his new office's physical address and phone number

- Suggestions for convenient places to park

- Confirmation of arrival/start date and courses to be taught

- The textbook ordering process

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[4] Adapted from Bensimon, Ward and Saunders, 2000.

At your end, you can also prepare for the new faculty's arrival by:

- Determining her/his office and ordering a name plate and keys for the office door

- Ordering a computer and other equipment, as needed, as well as system access

- Ensuring office furniture and basic supplies are in place

- Ordering the phone, if necessary

- Setting up a physical mail box/slot

- Adding the new faculty member's name to Department listings (website, catalogs, directories, distribution lists, etc.)

- Scheduling lunches or meetings with others in the Department and College, as needed

Preparing the physical space and system "connections" takes away a lot of uncertainty on the first day and provides a foundation for beginning her or his "real" orientation and integration into the Department, the College, and RIT.

On arrival

Avoid the tendency to tell a new faculty member *everything* at once. These checklists can help make sure you cover the vital information in a "just-in-time" approach, and plan so you can delegate some of these tasks to others in the department.

First Day

Physical Space

- Provide office keys

- Show the "snail mail" box location

- Demonstrate ID card swipe or other access for alarmed/secured doors/rooms

- Provide the campus and Department phone listings

Systems

- Confirm that an e-mail account is in place

- Provide the copier code, if any

- Discuss building/classroom/lab entry procedures during off-hours

- Review security measures and Campus Safety resources

Processes and Practices

- Provide academic calendar

- Review the schedule for standing meetings

- Introduce support staff and review the duties they commonly provided

- Introduce Plan of Work and agree upon completion date

First Week

- Share travel policies/forms

- Review weather-related cancellation sources and policies

- Discuss and provide Department policies, procedures, and forms

- Review Academic Advising and related procedures, providing advising sheets, handbooks, etc.

- Discuss the Department's and College's reporting structure

- Review standards for teaching excellence and course evaluation form

- Discuss classroom observations, if appropriate

- Discuss student advising responsibilities, if any including plans of study, accessing student records, office hours, other resources

- Review student support services including the Academic Support Center, Counseling Center, The Wallace Center, etc.

- Review process for class cancellation, requesting room changes, ordering special equipment

- Review/provide promotion and tenure policies including, timelines, key dates, and best practice examples

- Ensure she/he receives the *Faculty Mentoring Network@RIT* Resource Guide for New Faculty

- Make introductions to the Department faculty

First Month

- Review faculty governance structure and processes

- Discuss various curriculum committees

- Discuss Plan of Work and suggestions for balancing time between teaching, advising, grant writing, research, publishing, and service

- Review faculty member's initial mentoring plan

- Emphasize University resources for teaching excellence and for research and scholarship

- Review process of ordering desk or examination copies of books and textbook ordering process

- Review expectations for professional conduct, including RIT's values

- Discuss internal grant opportunities such as the Provost's Learning Innovations Grant

- Pair the new faculty with a mentor

First Quarter

- Review course evaluation results with the faculty member

- Discuss research and scholarship activity to-date and plan for the remainder of the year

- Introduce the annual review process

- Discuss the types of documentation to collect/prepare as a part of the mid-tenure or tenure portfolio

- Identify barriers to success, if any

- Share areas of your concern, if any

- Review strategies for when and how to say "no" to service requests (this may be of particular importance for women and AALANA faculty, who often receive an inordinate number of such requests)

Remember that it can be helpful to provide on-going feedback to new faculty, rather than waiting until the annual review to discuss accomplishments and concerns. Consider doing an abbreviated review at the end of each quarter.

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Managing Mentoring Relationships

Identifying Faculty to Serve as Mentors

While "mentor" is not an official role, it does entail a commitment of time and effort, so Department heads are encouraged to include serving as a mentor as part of a faculty member's service commitment.

It's also true that it can be difficult to ask faculty to add yet another task to her/his schedule. It can be easier, though, if you:

- Point out that mentoring can count toward his/her service commitment.

- Emphasize that mentoring is not an open-ended obligation, and it's appropriate to set reasonable limits with a protégé.

- Remind potential mentors that they will be only one element in a protégé's mentoring network—a network that they can also encourage the protégé to expand.

- Recruit "near peer" faculty, not just highly experienced department members, to act as mentors.

Helping Match Protégés to Mentors

Each new faculty member should develop a network of multiple mentors. This will ensure that they can receive support in each of the areas of competence required of faculty (teaching, research/scholarship, service), and obtain guidance to navigate the cultural, social, and policy landscape. While it is rare for any one individual to have expertise or time to counsel a protégé in all of these areas, a "traditional" mentor in the form of an experienced faculty member can be a central "star" in this constellation of mentors, especially during the first year.

Characteristics of Successful Mentors

A successful mentor…

- Remains accessible to the protégé, and meets with her or him on a regular basis.

- Skillfully provides constructive feedback.

- Actively engages in research and/or related scholarly activities.

- Possesses a publication record that meets College standards.

- Receives consistently satisfactory/acceptable teaching evaluations.

- Knows the resources available to support faculty development.

- Understands department and institute policies and procedures regarding faculty tracks, reappointment, promotion and tenure.

- Actively connects to networks inside and outside the university, and is willing to share those connections with the protégé.

- Consistently maintains confidentiality.

- Preserves the protégé's intellectual independence.

- Does not have supervisory authority over the protégé.

While you should make these matches thoughtfully, don't feel that you are setting people up for a career-long relationship. In fact, Armstrong (2002)[5] found that "forced" mentoring relationships can be counterproductive and violate "the true spirit of mentoring." However, by introducing these pairings as one of several mentoring relationships that the new faculty will develop, with a targeted goal of acquainting him/her with "how things work" in the Department and College, you can take some of the pressure off both the mentor and protégé.

When matching mentors to protégé's, start by aligning a mentor's expertise in one area (teaching, research/scholarship, service) with a protégé's area of greatest need. Then consider other areas of compatibility such as content expertise, scholarship or research agenda, and personal interests and circumstances.

One other factor to look at is personal style and experience. Clutterbuck (1998)[6] found that rather than pairing mentors and protégés according to similarities, learning was more effective when individuals were different in these areas.
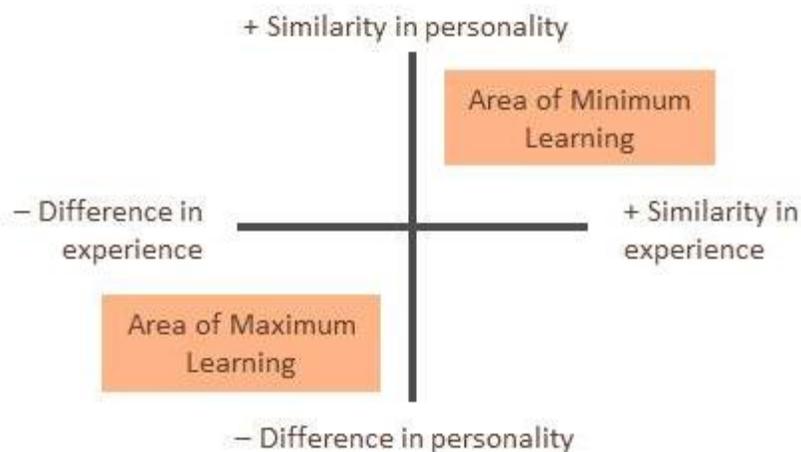
5 Quoted in Cox, 2005.
6 Quoted in Cox, 2005.

Mentoring Across Differences

Prospective mentors are often concerned whether they can provide effective support to individuals of a different gender or race. It is true that the greater the affinity the mentor and protégé feel for one another, the greater the likelihood of a deep and productive working relationship. However, this affinity is not rooted exclusively in demographics. In fact, one study found that the protégés who perceived themselves as similar to their mentors in terms of outlook, values, or perspective, reported being satisfied with, and having more contact with their mentor than protégés with same-race mentors.[7]

Based on their own experience with cross-race mentoring, Professors Stanley and Lincoln observe that a successful mentoring relationship is characterized by trust, honesty, willingness to learn about one's self and others, and the readiness to share power and privilege, rather than being characterized by shared demographics.[8]

> **Mentor/Protégé "Match"**
>
> Mentors should not feel that they can only be effective working with protégés of the same gender, culture or background.
>
> You can help new faculty build her or his mentoring network so that it provides support for potential diversity-related challenges. Encourage new faculty to connect with a Faculty Associate, peers, and other on- or off-campus groups.
>
> In a mentoring relationship, the best match is one based on the protégé's academic goals and the mentor's experience.

The personal and professional qualities of the mentor, rather than her/his demographic characteristics, are what matter most. A mentor's willingness and ability to help a new faculty member, coupled with her or his awareness and openness to the issues and impacts of differences, are the keys to a successful mentoring relationship.

One of the values of mentoring networks is that they provide opportunities for new faculty to receive counsel and support from individuals who do share their demographic characteristics, so this unique and important type of support is not the sole responsibility of the mentor.

[7] Ellen A. Ensher and Susan E. Murphy. "Effects of Race, Gender, Perceived Similarity, and Contact on Mentor Relationships," *Journal of Vocational Behavior.* Volume 50, Issue 3, June 1997, Pages 460-481

[8] Christine A. Stanley and Yvonna S. Lincoln. *Change*, March/April 2005. "Cross-race Faculty mentoring. p. 44-50

Managing Plans of Work

The Plan of Work is an effective vehicle to reinforce your expectations of the new faculty member, define a balanced set of goals, and uncover areas of needed support. These sample Plan of Work goals[9] may provide ideas for you and the new faculty member:

Research goals

- Establish a research agenda with a focused line of inquiry.

- Make connections to fellow faculty with similar interests to develop the potential for collaboration.

- Submit one conference paper abstract.

- Submit one journal article for publication.

Writing goals

- Work on dissertation to prepare for publication.

- Send drafts of article to three colleagues for feedback (one local, one dissertation advisor, one national).

- Attend faculty development workshops on writing and research.

Publication goals

- Incorporate comments from colleagues and submit article for publication.

- Submit conference paper abstract.

Grant goals

- Collect information about internal grant opportunities campus-wide.

- Submit "mini grant" application for summer research projects.

Teaching goals

- Prepare for [winter and spring quarter] courses

- Seek mid-quarter feedback from students

- Seek feedback from colleagues on syllabus, grading rubric, and other course materials.

- Arrange for one informal class observation.

- Attend faculty development workshops on use of course management system, other academic technology, and/or teaching excellence best practices.

Service goals

- Identify one service commitment that would support research agenda, teaching goals, or other responsibilities.

- Provide advising support for [number] students.

- Identify one committee that would be beneficial to apply/volunteer for.

- Determine external service expectations.

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[9] (Bensimon, Ward & Sanders, 200, pgs. 117-118)

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Mentors vs. Supervisors

The roles of mentors and supervisors (in this case, Department Heads) in the career—and life—of a new faculty member are very different. While both may be actively guiding and helping develop new faculty, mentors are focused on individuals, while Department Heads should always be acting toward the larger interests of the Department, College, and University. Also, a mentor's activities can be "off the record," which is why most mentoring guidelines and processes specify that mentors should not have positional authority over the protégé. It can be more difficult for new faculty to speak freely to the Department Head.

As Department Head, make sure that you are the source for the official word around such topics as:

- Department grading policies

- Process for reporting grades

- Request courses you want to teach

- Obtaining a teaching assistant

- Expected office hours

- Services available from Department support staff

You may want to review some of the primary differences in the two roles with potential mentors.

Department Heads…

- Provide performance feedback

- Enforce standard policies and practices

- Evaluate performance

- Set expectations and provide resources

Mentors…

- Provide developmental feedback

- Give insight to informal practices and cultural norms

- Give advice

- Help clarify expectations and identify resources

Providing Guidance

In your role, you may want to keep track of the mentoring relationships in the Department, to make sure they are effective.

New faculty protégés

- Are they expanding their mentoring networks?

- Do they feel integrated into RIT and the Department?

- Are they tapping into the various resources available to them?

- Are they increasingly clear on expectations?

Faculty mentors

- Is their mentoring work reflected on the Plan of Work?

- Are they meeting with protégés on a regular basis?

- Are they aware of the various resources available to their protégés?

Resources for Department Heads

There is support throughout RIT to help you with your questions about mentoring.

- Your Dean can answer questions about mentoring expectations and current practices in your College.

- Your peers in other Departments or Colleges can discuss their experiences managing mentors and protégés.

- The Faculty Associates can let you know about resources available to woman and AALANA faculty.

- Subject Matter Experts such as Teaching & Learning Services, Scholarly Publishing Studio, and Sponsored Research Services can help new faculty with specific challenges in their respective areas.

The Associate Provost for Faculty Success is also ready to support faculty mentoring, as well as to listen to your mentoring experiences to further improve the mentoring process at RIT.

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