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Building Your Mentoring Network @RIT
A Guide for New Faculty

Development Team

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A Message from the Provost

Welcome to RIT! As a new member of our faculty, your success is important to me, and I look forward to your contributions to the university.

Starting out as a new faculty member can feel overwhelming, especially the idea of not knowing what you *don't* know—about teaching, about scholarship and publishing, about achieving tenure, about RIT. You may wish you had a personal guide.

In many colleges and universities, as in many other professions, that guide is a *mentor*—an experienced individual who knows the profession, the organization *and* is invested in your success.

Mentoring exists in many forms throughout RIT, and faculty members are constantly devising new avenues to find, as well as act as, mentors. You should discover some of these in your College.

The approach described here of a *mentoring network* will enable you to develop a valuable and wide-ranging support system for many of your professional activities, during your first year and throughout your career at RIT. And as you progress, you may find yourself making the transformation from protégé to mentor sooner than you think.

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

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Why You Should Build a Mentoring Network

In many ways, faculty members work independently. However, especially when they are new to a university or the teaching profession, faculty require collaboration to be successful. Along with learning basic information about RIT and their teaching role, they also need guidance on how to approach their new career.

Mentoring has long been recognized as an effective method for new faculty to learn the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors for teaching in general and especially institution-specific norms[1]. 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 can possess all of the experience and expertise that a new faculty member needs to plan and develop a successful career. Instead, a collection of "mentoring partners" assist each other in nonhierarchical, collaborative, cross-cultural partnerships, each contributing according to their own knowledge and experience. This mentoring model can be both broader and more flexible than the traditional model, able to provide "just-in-time" advice and guidance.[2]

In addition to finding success at RIT, faculty may also want to augment their reputation and marketability within their discipline[3]. A mentoring network that

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[1] 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.

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

[3] de Janasza, Suzanne C and Sullivan, Sherry E., "Multiple mentoring in academe: Developing the professorial network," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 64 (2004) 263–283.

includes external partners can provide insights from a wider perspective to support this goal.

There is a wide range of support resources for new faculty at RIT, but faculty must also realize that they must often act as "self-agents" in finding and taking advantage of networking opportunities, such as participating in various development programs. The self-agency that you show in finding and connecting with mentors—as well as acting in a mentoring role with peers—can accelerate your integration into the RIT community.

While mentoring alone cannot provide you with all of the support, community-building, and competency development required for success, it is a vital component of your development. By developing a mentoring network you can obtain information and guidance, and benefit from the experiences of others. And, as with many of your new duties at RIT, you must take the initiative to build your own mentoring network.

This guide can help you get started.

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

Mentors

- Help less experienced faculty members (protégés) develop in specified capacities (teaching, research, scholarship, service, etc.)
- Provide career advancement advice
- Offer support

Protégés

- Openly seek advice from mentors
- Clarify expectations from Dean, Department Heads, 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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Mentoring Opportunities and Approaches

What Mentoring Looks Like

The traditional image of academic mentoring is of a long-term relationship between an experienced faculty member and a less experienced one in the same discipline—a relationship that may last for several years. And while those relationships still exist, mentoring has expanded to include:

- Guidance from a peers or "near peers"— colleagues who are close in career level[4]—who have been through similar experiences

- A peer mentoring group brought together by similar needs

- Periodic check-ins with former teachers or employers

- A mentoring group led by one or two experienced faculty members

- Short-term or project-based relationships with individuals who have specialized knowledge needed "in the moment," such as using an academic technology or working effectively with a book editor

Traditional Mentoring

Traditional mentoring refers to a one-on-one relationship with an experienced faculty member. Your Department Head can help you identify a mentor for a traditional mentoring relationship who can guide you through your pre-tenure years.

On page 7, there is information about finding and developing a traditional mentoring relationship with an experienced faculty mentor.

Peer Mentoring

Despite the traditional image of a solitary scholar, most scholarship occurs in a collaborative group environment, as opposed to an individual acting alone[5]. Because the collective knowledge base and experience of peers can be comparable to a tenured colleague[6], many universities have adopted a peer mentoring model for pre-tenured faculty.

Peer mentoring opportunities may appear both formally and informally during your first year of teaching since you will often be involved in activities and events with other peers or "near peers" who have recently faced similar challenges and can provide valuable lessons.

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[4] Sorcinelli, Mary Deane and Yun, Jung, *Mutual Mentoring Guide,* University of Massachusetts Amherst, © 2009.
[5] UFAST, Practical Advice for Accelerating New Faculty Scholarship, presentation, 1/18/11.
[6] (Moss, Teshima, & Leszcz, 2008, p. 230)

In peer mentoring, faculty groups meet and network with their peers within or across Colleges. During these meetings, peers work on specific objectives, such as increased dissemination of scholarly work. In addition, one of the most positive and rewarding aspects of peer mentoring and participating in a peer network is that it gives you opportunities to help others and contribute to the overall development of a group of colleagues.

To develop and maintain your network of peer mentors:

- Maintain contact with colleagues that you met at New Faculty Orientation

- Approach pre-tenured faculty in your department who are facing similar challenges

- Attend workshops such as The PI Institute where you can meet other new faculty (www.rit.edu/research/srs/about/pi_institute/)

- Contact the Associate Provost for Faculty Success who can connect you with other pre-tenured faculty (www.rit.edu/provost/dr-lynn-wild)

Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) are one form of peer mentoring available to faculty at RIT. FLCs usually consist of about a half-dozen cross-disciplinary faculty who meet regularly to explore a specific theme of mutual interest to the group. FLCs provide a confidential, safe environment for open discussion of issues and new ideas in the scholarship of teaching and learning (wallacecenter.rit.edu/tls/faculty-learning-communities).

Faculty in the Department of Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering Technology and Packaging Science (MMET/PS) have developed a variation of the peer mentoring model called **UFAST (Untenured Faculty Accelerated Scholarship Team)**. In UFAST, a group of peers share and commonly track research, scholarship, and grant-related activities and projects for everyone in the group. The group holds regular meetings that enable members to learn from each other. Because this peer mentoring network focused on expectations for scholarly performance, the meetings keep members on track.

Garrick, Robert, Scott Anson, Mario Castro-Cedeno, Elizabeth Dell, Christopher Greene, Carol Romanowski, Michael Slifka, Larry Villasmil, and James Lee. "UFAST - Practical advice for accelerating new faculty scholarship." *ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition,* 2010. http://nee.asee.org/ConferencePapers/2010/1526.pdf

Group Mentoring

Many universities have initiated **group mentoring** as a way to make guidance available when experienced faculty have limited time to mentor new faculty. Your Department Head will know if your College offers any group mentoring opportunities.

In group mentoring, one or two experienced faculty members mentor a group of protégés[7]. This usually occurs in a group meeting format, so everyone present has opportunities to ask questions and can gain value from the mentor(s).

[7] University Leadership Council (Tansey & Enyeart, 2009)

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"Ad hoc" Mentors

As you encounter different situations during your first years at RIT, you can draw on several resources for guidance and advice. While not all of these advisors may be true mentors, they are important elements of your mentoring network—your support structure. Just as important, they can also give you essential information and perspectives that you can share with peer mentoring partners.

Some ad hoc mentors may be found within the following RIT Departments:

- The Scholarly Publishing Studio www.rit.edu/wallacecenter.rit.edu/scholarly-publishing-studio

- Teaching & Learning Services www.rit.edu/wallacecenter.rit.edu/tls

- Information Services for Research & Instruction (Reference Librarians) www.rit.edu/library.rit.edu/meet-your-librarian

- Faculty Associates www.rit.edu/facultymentoring

- Student Learning Outcomes Assessment www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/outcomes/gec.php

- Sponsored Research Services www.rit.edu/research/srs/

- Office for Diversity and Inclusion www.rit.edu/~w-faclty/offchiefdiversityoff.html

Individuals from outside of RIT who may act as ad hoc mentors include:

> You can check www.rit.edu/~w-faclty/index.html#resource for a full list of resources available to new faculty.

- Your dissertation advisor

- Former teachers

- Professional associations, inside and outside of higher education

- Former colleagues from school or work

Some faculty members rely on different mentoring sources for each of their primary development areas—teaching, research, scholarship, service—as well as for assistance with navigating the tenure process and to receive support and encouragement.

As you build your mentoring network, be sure to seek out support from multiple sources and devote energy to those relationships that prove to be valuable.

The worksheet on page 9 can help you document and plan your personal mentoring network.

> As you plan your service related activities, remember that service can include:
>
> - Service to the University
>
> - Service to the discipline
>
> - Service to the profession
>
> Each of these aspects of service may also help you extend your mentoring network.

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Finding Mentors

A first step in building a mentor network is figuring out what you want and need from your mentors.

Your Mentoring Goals

Check the two areas that are your main priorities now, and write a goal statement for those two areas.

I need a mentor to help me:	
☐ …understand the RIT culture	
☐ …understand tenure requirements	
☐ …with teaching effectiveness	
☐ …with research	
☐ …with scholarship	
☐ …develop and maintain work/life balance	

How do you see these needs changing over the next year or two?

What type of mentor relationship would you be comfortable with?

Although this guide focuses on developing a mentor network, it's likely that you'll want to include a traditional mentoring relationship with an experienced faculty member. Although your College may assign an experienced faculty advisor to help you during your first year, this person may or may not become a long-term mentor.

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One thing to keep in mind as you seek, find and ultimately build your relationship with a mentor, is the unique nature of the relationship. While a mentor/protégé relationship has elements of both personal and professional interactions, it is not wholly one or the other. A mentor usually does not have positional power over the protégé, but does have organizational position, experience and contacts. A mentor is an advisor and guide, but not a friend. It's important, as a protégé, to understand and respect these limits. [8]

Identifying a Traditional Mentor

Identifying an traditional mentor for a one-to-one relationship may come from meeting an individual and "feeling" that s/he has the experience, knowledge and temperament that you are looking for.

Considering the goals you've identified for your mentor relationship, what kind would you want your mentor to have?

- Position in the department/College?

- Length of time at RIT?

Also, consider which commonalities are important to you:

- Does he/she have to work in the same areas of research/scholarship?

- Is it important that he/she is interested and connected to the research/scholarship you want to pursue?

- Is it important that you share similar backgrounds?

- Is it important that you share similar values?

- Does your mentor's image or reputation on campus and in the department matter to you? In what ways?

> One important element of mentor/protégé "fit" is an alignment of personal values. This doesn't mean that you and your mentor need to be totally alike, including gender or ethnicity, but you should share agreement on fundamental values
>
> Waugh, Jessica, M.A., Faculty Mentoring Guide, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, ©2002, page 11.

Developing a Mentor Network

By connecting with multiple mentors, you can gain a variety of different perspectives. Your mentoring network may include peers, administrators, experienced faculty and even external individuals like journal editors, members of a professional association, or your thesis advisor.

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[8] Waugh, Jessica, M.A., *Faculty Mentoring Guide,* Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, ©2002.

Complete this table to create a snapshot of your current network. It's a snapshot because your network won't be static—individuals will be added and removed as your needs change.

Topic	Mentoring Source	Notes (expertise, connections, etc.)
RIT Culture		
Tenure Guidelines		
Teaching Excellence		
Research		
Scholarship		
Other: Service, Career Planning, etc.		

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Guidelines for Successful Mentoring Relationships

Traditional Mentoring Relationships

While your mentor provides advice and guidance, being a protégé is an active role as well. Your efforts to clarify your needs, along with your willingness to accept suggestions or criticism are vital to a successful mentoring relationship.

Set Expectations

It will be easier for your mentor if you make your needs and goals explicit:

- What kind of guidance do you want?

- What are your priority goals?

- What kind of working relationship do you envision?

- What are your expectations for introductions and connections to others who can assist you?

This will help your potential mentor decide whether the two of you are a good fit before working on your ongoing learning and development.

You should also be prepared to disclose information about yourself, your challenges as well as your strengths, so your mentor has an idea of what might be required to help you achieve your goals.

Meeting Preparation

Your meetings with your mentor are a key part of building and maintaining your relationship, as well as making professional progress. You should plan for each meeting so it is time well-spent for both of you.

The First Meeting

Consider your first meeting with your mentor as a "get acquainted" session. You may have dozens of questions and concerns, but instead, focus on addressing broad questions and gaining agreement on how you and your mentor can best work together.

Some initial questions include:

- What surprised you the most as a new faculty member?

- What do you wish you had known when you first started out as a new faculty member?

- What is the most important lesson you learned during your first year as a faculty member at RIT?

- What did you do during your first years that enabled you to become more a capable faculty member?

- What experiences were most valuable in shaping how you view your role?

- What department or university events should I be sure to attend? Why?

Work on getting to know one another better, and make sure you leave time for your mentor to ask about you. Invite her or him to do so.

Regular Meetings

Mentoring is an ongoing process of learning and development, so what you want to talk about at each meeting can change depending on what is going on with your career (and life).

A strategy for making the most of your time with your mentor is to have two basic agenda items for each meeting: one with a short term focus and one with a long-term focus.

- The long-term focus is your related to your overarching goal for the mentoring relationship, such as identifying your research agenda and creating a plan to make it a reality.

> Your long-term goals will probably be around one of these areas:
>
> - Research
> - Scholarship
> - Teaching excellence
> - Service
> - Gaining tenure

- The short-term focus may be a recent event or problem where you need help, such as dealing with a problem student, or identifying grant opportunities.

This double-edged strategy allows you to gain some perspective on immediate issues so you can work through (and past) them, while maintaining momentum toward your larger goal.

You should have an early discussion about the Statement of Expectations from your Department Head. If you have not received one, your mentor can still go a long way in helping clarify expectations in the College and at RIT. Another topic of continued guidance will be around building your tenure portfolio or dossier and developing contacts who will be effective tenure references.

There are questions that you can ask your mentor starting on page 15 to help keep every meeting productive.

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Guidelines for Successful Peer Mentoring

Whether you are part of an established peer mentoring group or simply providing advice to a peer, you should follow these guidelines to ensure mentoring success:

- **Provide constructive feedback** rather than pointing out mistakes.

- **Be receptive to constructive criticism** and willing to try suggestions from others.

- **Freely share what you learn**, even if through mistakes, with others.

- **Be willing to share your connections** to networks inside and outside RIT with peers.

- **Always maintain confidentiality** within the relationship.

- **Disclose your own personal experiences** when they are relevant.

What your mentor should not do

Since your mentor's time may be limited, remember that your supervisor should be your main information source for basic process or policy matters, such as:

- Department grading policies

- Process for reporting grades

- Obtaining a teaching assistant

- Expected office hours

- Services available from department support staff

Actions and Behaviors for Protégés

As stated before, being a protégé is an active role. By using these strategies, you can build a stronger, more productive relationship with *all of your* mentors.

- **Set a regular meeting time and stick to it**
  If one of you cannot make the regular time, reschedule rather than waiting for the next one; this will enable you to maintain your momentum.

- **Prepare for each meeting**
  Know what you want to discuss, find out, or explore.

- **Be clear and direct about your needs and goals**
  Your mentor can best help when s/he can address specific issues.

- **Be honest about your shortcomings**
  Sharing mistakes or competency gaps can help your mentor provide guidance that may directly improve your skills.

- **Explicitly ask for feedback**
  It will be much easier for your mentor to give you honest opinions if you provide her or him with an opening.

- **Accept feedback with an open mind**
  A mentor can often provide valuable insight and objective opinions based on his/her extensive experience, but it only has value when you act on it.

- **Ask for guidance that enables you to help yourself**
  The mentor's role isn't to "fix" your problems or provide you with all the answers, so focus on identifying additional resources and connections.

- **Try the things your mentor suggests**
  Don't dismiss advice because it is unfamiliar or pushes you out of your comfort zone.

- **Maintain professional boundaries**
  Don't expect, or try to develop, a "personal friendship."

- **Show eagerness and enthusiasm for what the mentor can provide**
  Let your mentor know that you appreciate his or her effort and insight[9]

- **Share credit for your successes**
  Acknowledge the value your mentor has provided.

Evaluate the Relationship

After you have been working with your mentor for one or two quarters, you may want to evaluate the relationship to determine if you are getting what you need from your mentor. Questions to consider are:

- **Do you meet regularly?**
  Do you look forward to your meetings? Does your mentor?

- **Are you getting valuable, actionable insight and advice from your mentor?**
  Can you identify two or three instances when advice or information you received from your mentor helped you?

- **Is your mentor facilitating your integration to RIT?**
  Have you made any important or valuable contacts through your mentor?

- **Are you dedicated to each others' success?**
  Do you feel a mutually-beneficial partnership?

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[9] Waugh, Jessica, M.A., *Faculty Mentoring Guide,* Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, ©2002, page 11.

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If your relationship with your mentor is not turning out to be mutually productive, it might be better to end it so you can both find partners that are more suitable. You should not end the relationship abruptly, however—work together to bring the relationship to a positive, if not entirely successful, conclusion[10].

- Directly but honestly express how the relationship is not working; cite specific examples.

- Recognize what you have accomplished from the relationship and express appreciation for the help you have received.

- Communicate respectfully, and make sure you have enough time to discuss the situation.

- Review and develop a plan for any open issues.

- Continue to maintain confidentiality.

[10] Dartmouth Mentor Exchange, based on Ensher and Murphy (2005) and adapted from material developed by Duke University.

Potential Questions for Your Mentor

On Research…

- How much time should I spend seeking grant funds?

- What is considered a superior publication record in my department and College? How many refereed articles do I need? In what journals? How are online journals viewed? Do I need a book?

- How are journal articles or chapters in edited collections viewed? May material published in a conference or workshop be submitted to a journal? How much work is necessary to make it a "new publication"?

- How does the department/College view collaborative work? Do co-authored articles count in my discipline? Is it important to be the first co-author? Should I put my graduate students' names on my papers? How is alphabetical listing of authors viewed?

- Do conference and workshop papers or presentations count as research in my discipline?

- Should I give talks within my department? How are colloquia arranged in my department? How do I publicize my work within the department?

- What conferences should I go to? Is it better to go to national conferences or smaller ones? How much travel is allowed, expected or demanded? Is there support available for travel expenses? How else can I gain the exposure I need for good tenure letters?

- Should I further develop my dissertation or branch out into a new area of research?

- How important are grants?

On Teaching…

- How do I find out what the content of a course should be? Does the department share syllabi, assignments, etc.?

- Are resources available for grading, section leadership, etc., of undergraduate courses?

- What am I expected to teach? Should I ask to teach service courses? Should I teach the same course and stay within a single area or teach around? Should I develop a new course? An undergraduate course? A specialized course in my research area?

- Is it better to keep teaching the same courses or vary them?

- Does the department or College take the nature of a course into consideration when analyzing student evaluations of teaching? Are certain courses or types of courses more beneficial for me to teach than others?

- Are there department guidelines for grading? What is the usual frequency of midterms, exams or graded assignments?

- How many independent studies should I agree to sponsor? How do I choose them?

- What is considered an appropriate response to a student who is struggling with coursework or is clearly troubled? What resources are available for students?

How can I suggest a student connect with these resources?

- What kinds of files should I keep on my students?

- What documentation on teaching and advising should I retain for my personnel file?

- How does the department handle advising? How many undergraduate advisees should I have? How much time should I spend with them? Where can I ask questions about degree requirements?

- How many graduate student advisees should I have and how aggressive should I be in recruiting them? How much time and effort should I invest in working with them? How do I identify the "good" ones? Do I need to find resources for them? What should I expect from them? How do I promote my graduate students to the rest of the community?

- Does the department use student evaluations? What other methods does the department use to assess teaching effectiveness?

- How do I establish an excellent teaching record? What resources are available at the department/College/University level to help me do this?

On Service…

- What kind of service to the department, College and University is expected of me?

- What kind of outreach is expected of me?

- Are there committees I should seek out as a new faculty member?

- How much committee work should I be involved in and which committees matter?

- Are there committees I should avoid, if asked to serve?

- How much service to the profession or communities outside of the University is recommended or expected?

- Should I speak at other universities or at conferences? How important is this? How can I get invited to speak?

- What types of outside service should I do?

- When should I begin service and outreach? How much should I take on in my first two years?

- How do I develop and document an excellent record of service and outreach?

On Other Topics…

- What kind of balance between research, teaching and service I should aim for?

- How important is the annual faculty report to merit, reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions in my department? What sort of documentation of my achievements will help me succeed in these decisions?

- What kind of record-keeping strategies can I adopt to make compiling my annual faculty report and/or tenure package both accurate and manageable?

- Do I need to "read between the lines" in my annual evaluation, or will someone tell me explicitly if there are specific concerns about my performance?

- How can I get feedback on my performance?

- How can I meet and socialize with other new faculty?

- What sort of support is available to me through the campus and surrounding communities?

- Where can I find advice on balancing a professional life (e.g., teaching, research, service) with a personal life (e.g., time for significant others, children, leisure, civic responsibilities)?

- Where can I get help with dual career issues, childcare and other personal concerns?

- Is collaborative work encouraged? If so, how can I form connections with more experienced faculty?

- How can I get the exposure I'll need to secure good tenure letters?

- How can I find people to write references for me? Does it matter if I solicit the letters?

- What types of raises are typical?

- What campus traditions should I be aware of?

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