

## **Department of Agronomy & Horticulture faculty mentoring guidelines**

Mentoring of new and not fully promoted faculty is an important component of improving faculty success and satisfaction. Mentoring can be formal or informal, address professional, personal, cultural development, and foster mutually beneficial relationships for the mentor and the mentee. Mentoring is a key component in the team available to new and not fully promoted faculty to be successful in their positions. This team consists of the P&T committee, the department head, and the mentor(s). Together this team provides advice and guidance that will help the faculty member in developing a successful program.

### **Goals of the Agronomy & Horticulture faculty mentoring program:**

- Help new faculty attain success in the UNL system
- Ensure new faculty gain an appreciation of and contribute to the Department's mission, culture, and vision
- Provide support in locating and accessing department, IANR, university, and other government and professional resources
- Foster open communication and dialogue

### **1. Matching process**

All faculty whom are not fully promoted will choose, with the guidance of the department head and when appropriate with the teaching and/or extension coordinator, at least one senior faculty mentor(s) by their second year of being hired or promoted. During the first year, the new faculty member should be seeking advice and counsel from the department chair, coordinators, and multiple senior faculty to help identify mentor(s) that will promote a healthy mentor/mentee relationship and provide sufficient guidance in the faculty member's split in research/teaching/extension. In choosing a mentor, it is highly recommended that the mentee does not choose a mentor that is already mentoring three or more faculty members. While a faculty member is required to have one formal mentor, the faculty member is encouraged to have multiple informal mentors inside and/or outside the department to seek advice and council that could help them develop a successful career.

### **2. Characteristics of Effective Mentoring**

*(modified from "Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Mentoring"; Columbia University)*

In formal mentoring relationships, the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees should be defined and made explicit from the outset. Both the mentors and mentees have responsibilities for maintaining the productivity of the relationship. The literature distills characteristics of effective mentoring to include the following:

- a. Development of clear, agreed-upon career goals and plans to achieve them:

- i. Objectives
  - ii. Strategies for achieving them
  - iii. Specific deliverables
  - iv. Timelines
- b. Agreeing upon roles for each mentor when there is more than one mentor (particularly important for interdisciplinary scholars) as well as whether technical or psychosocial functions are the focus
- c. Setting clear rules regarding meetings (frequency, agenda, and deliverables)
- d. Establishing accountability and oversight for mentors and mentees
- e. Maintaining confidentiality
- f. Agreeing on communication mechanisms, frequency, and style
- g. Measuring progress with timelines
- h. Providing constructive feedback
- i. Creating an environment of trust and open communication
- j. Sharing the departmental and university mission, vision, values, and culture

Mentoring can vary in the proportion of directive versus nondirective advising on the part of the mentors, depending on the stage of development of the mentee. While close supervision may be appropriate for student mentees, faculty mentor/mentee relationships are between individuals who also are professional colleagues and thus should be collegial and collaborative rather than highly directive.

### **3. Mentor responsibilities**

- a. Communicate assessment to P&T committee
 

The mentor shall communicate their assessment on the respective mentee to the Promotion & Tenure Committee in writing prior to the annual convening of the Committee in which the agenda includes discussion and recommendation on progress towards promotion, promotion and/or tenure of the respective mentee.

  - i. The assessment document will include a synopsis of the meeting(s) with the mentee and reflect how the outcomes of the mentoring process impacted the way mentee is addressing the goals and objectives of their program.
  - ii. The mentor will serve as an assessor of the document submitted by the faculty under review. Should the Mentor be serving on the Promotion & Tenure Committee, their position on the mentee can be communicated during the annual convening of the Committee in which the agenda includes discussion and recommendation on progress towards promotion, promotion and/or tenure of the mentee. The Mentor may choose to vote on the mentee or elect to recuse themselves from the vote.
- b. Guide and review mentee's promotion and tenure plan

- c. Review mentee's promotion and tenure document and provide feedback on the document
- d. Mentor receives a copy of the promotion and tenure annual evaluation document and reviews comments with mentee. If necessary, mentor will contact the P&T chair for clarifying comments on the review.
- e. Guide and review the mentee's annual activity insight document
- f. When appropriate and possible nominate the mentee for awards and recommend professional, university, or department service opportunities.

#### **4. Mentee responsibilities**

- a. At the start of the mentorship share a position description and current CV with their mentors
- b. Schedule a meeting with mentor(s) at least twice a year but more frequent formal or informal meetings are encouraged as needed
  - i. The mentee is responsible for scheduling these meetings and for providing an agenda for the meeting
  - ii. The mentee is responsible for taking notes during the meeting and following up on recommended actions from the mentorship meetings.
- c. Develop a promotion and tenure plan and review this plan with mentor
- d. Provide the mentor with their activity insight annual review and P&T documents.
  - i. The mentee should work with the mentor to agree upon when these documents should be provided to ensure that the mentor has sufficient time to look over the documents and provide feedback before it is turned in for formal evaluation.

#### **5. Potential discussion topics for mentor/mentee meetings**

Below are some potential topics for the mentor/mentee meetings but these meetings do not have to be limited to these topics.

- a. Program development
- b. Performance expectations
- c. Reporting in Activity Insight
- d. Developing a promotion and tenure plan
- e. Developing the P&T documents
- f. How to interpret and take action on feedback given in the annual academic performance evaluation and professional development of faculty form and the P&T annual faculty progress form
- g. Developing teaching, research, extension, and service goals
- h. Professional, University or department service opportunities
- i. Professional development opportunities
- j. Professionalism and collegiality

- k. Steps for developing a new class or improving an existing class
- l. Steps for developing a new extension program
- m. Steps for developing a new research program
- n. Resources available in the department and at UNL for teaching, research, and extension
- o. Information on the right person to contact about utilizing an available resource

#### **6. Assessment of Mentoring**

- a. Mentoring quality will be assessed in two ways: 1) through progress of the mentee, and 2) discussions with the mentee about the mentorship during the mentee's annual evaluation. Results of annual evaluation of mentors will be confidential, and will be used by the department head to assess the mentoring environment, to recognize effective mentors, and to discretely correct minor concerns. In the event of serious concerns, or if the mentor or mentee feels that a mentor relationship is not working, it is important that these concerns be addressed as soon as possible with the department head. Changes will be made in the mentors if no other solutions can be determined.

### **Appendix**

#### **Qualities of Effective Mentors**

*(from "Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Mentoring"; Columbia University)*

- a. Commitment to the time required for meeting and advising
- b. Commitment to reviewing the mentee's work
- c. Guidance on setting realistic career vision/goals/objectives
- d. Collaborative development of appropriate goals and strategies for achieving goals
- e. Guidance and resources for developing academic competencies in scholarly research, teaching, extension, scholarly outputs, and overall career management
- f. Facilitation in the development of academic networks
- g. Careful and active listening, ability to work across boundaries of gender/race/ethnicity/sexual orientation/culture/religion
- h. Provision of constructive feedback
- i. Attention to measuring progress
- j. Consideration of sponsorship when appropriate and possible
- k. Maintenance of confidentiality when appropriate and creation of an environment of trust
- l. Respect for personal boundaries

#### **Qualities of Responsible Mentees**

*(modified from "Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Mentoring"; Columbia University)*

- b. Active engagement in the identification of specific developmental goals for which guidance is sought
- c. Commitment to setting meeting times and agendas to ensure a productive discussion
  - i. Meet with department head as needed
- b. Initiative and follow through in both setting and completing agreed-upon goals
- c. Commitment to hard work and integrity
- d. Preparation of agreed-upon deliverables in adequate time for review by mentors, with respect for the time constraints of mentors
- e. Development of listening skills and willingness to work outside of “comfort zones,” across boundaries of gender/ race/ethnicity/sexual orientation/culture/religion
- f. Ability to solicit and consider thoughtful feedback, both positive and negative, in a timely manner
- g. Active commitment to developing scholarly independence
- h. Respect for personal boundaries

### **Helpful Resources**

[Academic Advancement Network](#). Michigan State University site with various ideas for mentors and mentees.

[Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Mentoring](#). Very helpful guide to faculty mentoring developed by Columbia University.

[Mentoring Evaluation Tools and Forms](#). This site from the University of Wisconsin provide a variety of self-reflection tools for assessing effectiveness as mentors and mentees.

[National Research Mentoring Network](#). Funded by NIH, provides training resources for both mentors and mentees.

[Optimizing the Practice of Mentoring: An online curriculum for the Professional Development of Research Mentors](#). An open-access, self-paced online course on improving mentoring skills, developed by the University of Minnesota.

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