

Faculty Mentoring Handbook
UIC MIE Department
Approved February 2024 by MIE faculty vote

Purpose

This document describes department policies for formal faculty mentoring and provides guidance for mentors and mentees. Mentoring is intended to help faculty members who have not reached the highest rank in their employment track to advance in their track. The most obvious need is to support Assistant Professors on the tenure track (TT), since a failure to advance to Associate Professor means the termination of their position at UIC. Mentoring can help all faculty to achieve career goals and satisfaction, thus contributing to enhanced reputation of the department and the college. In addition, mentoring can support an inclusive, diverse, and engaged faculty by communicating explicitly about university and department culture. Summing up briefly: we want faculty contributions to have impact, and we want faculty to be good academic citizens; mentoring supports these two goals. Mentoring can provide professional and/or personal growth for the mentor as well as for the mentee.

University Requirements

UIC mandates a mentoring plan for all faculty who have not reached the highest rank in their employment track. UIC Faculty Affairs Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines Number 706 states that mentoring plans must include:

- Strategies for achieving the mentee's career goals
- Clear roles for the mentor(s) and mentee
- Established expectations and boundaries
- Communication plan (e.g., mode, frequency, and style)
- Schedule of mentoring meetings
- Administrative accountability for oversight of the mentoring program
- Feedback mechanism

The same document specifies additional requirements. These are relevant to the current document:

- Mentors and mentees must be permitted to provide input on their preferences and availability
- Mentees should be provided with some choice in matching with mentor(s)
- Mentors should not have a role in evaluating their mentees during annual faculty evaluation
- For faculty members with joint appointments, a single mentoring plan should be developed, led by the home unit
- A complete description of the faculty member's mentoring plan must be included in the mid-probationary review and promotion and tenure dossier

Department Policies

1. The MIE Department Head will assign a faculty mentor to each untenured TT faculty member in the department, with the input and agreement of both mentor and mentee. Contingent upon mentor availability and mentee interest, the Department Head will also assign a mentor to each non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty member who has not reached the highest level on their track, and to each TT Associate Professor with tenure. Mentors will in general be expected to be faculty members further along on the same track as the mentee, but if necessary and appropriate mentees may be mentored by faculty members on other tracks or even outside the department. Formal mentoring is a significant commitment. The department head approves each mentoring relationship. While there is no hard limit on the number of mentees assigned to a particular mentor, the department head will attempt to distribute mentoring as much as possible; in particular, the department head will not assign more than two mentees to the same mentor without explicit justification of the necessity. The assignment of a formal mentor will specify what consideration or incentive is attached to the mentoring responsibility. It is expected that most mentoring relationships will count as service in the annual faculty review. The mentoring relationship will be confirmed or changed annually by the Department Head. If either mentor or mentee wishes to terminate or change the formal relationship, they may request this of the Department Head at any time.

2. The department will provide to all faculty an annual overview of faculty performance on metrics relevant to promotion and tenure. This information will be anonymous and will not identify individual faculty by name.
3. The department encourages a culture in which junior faculty are comfortable seeking advice from senior faculty whether or not there is a formal mentoring relationship. This document describes the formal requirements for mentors. Mentors are encouraged to connect mentees with other faculty members who can provide advice, resources, and collegiality, and mentees are encouraged to form relationships with other faculty members both in and out of the department.
4. The department will reimburse mentees once a year to take mentors out to lunch.
5. A faculty member's formal mentor must recuse themselves from any promotion or tenure votes for that faculty member.

General Mentoring Responsibilities and Procedures

1. Mentors and mentees should establish a regular meeting schedule. This schedule is a baseline minimum; it is expected that there might be other meetings, and it is not required to calendar all meetings in advance. The schedule should include at least one meeting per year to review the promotion documents. In addition, there should be at least three other meetings a year to review and document progress on promotion metrics.
2. Documentation is discussed below. Two levels of documentation should be maintained. Mentors are responsible for maintaining simple documentation of the mentoring process as explained below. Mentees are responsible for maintaining a current version of the promotion dossier that will be used at the next promotion step; the mentor should provide advice on these. All documents should be provided to the Department Head annually. The promotion dossier will be reviewed annually by a committee consisting of all department faculty who would be eligible to vote on the next promotion of the mentee.
3. Mentoring should begin with the mentee articulating their career goals. While it is generally assumed that the immediate goal is to advance to the next level on the employment track, the mentor can be more helpful and the mentee can more productively pursue goals if they are articulated in more detail. Mentee goals may concern career success (e.g., promotion), quality of professional life, or personal health and satisfaction.
4. Mentors must bear in mind that their role is to support the mentee to pursue the mentee's goals, not to direct the mentee as to which goals are most worthy. Mentors must decide if they feel qualified to help mentees with their desired goals; a mentor may choose to mentor a mentee for some goals and let the mentee seek mentorship from others for other goals.
5. All mentoring in support of promotions should be informed by the norms for that promotion. The university, college, or department may choose to modify or clarify promotion norms, and mentoring activities should respond to the current norms.

Documentation Requirements

Mentoring should be documented in two ways. Mentees maintain a "live" version of the formal promotion dossier required by the university. Mentors maintain other documents specifically for the department; these are provided below.

The university provides promotion dossiers that are required as part of every application for promotion. These dossiers have two kinds of content. One is lists of activities considered in the promotion process to demonstrate accomplishments in research, teaching, and service. The other is personal statements outlining past accomplishments and future plans; currently there are statements for teaching, research, service, DEI, and interdisciplinary work. Mentees should maintain a working copy of these dossier documents and keep them up to date with relevant activities. Once a year the mentor should review the dossier before it is provided to the Department Head to share with the promotion committee.

The department also uses its own documents to track mentoring activities and mentor progress. The mentor is expected to maintain these documents, which include the Mentoring Plan, a record of communication, and an optional record of mentee progress and activity.

Feedback and Improvement Mechanisms

A mentoring relationship should contribute to the mentee's attainment of their career goals, and this should be the ultimate measure of success. We can (and should) certainly track annually whether goals are attained, but if we are entirely honest we must admit that we cannot know if the mentoring relationship helped or hindered the mentee. We can also survey both mentors and mentees about their opinion whether the mentoring relationship is helpful. Both mentors and mentees can reflect and report on what they learned and in particular what they found helpful and how they believe that mentoring made a difference in their work and career.

The department head is responsible both for the individual mentoring relationships and for the mentoring program as a whole. The department head may oversee and evaluate the mentor's work by referring to the documents that the mentor produces and by meeting with the mentor and mentee. However, such evaluation is **not** considered part of a feedback and improvement mechanism for the program as a whole. In the service of improving the mentoring program (as opposed to improving a particular mentoring relationship), an annual reflection on the successes and challenges of the mentoring program shall be provided by both mentors and mentees, and the summary results made available by the department head or a designee. The format of this reflection is not specified, though a survey is probably the simplest mechanism to implement. It is crucial, however, that it be communicated clearly that these reflections on the mentoring process are not used to evaluate the performance of individual mentors but instead to suggest changes in the mentoring program overall.

Structural Nature of this Program

This handbook provides a structure for mentoring with the following simple steps:

- The Department Head consults with the mentee and potential mentors and assigns a mentor (specifying the incentive for mentoring)
- The mentee completes the first section of the mentoring plan (career goals)
- The mentor and mentee meet and complete the rest of the mentoring plan
- The mentor and mentee follow the mentoring plan
- Once a year the promotion dossier is reviewed by the promotion committee
- Once a year the department head or designee verifies activity through the documentation
- Once a year the department head or designee solicits feedback from both mentor and mentee and reports (aggregate) results; at this point the department head confirms the continuation of the mentoring relationship or seeks a new one

The content of the mentoring plan frames the course of the engagement. This handbook does not dictate the content of the plan, but does offer broad guidance for different levels as described immediately below.

Once a year all mentors meet to discuss the feedback received from the annual feedback assessment and to share ideas, concerns, and suggestions from their work throughout the year.

Mentoring Assistant Professors on the Tenure Track

The current norms for promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure state: "the individual nominated should have demonstrated his/her scholarship through sustained growth in publications, sponsored research, graduate advisement, teaching effectiveness and faculty governance. There should be a clear perspective that the individual is well on his/her way to national prominence in his/her field. It is a necessary condition that the individual be an effective teacher." It is of course necessary to verify to that one is working with the current norms, and this document should be updated as appropriate.

The tenure dossier document includes sections on research, teaching, service, DEI, and collaboration; at a minimum, mentoring should consider what actions the mentee takes to address these items. If the annual

feedback assessment or annual mentor meeting generates specific suggestions or guidance that would be useful to provide as part of this handbook, then this document should be updated to include such information.

Mentoring Associate Professors on the Tenure Track

Content in this section should be updated as appropriate.

Mentoring Assistant Professors on the Clinical Track

Content in this section should be updated as appropriate.

Mentoring Associate Professors on the Clinical Track

Content in this section should be updated as appropriate.

Other levels as appropriate

This document was approved by online vote February 23, 2024 with 14 in favor, 0 opposed, and 3 abstentions.

Templates for mentoring forms are on the following pages.

DOCUMENT: Mentoring Plan (Template)

This plan and all documents should be kept in a shared location (such as Box) available to the mentor, the mentee, and the Department Head or designee. The plan should be updated once a year at the beginning of the academic year. The mentor is responsible for maintaining the plan. Except for the first item (Career goals), all items are to be agreed upon by mentee and mentor.

Mentee:

Mentor:

Date created:

Date of last modification:

Career goals (provided by mentee): What career goals do you want to work on with your mentor? Bullet points are fine, or a short paragraph. Goals may concern career success (e.g., promotion), quality of professional life, or personal satisfaction and health. If there are more than three goals, please list in order of importance.

<response>

Strategies for achieving these goals: What actions should the mentee take to pursue these goals? What resources are needed? Identify strategies for the coming year and also for the remaining time at the current employment level.

<response> At a minimum, this section should identify specific actions to advance in the requirements listed in the norms for promotion.

Roles for mentor: What will the mentor do to support the mentee? Is there anything the mentor should avoid?

<response>

Roles for mentee: What will the mentee do to further the mentoring relationship? Is there anything the mentee should avoid?

<response>

Communication plan: What mode(s) of communication will the mentor and mentee use? (email, phone, text, other messaging platforms, in-person visits?) What is the expected frequency of communication for both formal and informal interactions?

<response>

Schedule: Provide a calendar or list of formal meetings.

<response> Mentor and mentee are required to have at least four meetings a year. This plan should be reviewed at the beginning of each academic year (fall semester, unless the mentee begins work in the spring semester in which case the first meeting will be in the spring). The promotion dossier should be reviewed in spring semester. In addition, there should be at least one additional meeting in the fall and one in the spring semester.

Involvement of others: Does the mentee have goals for which the mentor may not be the best person to provide guidance? What other people, if any, should be explicitly invited to participate in mentoring?

<response>

Administrative accountability: The mentor will maintain documents in a shared location. The department head or designee will verify that mentoring is happening.

Feedback mechanism: How will the mentor and the department receive feedback on the efficacy of the mentor and the mentoring relationship?

<response>

DOCUMENT: Record of Communications

The mentor should keep track of communications with the mentee. As usual, no specific format is required, but a spreadsheet is suggested for this record, with the following columns:

- Date
- Form of communication (email, face-to-face-meeting, etc.)
- Time spent (for many communications, this may be negligible, and it is fine to say “negligible” or “<10 minutes”)
- Topic(s)

A text document may be used in place of a spreadsheet.

Note: Faculty are generally unused to tracking hours the way that lawyers do (except for those faculty members who moonlight as expert witnesses for lawyers). We include this requirement because we believe that the data it will provide about frequency and nature of engagements will help the department to improve mentoring for everyone. We understand that people are unlikely to record every quick interaction, and while a complete and comprehensive record would provide better data, it is also acceptable to periodically add a line stating how many quick interactions happened since the last record. Emails and texts are recorded, and histories could be reviewed to determine how many of them have happened in a given time period. If mentor and mentee regularly chat briefly in person, we would like to have an idea of that as well.

We further understand that some mentors may object to any bookkeeping burden. Nevertheless, in order to serve as a formal mentor a faculty member must be willing to at a minimum provide an annual report that estimates the time of mentor activity each week; more details are appreciated.

OPTIONAL DOCUMENT: Record of Mentee Progress

The mentor or mentee may choose to maintain a record of the mentee’s plans and execution of those plans. This is optional, and if maintained may be shared together with the other documents.