



EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

College of Science

Junior Faculty Mentoring Program

## **Introduction**

The mentoring of new and junior faculty by senior colleagues at higher education institutions is not new. Many universities have had such programs since the 1960s. The objectives of these programs are varied, but primarily their focus has been on the professional development of new faculty and their success in achieving tenure. Specifically, mentoring programs have addressed: 1) teaching effectiveness, 2) pedagogy, 3) fostering creative and performance based activities, 4) research productivity including publishing and grantsmanship, 5) collegiality, successfully negotiating the probationary period, and 6) acclimating to the campus/regional culture and the community of scholars.

All of these objectives in their own right are sufficient reasons for a university to invest in faculty mentoring. Moreover, junior faculty are an important resource for a university, playing critical roles in the delivery of instruction, conducting scholarly activity, and infusing fresh ideas and perspectives into the professoriate. They also represent a sizeable financial investment that needs to be nourished. While a number of faculty will resign over the course of a probationary period, some resignations could be prevented if more effective mentoring is available. Other reasonable expectations of effective mentoring could be: 1) improved/increased professional productivity, 2) greater teaching success, and 3) a reduction in critical evaluations leading to the recommendation for non-renewal of a contract during the probationary period.

Given these potential benefits, the College of Science (COS), in collaboration with its constituent departments, has established a formal college-wide mentoring program for all junior tenure-track faculty.

## **Mentors and Mentoring**

Mentorship is a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable individual helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable individual. However, mentoring involves the building of personal and professional relationships that can be mutually beneficial for both the mentor and mentee. Serving as mentors enables senior faculty to: 1) sustain their own professional growth, 2) share their wisdom, knowledge, and acquired expertise with their junior colleagues, and 3) ensure the health of their discipline and department within the University. Mentees can expect to avoid some of the pitfalls and mistakes commonly encountered during the early stages of an academic career, gain insight into the culture of higher education, realize more success in their teaching and research, be better colleagues, and enhance their probability of achieving tenure and promotion.

## **Goals of the Mentoring Program**

Although not an exhaustive list, some of the specific goals of the College of Science mentoring plan include:

- Assisting faculty with their pedagogical skills and assessing their effectiveness in teaching and learning;
- Helping faculty set realistic goals for their professional, scholarly, and creative development, and balancing their time and energy between teaching, research and service;
- Supporting research and scholarly activities;
- Facilitating the preparation of proposals to secure funding in support of scholarly and creative activities;
- Familiarizing faculty with department/college/university expectations, criteria, documents and processes regarding tenure and promotion;
- Informing faculty of campus-wide resources to support their efforts and to facilitate the development of their professional networks;
- Providing clear, honest, constructive, and diagnostic feedback on the progress of junior faculty toward tenure and promotion;
- Creating opportunities for faculty to feel welcome within the department, college, university, and Richmond community;
- Encouraging a collegial atmosphere where faculty feel comfortable engaging in debate on a variety of academic issues while respecting the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of being a member of the community of scholars;
- Creating mechanisms for the informal support of faculty ranging from social events to peer group discussions;
- Focusing on faculty achievements through one-on-one and group relationships that are non-judgmental and non-threatening; and
- Transferring experience, knowledge, history and leadership skills throughout the organization.

Achieving these objectives will advance the College of Science toward fulfilling its mission and realizing its vision.

## **Conceptual Overview of Junior Faculty Mentoring Program**

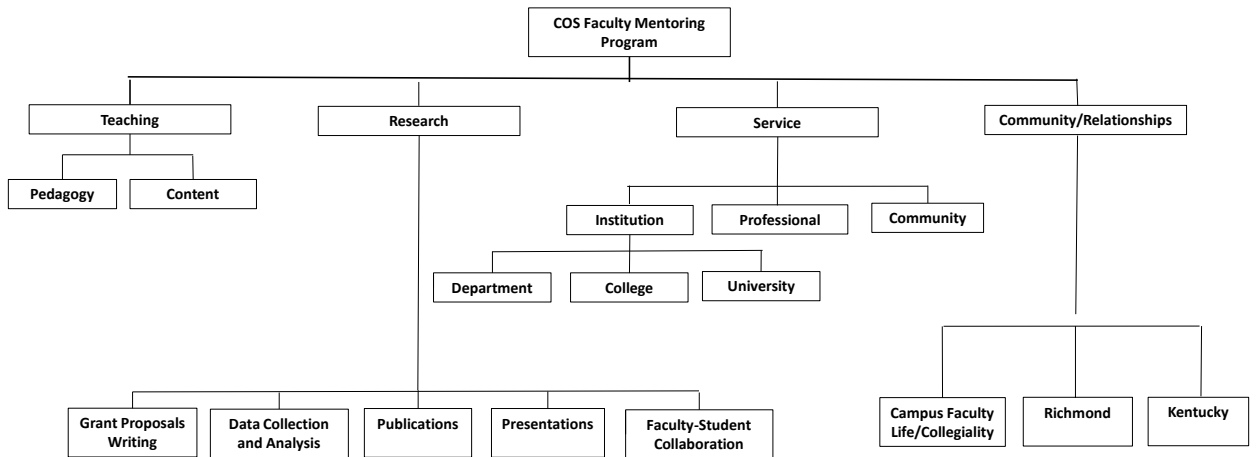
A conceptual overview of the COS mentoring program is presented in Figure 1. This diagram illustrates the breadth and depth of topic coverage across the three traditional areas of teaching, research, and service, plus a fourth area addressing citizenship the university, region and state. Topics covered enable junior faculty to obtain advice in those areas where they might feel the greatest need. For example, a new faculty member may have been successful in publishing one or two articles extracted from their dissertation. However, they may need guidance in designing a research agenda extending beyond their doctoral work and in developing external funding proposals to support this agenda. Similarly, a recent Ph.D. may have served as a research assistant throughout her/his doctoral program. While they may have command of the subject material, they may need assistance in the mechanics of teaching, ranging from syllabi construction and designing learning outcomes to developing classroom policies on attendance and grading. University and community relations, collegiality and service are covered under the fourth topic. The focus is on assisting faculty members to become familiar with their new surroundings, both professionally and personally. This may be particularly important if they are not natives of Kentucky and do not have family accompanying them during their relocation. Moreover, all departments have a “culture”, as well as written and unwritten rules on acceptable and collegial behavior, which need to be learned by new arrivals. For example, a new faculty member may be expected to have his or her own graduate students; however, the manner and style they use in recruiting these persons might be at odds with departmental standards or norms and result in the new faculty member not being viewed as a team player.

## **Structure and Implementation of Junior Faculty Mentoring Program**

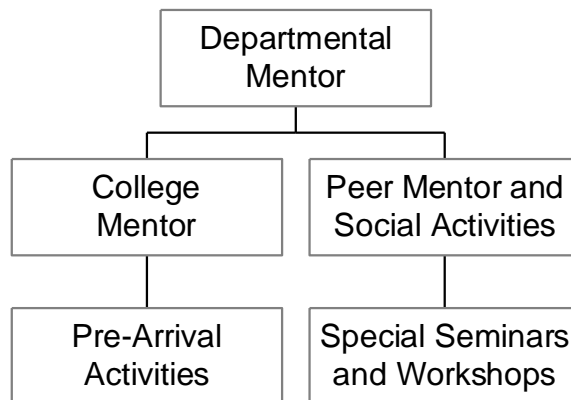
All tenure-track faculty will be eligible to participate through the first two years of their probationary period which normally runs six years. Thus, the program will have two cohorts, by year, of participants.

Five complementary components, implemented at the departmental and college levels will comprise the COS mentoring program (Figure 2). Participation in all of the components is voluntary, although junior faculty are strongly encouraged to have a departmental mentor. The program is designed to be flexible and convenient, and provide targeted assistance on an as-needed basis to junior faculty members as they navigate the first three years of their probationary period. The components outlined below should not be viewed in exclusive terms as the only means to mentor junior faculty. We realize that mentoring can and will take place in a variety of ways and encourage junior faculty to seek out individuals from across the EKU community who can assist them with their professional development.

**Figure 1. Overview of COS Junior Faculty Mentoring Program**



**Figure 2. Components of COS Junior Faculty Mentoring Program**



1. **Pre-arrival/Arrival at Eastern Kentucky University:** Upon receipt of a signed offer letter, the new faculty will receive a congratulatory letter from the Dean of the College of Science. In addition, the department should establish regular

communication with the individual to help welcome them to EKU and make them feel part of the department. Pre-arrival materials that may be sent to the new faculty could include:

A description of the COS mentoring program, complimentary textbooks for assigned courses, campus maps, local phone book, and local newspaper. Information on the following could also be included: housing, parking, local utility providers, child care facilities, new faculty orientation, fall convocation, office assignments and phone numbers, teaching schedules, and how to log into EKU Direct (Web based Banner administrative System at EKU).

Establishing and maintaining communication with new faculty members prior to their arrival at EKU will be the responsibility of the department. The Dean's office will liaise with appropriate university offices to assist new faculty acquire EKU e-mail accounts as soon as possible.

The pre-arrival/arrival component is intended to help new faculty with the paperwork and bureaucracy, expedite the ordering of start-up equipment, and welcome them to Richmond and the EKU community.

2. **Departmental Mentor:** Each department will arrange for a tenured member of the faculty to serve as a mentor for new arrivals at EKU. The chair and/or departmental personnel affairs committee should devise and implement this matching procedure, but the match should be mutually agreed upon by both parties and reflect similar teaching, professional, and research interests. If the department already has mentoring activities in place, these should continue and be integrated with the other components of the college program. The departmental mentor should serve as the primary, on-campus disciplinary resource for the new faculty member, as well as provide advice and guidance on policies and procedures in the unit. Both parties will be required to attend an orientation session focusing on 1) the objectives of the mentoring program, 2) best management practices for achieving those objectives, and 3) the expectations and responsibilities of each person in the match. The length of the agreement will be for two years, but during that period either party can end the match on a no-fault basis. If the mentee wishes to continue with another departmental mentor, one will be arranged for him/her following the selection process used by that unit. The mentoring orientation session will be organized and conducted by the Dean and the Associate Dean.
3. **College Mentor:** In some cases, where the departmental mentor is also a member of the Personal Affairs Committee and/or the promotion and tenure committee, the new faculty member may be hesitant to openly discuss some issues. In these cases, a second mentor from outside the mentee's home department might serve as a more objective, impartial and dispassionate listener. Therefore, each new faculty member, should they choose to have one, will also be matched with a tenured member of the College of Science from a Department other than their own. The college mentor-mentee match should be based upon mutual professional and

personal interests and hobbies and shall be facilitated by the Dean. The length of the match will be for two years and a no-fault arrangement will again be in effect. Each of these college-wide mentors will also be asked to attend the mentoring orientation session.

4. **Peer Mentoring:** In many cases, the best advice that new faculty members can get is from a peer who might be experiencing the same problems in either teaching a large class for the first time or in publishing their first refereed manuscript. All new faculty will be invited to attend a college orientation program where they will have an opportunity to meet each other, receive an overview of college policies and procedures, and be introduced to the administrative staff in the Office of the Dean. This cohort will serve as their peer-mentoring group, and be invited to attend a series of activities together. These activities will be organized by the Office of the Dean and will include, but not be limited to, a new faculty reception, at least two group lunches each fall and spring semester, and an end-of-year reception. These social events will provide opportunities for new faculty to share their experiences and interests through informal and casual communication.
5. **Workshop and Seminar Series:** More detailed and in-depth workshops and seminars will be arranged throughout the mentoring period. Topics may include, but are not limited to, legal issues for faculty, evaluating of teaching effectiveness, time management, assessing progress toward tenure, collegiality, services available from the Division of Sponsored Programs, and using library resources to support teaching and scholarship. Faculty will also be encouraged to participate in regular workshops conducted by the Teaching and Learning Center.

### **Program Evaluation**

Evaluation of the Junior Faculty Mentoring Program will be conducted periodically to determine its overall effectiveness in facilitating the development, success, and retention of junior faculty in the College of Science. Participating mentors and mentees will be asked to complete a survey on the program's structure and implementation and provide ideas and information for improvement.

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Adopted: August 2016