

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY MENTORING PRACTICES

(last revised March 21 2020)

The members of the Department of Psychology heartily concur with the N2025 Strategic Plan – “We believe in the power of every person. The most important asset at the University of Nebraska is its people...” Thus, it is critical to the success of our faculty members, the Department, and the University to have mentoring practices aimed at helping every individual succeed. The current version of this document covers newly hired faculty members that are not yet promoted to Associate Professor. However, mentoring is available to all faculty, regardless of rank or time on faculty.

Exit Interview

- The Chair of the Department describes the mentoring process with each applicant that interviews for a faculty position.

Chair and Associate Chairs

- Early in the first semester at UNL, the Chair or designee calls for a meeting with the new faculty to discuss potential mentors. That meeting typically includes the Chair and the Associate Chairs. We identify a minimum of two individuals as potential mentors and discuss the expectations for the mentor-mentee relationship in that meeting (e.g., a minimum of one mentoring meeting per semester; see below).
- Once potential mentors are identified, the Chair or designee contacts each individual to see if they are willing to serve. At this point, expectations for the mentee-mentor relationship are also discussed. If they agree, then the Chair or designee informs the new faculty member and strongly encourages them to set-up the first meeting with each mentor as soon as possible.
- While the new faculty member is explicitly assigned at least two mentors, the collaborative and supportive culture of the Department means that many other faculty members serve as informal mentors. New faculty members typically discover this quite quickly. However, we make sure to point this out in the initial mentoring meeting.
- In the first year, the Chair along with the Associate Chairs meet with new faculty members at least three more times; one more in the Fall Semester and two in the Spring Semester. Agenda items for these meetings may include merit evaluation process, establishment of research program, effective teaching, mentoring of students, challenges or barriers, standards for promotion, etc.
- In subsequent years, the Chair or designee annually confirms the status of mentoring assignments and adjusts such assignments as needed. In practice, the check-in is more frequent given the role of mentors in the evaluation and reappointment process (see later).
- Beginning in the Fall 2019 Semester, the two Associate Chairs scheduled monthly 90-minute mentoring meetings for all Assistant Professors (of Practice and Tenure-Track). The purpose of these meetings is to discuss common issues faced by new faculty members, including faculty evaluation and promotions processes, setting up a research lab, time management, teaching strategies, and recruitment of graduate students. These meetings ensure that all Assistant Professors have a forum in which to have questions answered and learn from each other.

Mentors and Mentee

- We expect the mentee to be proactive in this process and reach out to mentors as needed. However, there is an expectation of at least a one meeting per semester; see earlier about conveying expectations for mentee-mentor relationship. Similarly we encourage mentors and mentees to check in with each other more informally between scheduled meetings and especially if there are significant events or discussions in department meetings.
- When possible, one of the mentors presents the mentee's materials for all reappointment meetings as well as the promotion meeting. This role highlights the importance of the mentor-mentee relationship, as effective presentation of the mentee's record requires knowledge beyond just the number of publications or the classes taught while here at UNL.
- If an issue arises with the new faculty member's record during a reappointment or merit evaluation meeting (e.g., poor teaching evaluations, too few publications), the mentors are informed about the concern and potential steps to remediate the issue are discussed. Soon after that discussion, the mentors (either together or separately) are expected to meet with the mentee to discuss the situation and potential solutions. The Chair typically meets with the faculty member as well in this situation. While the onus of implementing a strategy sits with the mentee, the mentors and the Chair should look for opportunities to facilitate successful implementation of the mentee's strategy to remediate the issue.

Reappointment & Merit Letters

- Reappointment and merit evaluation letters are considered an important part of the mentoring process. As such, feedback on performance in the areas of research, teaching, and service should be clear regarding progress toward promotion. These letters identify areas of strengths and, if any, areas requiring more work. Potential strategies to address concerns may also be included in these letters.
- Further, these letters are also used to remind and reinforce the importance of an active mentor-mentee relationship.

Other Resources and Opportunities

- There are a host of professional development workshops and brown bag discussions hosted by the Department each year. While all faculty are encouraged to take advantage of such opportunities, these are often geared toward junior faculty and there is a strong expectation that new faculty members participate if their schedule allows.
- The Chair and other faculty members also share other professional development opportunities in the College, University, or professional societies on the department's faculty listserv.
- New faculty members are also encouraged to explore the mentoring resources available from UNL's membership in the [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#). Mentors are also directed here to learn more about effective mentoring.