

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY MENTORING PRACTICES

(last revised November 3, 2022)

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...” 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. As a result, an [individualized mentoring plan](#) will be developed for all new faculty members. While the current version of this document covers newly hired faculty members that are not yet promoted to Associate Professor, mentoring is available to all faculty, regardless of rank or time on faculty.

Mentoring Roles

Mentees. The Department believes that mentoring is best when it empowers the mentee. Promoted faculty are a resource new faculty can draw upon to flourish in their careers. New faculty should reach out to mentors to ask for what they need and plan to attend all departmental mentoring events.

Mentors. Mentoring is an expression of the Department’s core values, and it is also critical to advancing the Departmental mission. The investment of mentors helps our new colleagues to make their best contributions to research, teaching, and our community. Mentorship represents valued service to the department and will be discussed during annual merit review. The Department of Psychology is grateful to all our faculty members for their mentoring efforts.

Mentoring Activities

Mentorship activities include a wide range of activities, including professional development, access to opportunities and sponsorship, and substantive feedback, which may include:

- Giving substantive feedback on a grant proposal, manuscript, research protocol, or book chapter
- Offering advice about which journals would be the best match for an article in preparation
- Strategizing with mentees about course assignments
- Discuss efforts and training around inclusive excellence and diversity
- Ongoing discussion on progress toward the mentee’s promotion and tenure standards
- Sharing teaching resources with mentees
- Engaging in peer evaluations of teaching
- Advising mentees on how to handle performance issues with students, staff, or post-docs
- Providing feedback on inclusive excellence efforts
- Strategizing with mentees about service activities
- Discussing professional development issues (e.g., conflict, work-life balance)
- Helping mentees establish accountability structures
- Nominating a mentee for university or professional awards
- Introducing a mentee to a colleague in another department or at another institution
- Helping mentees identify training opportunities (e.g., teaching, grants, mentorship)
- Providing feedback on yearly benchmarks (e.g., numbers of publications; scholarship of teaching learning)

Mentoring Sources

Chairs and Associate Chairs

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

- The Associate Chair who oversees the reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RP&T) committee also serves as a mentor for new faculty throughout the RP&T process. The Associate Chair holds regular meetings to discuss the logistics of the RP&T process. Mentoring may be more intensive prior to the 4th year or tenure year reviews. The RP&T Chair may also provide feedback when mentees are considering early tenure (e.g., after speaking with the mentee, the RP&T Chair may solicit perspectives from voting members of the RP&T committee).

- In the first year, the Chair along with the Associate Chairs meet with new faculty members at least four times; twice in the Fall Semester and twice in the Spring Semester. Agenda items for these meetings may include merit evaluation process, establishment of research program, effective teaching, mentoring of students, standards for promotion, including intermediate benchmarks, etc. Early in the first semester at UNL, the Chair or designee will schedule the first meeting to begin to formulate the individualized mentoring plan for each new faculty member. The first step in the process will be discussing potential mentors. A minimum of two preferably three individuals will be identified as potential mentors (e.g., faculty who may have relevant expertise in research, teaching, service, professional development, diversity and inclusion). While each faculty member always has at least 2 department mentors, mentors outside of the department are also sometimes identified if a particular need cannot be met within the department (e.g., a faculty member from an underrepresented group may want a mentor from a similar identity to help with issues connected to belonging uncertainty). General expectations for the mentor-mentee relationship will be discussed in that meeting (e.g., meeting regularly; mentoring activities). At the first faculty meeting of the year, the faculty will be reminded to consult with this document to refresh themselves on the Department mentoring practices.

Formal Mentors

- Once potential mentors are identified, the Chair or designee contacts each individual to see if they are willing to serve. Then a meeting is scheduled with the mentee and mentors in which the individualized mentoring plan is formalized. These plans often include a discussion of: roles and responsibilities for the mentee and each mentor (e.g., the point person to set-up meetings, time commitments, expertise around different topics), a schedule (e.g., monthly meetings), accountability structures (e.g., 6-month check-ins), or training (e.g., peer review of teaching). Once the individualized mentoring plan is developed, it that will be conveyed in writing to the mentors, the RP&T Chair, and the Department Chair. Mentee-mentor relationships are highly flexible, depending on the needs of the new faculty member. However, there is an expectation of at least a one meeting per semester, but many people meet more frequently (e.g., monthly). Similarly, we encourage mentors and mentees to check in with one another informally between scheduled meetings and especially if there are significant events or discussions in department meetings.

- 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).

Informal Mentors

- 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.

Periodic Meetings (3-4 times/semester)

- Department leadership (e.g., Associate Chairs, Graduate and Undergraduate Chairs) holds 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, such as faculty evaluation and promotions standards and processes, setting up a research lab, teaching strategies, time management, and recruitment of students. These meetings ensure that all Assistant Professors have a forum in which to have questions answered from departmental leadership and learn from each other.

Reappointment and Promotion Meetings

- When possible, one of the mentors presents the mentee's materials for all reappointment meetings as well as the promotion meeting. The mentors are also expected to discuss outcomes (e.g., ratings on research, teaching, and service) shortly after reappointment meetings. These 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 and feedback after the meeting can help demystify the reappointment, promotion, and tenure process.

- If a concern about a mentee's progress toward promotion and/or tenure arises during a reappointment or merit evaluation meeting (e.g., poor teaching evaluations, too few publications), the RP&T Chair informs the mentors about the concern and potential steps to remediate the issue are discussed. The onus of implementing a strategy sits with the mentee and the individualized mentoring plan will be updated by the mentee and mentors to provide additional support. These plans often include: identifying additional mentors (e.g., a faculty member with teaching expertise for poor teaching evaluations; a faculty member with additional granting experience), more intensive contact (e.g., biweekly meetings), additional accountability structures (e.g., quarterly progress reports), or more intensive training. Any revisions to the individualized mentoring plan must be conveyed in writing to all the mentors, the RP&T Chair, and the Department Chair.

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 Assistant Professors 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.