

# ENGLISH DEPARTMENT MENTORING DOCUMENT

Fall 2019

## JUNIOR TENURE-TRACK FACULTY MENTORING

The goal of mentoring should be to improve junior faculty career success and retention through establishing clear expectations and providing guidance toward achieving them; to enhance departmental climate, transparency, and consensus around the group mission; and to promote excellent research, teaching, and service across the University.

Mentoring of junior faculty should be oriented toward key moments in their professional trajectory. New TT faculty members' introduction to the university should include support from a faculty mentor able to provide insight into the structure, processes, and culture of the department as well as the University. From this point forward, mentoring should communicate expectations for fourth-year review and tenure. (While not a contract, the English Department's "Tenure Expectations" document can provide mentors and mentees with general guidance. New faculty should also familiarize themselves with the Red Book and Implementation Guidelines documents.)

Mentoring improves the culture and quality of the department, building a sense of community. It also opens the lines of communication between junior and senior faculty members beyond regular meeting times. Mentoring also provides the senior faculty member with opportunities to learn from junior faculty about the issues emerging among new generations of scholars and teachers, allowing for more dynamic evolution of the department and of the senior faculty member's career trajectory.

Mentoring improves faculty retention, especially of women and faculty from underrepresented groups. Information about the University's subscription to the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity should be disseminated to all faculty regularly.

## INDIVIDUAL MENTORING FOR TENURE-TRACK FACULTY

**First-Year Mentor.** When asked, junior faculty strongly felt that giving new faculty a year to identify a formal mentor and encouraging them to seek out additional informal relationships are parts of a good system that offers support while remaining flexible. A first-year mentor may, accordingly, be another junior faculty member; they may also be a faculty member from the search committee who already has some relationship to the new hire. This mentor should be identified before the summer when the new faculty member makes the move to Boston. This contact might be responsible for helping the new hire transition to Boston, if the new hire wishes—they would help with advice about

moving and places to live and, once the new hire was in the city, would help them with basic orientations to the campus, such as telling them where to get a parking pass, keys, ID, and business cards; and showing them the library and other campus facilities, where to park, how to get from JFK to UMass, the quiet spots on campus, and so on. The first-year mentor will be especially helpful with responding to teaching challenges, and figuring out how to establish a balance between scholarship, teaching, and service.

**Principal (Major Reviews-Oriented) Mentor.** Near the conclusion of the first year, the junior faculty member should have a meeting with the Chair in which possible mentors for subsequent years are identified. The Chair will contact prospective mentors and broker a relationship between mentor and mentee. Meetings should be scheduled regularly and in advance, rather than ad-hoc. Discussions should be oriented toward the major reviews, rather than toward the topics discussed with the first-year mentor.

Principal Mentors are expected to do the following:

- Mentors should check in at least twice a semester with their mentees. These should not be ad hoc meetings, but planned in advance.
- The first meeting with the mentee should involve establishing clear goals for the mentee's career at UMB and helping the mentee develop a plan to achieve these goals.
- Mentors should help mentees find other faculty members and/or resources on campus that might be of interest and help their mentee address specific issues or concerns.
- Mentors should also be available to participate in planning a research trajectory and possible venues for submitting publications, possible service opportunities inside and outside the department, and a sequence of courses (and communication with the Associate Chair regarding teaching priorities). Mentors should also be available to watch for grant and fellowship opportunities that junior faculty may not be aware of, to suggest relevant extra-departmental connections with faculty and centers, and to keep an eye on the balance of teaching and service responsibilities in relation to tenure.
- Mentors should participate in joint meetings with the Chair whenever possible in cases when the Chair needs to meet with a junior faculty member on exigent matters.
- Mentors should share information about University-specific opportunities. These might include university subscription to National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity, the junior faculty research seminar, OFD events, the CIT seminar, grant writing workshops at ORSP, and the Active Learning TEAL Fellows Program.

- Mentors may also offer informed feedback on work-in-progress.
- Mentors may also provide a sense of community and a safe space to talk, offer emotional support when needed, and advocate for junior faculty in the university and beyond. However, mentees and mentors should be reminded that mentors may be asked to serve as authors of their fourth-year and tenure reviews, and must therefore balance impartiality with advocacy for their mentees.

## OPEN MENTORING EVENTS

Mentoring events are also offered to all junior faculty. These include the following:

- **AFR Workshop.** Especially in years when there are second- or third-year faculty in the Department, the Chair of the DPC's Subcommittee will, in conjunction with the Chair, offer a workshop on filling out the AFR. Evaluation criteria and processes should also be spelled out in a transparent way at the workshop. Faculty will also be provided with directions about keeping a work log in the AFR system to note creditable achievements as they happen.
- **Advising Workshop.** The responsibility of advising undergraduates requires a great deal of technical knowledge about the University's degree requirements. The Director of the Undergraduate Program will, in conjunction with the Chair, offer a workshop on the advising process, and/or update the Department's FAQ or "advising wiki" with information about best practices and university requirements. The Director of CLA Advising also offers a workshop on the degree audit system.
- **Colloquia for Research-in-Progress.** The Department's Colloquium series provides a friendlier environment than most conferences will. Advanced junior faculty members should encourage their new colleagues to present their research projects to the group.
- **Teaching Cohort Meetings.** Meetings are offered regularly for all faculty members who teach shared courses. Composition Faculty hold a Reading Group series. Experiencing Boston instructors meet to discuss pedagogical approaches. Meetings for all faculty members who teach 200 level courses pool resources such as assignments and syllabi. Peer-class visits may be offered when desired.
- **Book Proposal Workshop.** The department has on occasion offered book-proposal-writing workshops and grant-writing workshops. These events are offered more regularly at the University level.

## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MENTORS

The Chair takes principal responsibility for ensuring that mentoring in the department does not consist of simply matching up mentors with mentees and hoping that will work. The Chair takes steps to create a climate of mentoring in the Department by disseminating this document and prompting its revision when needed. This ensures that expectations and accountability for mentoring are communicated regularly.

The Chair also takes steps to ensure that the responsibility to be mentors should not fall only on the shoulders of a few faculty. All senior faculty in the department must be willing to participate as designated faculty mentors. The findings “A Report of the Promotion, Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Service Sub-Committee” (2016) suggest that mentoring responsibilities have in general fallen on the shoulders of women and faculty of color. (While the report’s emphasis is on graduate student mentoring, the same finding applies to junior faculty mentoring as well.)

The Chair will remind mentors to note their work as service on AFRs. Mentors should provide some minimal account of their work in this document (noting the dates of meetings, for example). The DPC should take care to recognize and reward this work.

In general, care should be taken to dissociate mentoring practices from paternalistic direction. A good mentoring climate is one that expresses mutual openness and appreciation. Tenured faculty should remember that new hires have current views of the research field and pedagogical practices, since graduate education trains students to keep up with, and to contribute to, the latest trends in the field. A desire to renew our disciplinary approaches is, after all, a principal rationale for hiring junior faculty.

## **NTT FACULTY MENTORING**

Because this document discusses all three areas of TT faculty evaluation (research, teaching, and service) as objects of mentoring, most of this document is oriented toward TT faculty. While some of the above will apply to NTT faculty, it should be remembered that NTT faculty are evaluated principally in terms of their teaching. However, NTT teaching calls for particular attention, especially in light of the special conditions of the English Department, in which the majority of courses are taught by NTT faculty. (For example, in fall 2019, 74% of English course sections were taught by NTT faculty. 14% of courses were taught by TT faculty. We do not comment here on the work of teaching assistants, who cover just 11% of courses and are carefully trained in a three-semester sequence.)

The majority of NTT faculty teach in the Composition Program. The Program offers diverse mentoring support. A pre-semester all-day orientation provides conscientious oversight over its hundreds of sections. It organizes an annual conference, Engaging

Practices, at which faculty have the opportunity to present their research. It pairs new with veteran faculty on pedagogical projects by inviting all faculty to identify collaborators every semester.

Some courses outside Composition have a similarly cohesive structure; cohort programs such as Experiencing Boston often attract new NTT hires. Since other English courses have more specialized and varied goals, it has been tempting to assume that mentoring is not possible for those classes. However, these NTT faculty find themselves in a particularly challenging environment. Since NTT faculty are hired only by the Chair, rather than by committee, new NTTs may not know to whom to turn for help.

Accordingly, the Department began an informal pilot program in fall 2019 of pairing new NTT literature faculty hires with TT faculty mentors to help with pedagogical preparation. This program pairs one NTT hire with one TT faculty member so as to create a system of accountability. Since NTT faculty are not usually hired to invent new courses or programs, as TT faculty are, NTT faculty will benefit from the guidance of those who may have created those courses, or in any case have taught them many times.