

Principles of Faculty Mentoring

Introduction

Johns Hopkins University is committed to the provision of mentoring to all junior faculty, and the development of divisional action plans that embrace core principles and encourage divisional experimentation. The following statement of principles is meant to serve as guidelines for mentoring programs across the university. Differences in structure, criteria for advancement, and culture across the schools will require the development of programs that differ in detail from each other. Nevertheless, the specifics of each program should aim to meet the basic principles that underlie the purpose, goals, and value of mentoring.

Principles

Overall purpose: The purpose of faculty mentoring is to support, facilitate, and enhance the development of faculty throughout the early and middle stages of one's career. Faculty mentoring programs should provide assistant professors with both specific, content-oriented mentoring and general career advice relevant to advancing as a faculty member. Mentoring topics should include advice about the tenure and promotion process but should not be focused solely on tenure preparation and/or clarity. A key goal of mentoring should be the promotion of independence in one's career. Focus should be placed on mentoring faculty at the earliest stages of the academic career, for example, at the rank of Assistant Professor or its equivalents. However, each division should also be encouraged to extend mentoring programs to other faculty, including mid-career faculty, such as Associate Professor, and non-professorial faculty, as is deemed appropriate.

While each school may have specific requirements unique to the disciplines they encompass, faculty mentoring programs should strive to be:

- **Specific:** Programs should develop specific means by which mentors are identified, how mentor-mentee pairs/ groups are established, candidate topics that could be discussed, selection of timing formats for mentor-mentee meetings.
- **Voluntary and Flexible:** Mentor/ mentees should be able to select each other, change partners when better progress can be achieved by doing so, adapt to changes in career stage by changing topics, establish flexible timing formats on mutual agreement.
- **Goal-oriented:** Mentor/ mentee pairs should establish several clear goals for their discussions each year, and evaluate their own progress towards these goals at the end of each year.

1. **Mentor and mentee expectations:** These should be stated clearly for each pair. They may include, for example:

- responsibilities of mentors and mentees
- means by which goals are set and examples of goals
- frequency and range of recommended meetings per year
- topics to be addressed
- mechanisms for changing a mentor/ mentee
- ways of evaluating progress towards goals

2. **Eligibility and matching:** Every faculty member being mentored should have access to at least one mentor. The match between mentor and mentee should be made with the following considerations:
 - **Scholarly Field.** The mentor should share the mentee's scholarly field and, where appropriate, mentors should be able to build leadership, teaching, and clinical skills.
 - **Conflict of Interest (COI).** Special attention should be given to COI in mentoring relationships. Conflicts of interest can occur on a broad continuum from the natural personal investment in a mentee's success, to a mentee working on projects that may financially benefit his/her mentor. Individual schools should establish guidelines for handling COI in mentoring relationships.
 - **Management of conflicting roles.** Every attempt should be made to minimize potentially conflicting roles in the mentoring relationship. For instance, in cases where all senior members of a department have a supervisory or evaluative role (e.g., department chair, promotion and tenure committee members), every attempt should be made to provide mentees with alternative and/or neutral mentors.
 - **Changing Mentor-Mentee Pairings.** Specific mechanisms should exist for changing mentor-mentee pairings if needed.
 - **Information Exchange and Collaboration.** Mentees are encouraged to work together, as well as with their mentors, to promote information exchange and collaboration across fields, departments, and schools. Mentees could potentially form "self-mentoring" groups to network and share issues and solutions.

3. **Establishing topics of discussion and providing concrete feedback:** Mentor and mentee should develop a set of topics that are pertinent to career development. These will naturally differ somewhat across different points in the career trajectory, for different fields of study, and for different faculty groups. For all topics, mentors should offer concrete suggestions, which should then be discussed in the context of the mentees short and long-term goals. A sample of topics that could be considered include the following:
 - overall career trajectory relative to 1, 5 and 10 year goals
 - progress in research
 - progress in publications and presentations
 - progress in teaching undergraduates
 - graduate and medical student teaching and advising
 - progress towards promotion and/or professional advancement, including cv. checks, and review of all professional and scholarly activities
 - progress in leadership skills and clinical program building, where relevant
 - approaches to obtaining grants, including networking and grant-writing
 - review of the mentee's yearly departmental evaluation
 - the appropriate balance between one's scholarly work and service-oriented activities such as committee membership, how to best handle these pressures, when it is appropriate to decline, etc.
 - ways to handle pressures that may be specific to being a faculty member from an underrepresented group
 - work-life balance

4. **Confidentiality:** It should be understood that all discussions between the mentor and

mentee are confidential. This principle is designed to promote complete freedom of expression within the relationship, allowing the mentor and mentee to express thoughts and concerns, understanding that this information will not be communicated outside of those conversations. Exceptions to confidentiality should only be made with explicit permission of the mentee. For example, a mentee's written annual review could be shared with the mentor only if there is explicit permission from the mentee. Other exceptions should include situations in which there is a violation of professional or research misconduct, in which an individual threatens/ is suspected of harming themselves or others, or in which there is criminal activity. An understanding of confidentiality should be clearly formulated for use of mentor and mentee.

5. **Determining success:** Mentoring programs should incorporate specific means to evaluate on a regular basis whether they are being successfully implemented. Steps to do so should include yearly checks by Deans and Chairs on the mentor-mentee assignments, to determine whether these are satisfactory or in need of re-assignment.

Given these basic principles, each school should develop their own processes and procedures, appropriately tailored to its unique needs. A common core set of processes for each school could then be further tailored to needs of each department within the school.