

AHC Mentoring Policy

Background and rationale

Our faculty is our most important asset for scholarly work. We devote considerable time and expense to educate future faculty members and to recruit new faculty members. However, once hired, a faculty member is often left to his/her own devices with regards to managing one's career. This *laissez-faire* (or sink-or-swim) attitude is an ineffective means of protecting our considerable investments. Particularly for junior faculty, there is a need to systematically nurture, mentor, and retain junior faculty.

Career development is not well managed at most academic health centers, particularly in a thoughtful, prospective manner¹. However, several academic health centers have now begun to address this issue^{2,3}. A central component in any career development program is a mentoring program. A curriculum in professional career development is another. Individual and institutional factors, such as expectations, empowerment, and incentives also influence faculty development and success. At the University of Minnesota there is a need to create these components of a career development program. The schools and colleges of the Academic Health Center have multiple missions, including education, research, clinical care and civic engagement. Faculty are not expected to participate equally in all of these areas, but require guidance as they determine how to develop an effective balance among these competing interests and demands.

Currently, many programs, divisions, and departments have highly-developed, highly-effective mentoring activities. In other cases, there is no organized mentoring, and faculty only sporadically receive optimal support and guidance. Recognizing the importance of mentoring to the ultimate success of its faculty, the Academic Health Center (AHC) wishes to ensure that all junior faculty have the opportunity to benefit from quality mentoring.

Mentorship can be defined as the.. "influence, guidance, or direction exerted by a close, trusted, and experienced counselor. A mentor is to be detached and disinterested to some degree, so that he or she can hold up a mirror for the protégé" [or mentee]⁴.

Policy

Mentoring is a fundamental faculty responsibility. All junior faculty will be expected to participate in a mentoring program from the beginning of their employment. Senior faculty will be expected to serve as mentors, but are also expected to receive recognition for mentoring activities as they would for other faculty responsibilities. It would be counterproductive to specify a single type of mentoring program that would serve all

¹ Morahan PS, Gold JS, Bickel J. Status of faculty affairs and faculty development offices in U.S. medical schools. *Acad Med* 77:398, 2002

² Thorndyke LE, Gusic ME, et al. Empowering junior faculty: Penn State's faculty development and mentoring plan. *Acad Med* 81: 668-73, 2006

³ Bussey-Jones J, Bernstein L, et al. Repaving the road to academic success: the IMeRGE approach to peer mentoring. *Acad Med* 81: 674-9, 2006

⁴ Rogers JC, Holloway RL, Miller SM. Academic mentoring and family medicine's research productivity. *Family Medicine* 22:186, 1990

AHC faculty. While general mentoring principles apply across disciplines, it is essential that each department tailor a mentoring approach that is best for their discipline and culture. Nevertheless, it will be expected that every department or college has a mentoring program that meets minimal criteria. Records of individual faculty member mentoring activities will be maintained by departments to ensure that each junior faculty member is being adequately mentored. Summaries of collegiate mentoring programs will be included in annual compacts.

Components of Mentoring Programs

Regardless of the specific details of the mentoring plan, it will be expected that each department/college has simple, written guidelines for this process.

1. Designated mentor(s)

Each junior faculty member will have at least one designated mentor who will be formally responsible for providing and documenting mentoring activities. The method of assignment of this mentor will vary across departments. In some cases the department head may assign the mentor; in others the mentee will choose the mentor through a selection process.

In many instances, a mentoring team is more appropriate. This is particularly true in situations where there are a limited number of senior faculty in a particular academic home. Inclusion of additional mentors with specific scholarship expertise would enhance mentoring provided by someone from the faculty member's home/professional discipline. Departments should give consideration to employing a three-member mentoring team that could include one mentor from outside the department or college and/or one outside of the division. The decision of whether to employ single mentors or the team approach will be left to departments and colleges. There is no need to change those mentoring programs that already succeed. In all cases, demonstrated effectiveness of the process chosen will be expected. Other mentoring models, such as peer mentoring or group mentoring, are also acceptable as long as they address the following items. Mentoring programs for researchers might be designed differently than those for clinician-scholars.

2. Regular meetings of mentor(s) and mentee

Mentors and mentees are expected to meet for the purpose of discussing career development and progress toward agreed goals at least twice annually.

3. Career development plan

Each mentored faculty member will develop with her/his mentors a realistic plan with specific timelines and quantifiable goals that includes the following items, as appropriate:

- Projects (research projects or scholarly activities) – mentees should plan for diversity in their research interests to avoid the cyclical effects of research sponsor priorities, economic cycles, and the unpredictable nature of research itself.
- Instruction (direct teaching, advising or development of instructional materials) – a plan to document types of teaching/curriculum developed; peer and learner review of teaching as well as a means of documenting learner outcomes

- Publications – goals for the number and type of publications, as well as strategies for accomplishing the publication goals
- Grants – a plan that entails the types of grants; a long-range timeline for applying for and revising unsuccessful applications and for the sequence of planned applications⁵
- Civic engagement – a discussion of what level of activity is expected for a junior faculty and identification of which areas would be of most interest
- Skills needed – an assessment of what additional skills would be optimal (eg.- grant writing seminar, residence in an outside lab to acquire a new technique, learning new teaching methods, formal education) and a timeline for acquiring these skills
- Contacts to be made – mentors should formally consider what networking activities to promote and for what purposes⁶
- Experiences – a plan for what additional activities should be sought (ie., reviewer for articles in certain journals, member of study sections, winner of awards) and a strategy for accomplishing these goals (specific plans for making calls, writing reference letters, seeking out colleagues at meetings, nominating for awards on behalf of the mentee)
- Balance and trajectory – a plan for which activities should be emphasized, an evaluation of the match between expectations and appropriate available time (protected time), and how this portfolio of activities might change over time

The career development plan should be in place within the first six months of the faculty member's appointment.

4. Maintaining a realistic plan

The career development plan should be revised annually, depending upon prior successes and revised assessments of how to achieve future goals

5. Accountability

The mentor(s) and mentee will need to document their mentoring activities so that division heads, department heads, deans and senior university officials can ascertain that all eligible faculty are receiving and benefiting from mentoring. Reports of mentoring activities could be useful for annual faculty reporting and preparation of the appraisals of probationary faculty (Form 12), promotion dossiers, and other departmental or collegiate reports.

6. Resources and support for mentors and mentees

A variety of resources are available for both mentors and mentees. These include:

⁵ Example: A new faculty might anticipate applying for an NIH K award within x months of hire, submit an R21 within y months of completing the K application, allow 9 months for a possible revision of the application; contemplate submitting a R01 application within z years of hire, and submitting a second R01 application within z + 1 years.

⁶ Example; The mentee should be introduced to Professor X, who chairs the planning committee for a future national research symposium and to Professor Y whose lab trains potential postdoctoral candidates.

- A Training manual – Carol Bland, Anne Taylor, Sindie Shollenberger and Patricia Mulcahy have developed a very complete guide Mentoring and Being Mentored: Effective Collaboration Throughout an Academic Career (in press). This book serves as a primary reference for mentors and mentees.
- Training sessions – Throughout the year a variety of educational sessions devoted to specific aspects of mentoring and career development will be developed by colleges and/or the AHC.