A Discussion of Faculty Mentoring in STEM Fields

Facilitated by:
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and the WISE@OU Program

Introductions

Objectives

- Define faculty mentoring/coaching
- Describe different types of mentoring
- Discuss benefits of mentoring to the mentee, the mentor, and the institution
- Identify characteristics of a good mentor
- Provide examples of topics of discussion for mentoring meetings
- Articulate expectations in mentoring relationship
- **Longer term goal:** work on establishing formal mentoring programs in the STEM departments at OU
About WISE@OU

- The goal of the Women in Science and Engineering Program at Oakland University (WISE@OU) is to create a comprehensive program in recruitment, retention, and career development of women and under-represented populations in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

- Funded by the National Science Foundation ADVANCE program through a Partnerships for Adaptation, Implementation, and Dissemination (PAID) Grant (#1107072).

About WISE@OU

Activities include:
- Climate survey and focus group meetings
- Workshops (AHR, Tenure, Grants, etc.)
- Assistance to new STEM faculty
- Review of university policies and procedures
- Lab equipment inventory
- Family friendly policies...

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About WISE@OU

http://oakland.edu/advance
Why is WISE@OU focusing on mentoring?

• Lack of formal faculty mentoring programs in most STEM departments at OU

Why is WISE@OU focusing on mentoring?

• Responses to our climate survey indicate that many faculty feel that more mentoring in research is needed

• Follow up focus group meetings showed that:
  ➢ The majority were not getting advice from senior colleagues
  ➢ More support needed in grant application process
  ➢ More mentoring wanted

• The need for more mentoring was echoed in meetings with junior faculty, dept chairs and deans

So, what is mentoring?
So, what is mentoring?

- Origin of the word goes back to ancient Greece when Odysseus asked his friend and trusted advisor “Mentor” to look after his son, Telemachus, while he headed out to fight the Trojan war.
- Definition: a trusted counselor or guide
- A tutor, coach
- Experienced; role model

So, what has been your experience with mentoring?

- Think back to your own personal experiences:
  - Were you ever mentored (formally or informally) as a new faculty member?
  - if you are not a new faculty member, did you receive any mentoring midway or later in your career?
  - Have you or are you currently mentoring any faculty members:
    - Formally?
    - Informally?
    - In your dept? Outside of your dept?
    - At another institution?
**Types of mentoring**

- As we can see, faculty mentoring can take on many different forms:
  - One-on-one mentoring
  - Multiple Mentors
  - Group mentoring
  - Zone mentoring (by area of expertise: e.g., grant writing, teaching, work-life balance, etc.)
  - Peer mentoring
  - E-mentoring

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**Why is faculty mentoring so important?**

- Take a few moments to reflect about and discuss the benefits of mentoring to the mentee (junior faculty member, mid-career faculty member, etc.)

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**Benefits to the Mentee**

- Individual recognition and encouragement
- Informal feedback
- Advice in defining and achieving career goals
- Advice on scholarship and teaching and how to avoid typical pitfalls
- Advice on balancing teaching, research, committee work and other responsibilities
- Gaining an understanding of the culture of the institution
- Gaining knowledge of procedures and inside information about the department, college, university; dealing with problems in the classroom, lab or department
- Gaining knowledge of the informal and formal rules for advancement (tenure and promotion issues)
- Reduction of stress (psychosocial support)
- Feeling welcomed and valued through the initiation of mentoring

*From the Univ. of Rhode Island ADVANCE program: [http://www.uri.edu/advance/MentorTutorial/benefits_for_the_mentee.html](http://www.uri.edu/advance/MentorTutorial/benefits_for_the_mentee.html)*
What about the mentor?

• Take a few moments to reflect about and discuss the benefits to the mentor.

Benefits to the Mentor

• Satisfaction in enabling new faculty to begin their careers with a sense of direction
• Satisfaction in assisting in the development of a colleague
• Satisfaction of contributing to overall institutional climate change
• Provides opportunities for reflection and renewal of mentor’s own teaching and research career
• Respect and recognition from others in the university as an individual who has the ability to identify, encourage and promote other colleagues
• Improves managerial and mentoring skills
• More apt to keep abreast of new knowledge and techniques
• Increases stimulation from bright and creative new colleagues

From the Univ. of Rhode Island ADVANCE program:
http://www.uri.edu/advance/MentorTutorial/benefits_for_the_mentor.html

Benefits to the Institution

• Increases commitment, productivity and satisfaction of new faculty
• Minimizes attrition
• Encourages cooperation and cohesiveness for those involved in the program
• Develops faculty, enabling them to make full use of their knowledge and skills
• Contributes to the general stability and health of the institution
• Facilitates the development of future organizational leadership

From the Univ. of Rhode Island ADVANCE program:
http://www.uri.edu/advance/MentorTutorial/benefits_for_the_institution.html
So, what types of questions/issues are often discussed?

Research:
• What funding agencies should I target for my research proposals?
• Can I get copies of some successful grant proposals?
• Can you review my grant proposal and provide me with some feedback?
• What steps should I follow to ensure regulatory compliance (IRB, etc.)?
• Should I focus on only one research direction or more than one?
• How do I set up my lab? Who should I contact if I have issues with equipment?
• Are there any opportunities for collaboration with other faculty in my or other departments?
• What conferences should I attend?
• How do I get on conference committees or funding agency review panels?
• What are the journals to publish in? Am I publishing enough?
• How do I get matching funds from OU? What about internal grants and travel funds?
• How do I manage my graduate students?

Help! I am spending so much time on teaching and never find time for research!

*Adapted from the Univ. of Michigan ADVANCE program: http://www.advance.umich.edu/career%20advising.pdf

So, what types of questions/issues are often discussed?

Teaching:
• What classes do I need to teach?
• How do I get a good teaching schedule?
• How many different courses should I teach and how many new courses should I develop?
• How do I deal with sticky situations or problems with students?
• How do I get copies of old syllabi and course notes/assignments?
• What is the grading system used at OU? How do I input grades at the end of the semester?
• How are teaching evaluations handled and weighted?
• Help! I am spending so much time preparing for my classes!
• What instructional technologies can I use in my classroom?
• What in the world is Moodle?
• How do I deal with student cheating in my class?

*Adapted from the Univ. of Michigan ADVANCE program: http://www.advance.umich.edu/career%20advising.pdf

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Service:
• What are the important committees to serve on?
• Who decides what committee I should serve on?
• Are there committees to avoid?
• Am I doing too much or too little service work?
• What about professional service?

Department/University/Other:
• Who are the key people in the department?
• What are appropriate ways to raise different kinds of concerns or issues and with whom?
• Who should I contact to setup an email account, make copies or have equipment installed?
• I am having issues with Prof. X. What should I do?

*Adapted from the Univ. of Michigan ADVANCE program: http://www.advance.umich.edu/career%20advising.pdf
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Promotion and Tenure:
• What are the department’s formal and informal criteria for promotion and tenure?
• What or who can clarify these criteria? Are there some “unwritten rules” that I should know about?
• What would you have wanted to know when you began the tenure process?
• How does one build a tenure file? What should I keep or document?
• Who sits on the tenure committees and how are they selected?
• How should I prepare for my tenure review? Who will letters be sent to?
• Are my research, teaching, service and grants of an appropriate level?
• I am pregnant or ill. How will this affect my tenure clock?
• I am stressed and tired. I always seem to have an endless to-do list. How will I ever manage to get tenure?

* Adapted from the Univ. of Michigan ADVANCE program: http://www.advance-rhode.ischool.unm.edu/career%20advising.pdf

So, what makes a good mentor?

Characteristics of a good mentor

• Available: Makes the time to meet regularly with the new faculty member; stays in regular contact; is prepared to spend time discussing university affairs, reading proposals and papers, and reviewing the new faculty member’s progress.
• Listens and asks questions: Being a good listener is key to a successful mentoring relationship. Being encouraging and positive, yet being willing to ask challenging questions in a friendly way are also important.
• Helps establish relationships: Is willing to include the new faculty member in various formal and informal activities and to help him/her establish new connections within and outside the university.
• Serves as an advocate for the new faculty member: Advocates on behalf of the new faculty member when needed (funds, space, committees, panels, etc.)
• Privacy: Keeps all discussions in confidence and provides supportive guidance and constructive criticism.

* Adapted from the Univ. of Rhode Island ADVANCE program: http://www.uri.edu/advance/MentorTutorial/Guidelines_for_mentors.html
Characteristics of a good mentor

• Helps the new faculty member set goals and stay on target: Grant proposals, paper submissions; Advice on criteria for promotion and tenure; Discuss the expectations in the various categories (scholarship, teaching, service) and what can realistically be done to work towards those expectations. Helps identify gaps in knowledge and skills, or helps find resources needed to accomplish aims.
• Knows his/her limits and realizes s/he can’t do it all: Knows when to refer the faculty member to someone else for a specific issue.
• Appreciates the multi-dimensional nature of mentoring: Willing/able to discuss issues of work-life balance, sensitive to cultural diversity and gender issues.
• Is not overbearing: Nurtures self-sufficiency and growth.
• A good sense of humor and enthusiasm also help!!

Characteristics of a good mentor

Responsibilities of New Faculty

• A mentoring relationship is a two-way street.
• You are in charge of establishing and maintaining mentoring relationships. If a mentoring relationship is not working, be sure to seek alternative relationships that are more helpful. It is OK!
• Maintain communication with your mentor and take the initiative to introduce yourself to other faculty. Alternatively, ask for an introduction from a colleague if you are uncomfortable introducing yourself. Develop your own network with other junior faculty.
• Be a good listener and have a positive attitude. Ask your mentor plenty of questions.
• Act on the advice of your mentor(s).
• Try to stay focused on your needs at each meeting (time is precious), but stay flexible.
• Keep track of your scholarly activities in research (grant proposals, papers, presentations, etc.), teaching and learning (for e.g., attendance at training workshops or use of new techniques in the classroom), and service or outreach.

Adapted from the Univ. of Rhode Island ADVANCE program: http://www.uri.edu/advance/MentorTutorial/Guidelines_for_mentorship
**Issues that can arise**

- Time challenges
- Mentor expects too much too soon and mentee feels pressure or guilt
- Mentee feels that mentor does not prioritize meetings
- Mentor feels burdened with responsibility for mentee’s success
- Finding the right balance of roles
- Little involvement or follow-up on the part of the administration
- Hidden agendas or biases
- Inappropriate behavior
- Not knowing how to end a mentoring relationship

**The benefits of positive mentoring experiences are huge!**

**So, what are your expectations?**

Please complete mentor or mentee survey to help us draft a positive STEM faculty mentoring program.

Thank you!
Any questions?

Thank you CETL for hosting this workshop!