Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

Junior Faculty Mentoring and Accountability Policy

Mentoring Arrangements and Responsibilities

The Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, in consultation with the mentee’s Department Chair, will assign each junior faculty member an official mentor whose expertise is either in the same area as that of the mentee or in a closely related field. In addition, the official mentor should possess both an interest in and the capacity for supervising the scholarly and research-related activities of the mentee. The Associate Dean and Department Chairs will generally monitor these mentoring arrangements, making certain that they are operating smoothly and effectively. It is also important that junior faculty seek and receive informal and complementary forms of mentoring, whether from mid-level and senior faculty in the Curry School or other schools, from Program Coordinators, or from their own peers. Although having multiple mentors can be beneficial for junior faculty, the possibility of receiving conflicting advice may arise. In such cases, the official mentor, in consultation with the Department Chair and the Associate Dean, should ensure that such differences are resolved to the satisfaction of the mentee.

Despite the best of intentions, some mentoring relationships may not work out satisfactorily – whether from the perspective of the mentee, the mentor, or both. An unfortunate situation of this kind could be attributable to any of a number of factors, including for example: incompatible approaches to scholarship or the designing and carrying out of empirical research (i.e., despite common interests in a given field); an inability to work well together on a personal level; unexpected changes in one or the other’s responsibilities, commitments, or research interests. In such cases, the mentee, the mentor, or both should seek advice and counsel from the Chair in consultation with the Associate Dean. If a change in mentors is to be made, this process should be carried out in a confidential and professional manner that minimizes if not avoids any ill will or concerns about the potential for reprisal – especially against the mentee.

Responsibilities of mentors. Official mentors are expected to supervise the scholarly and research-related activities of their mentees. Responsibilities include: meeting with the junior faculty member on a regular basis – at least the first two years; being accessible, and making time to read and review drafts of grant proposals and papers; offering advice, guidance, and constructive feedback in a professional and supportive manner; contributing to the development of a timeline and deliverables for one’s mentee (see details below); assisting the mentee in developing viable strategies for achieving his or her scholarly objectives; monitoring the mentee’s progress in achieving the agreed upon goals and providing periodic reviews of progress; consulting with the Department Chair and the Associate Dean periodically to ensure proper oversight and coordination of the mentoring process.

If a mentor believes that his or her mentee is not fulfilling their requisite obligations, then he or she should first discuss these matters with the mentee. If the issues or problems are not resolved to the satisfaction of the mentor, then he or she should consult with the Chair, and if necessary the Associate
Dean, to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to ameliorate the situation. Official mentors should also list the names of their mentees in their annual reports, and in addition, should delineate the ways in which they have mentored these individuals.

Finally, the responsibilities of official mentors should count toward service, and mentors should be awarded with travel funds or some other form of recompense from the Dean’s Office in recognition of the importance of such service.

Responsibilities of mentees. Junior faculty should prepare documentation of their research-related and scholarly plans and progress when meeting with their mentors as per the designated timelines and deliverables described below. If a mentee feels that his or her official mentor is not providing adequate oversight of and support for these documented research efforts, he or she should first discuss this with the mentor. If the issues or problems are not resolved to the satisfaction of the mentee, then he or she should consult with the Chair and Associate Dean to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to ameliorate the situation.

Accountability

Deliverables. Developing a timeline and deliverables for junior faculty should not only help them to plan and prioritize their research-related activities for the coming academic year, but should also assist mentors in directing their advisory efforts. Chairs, in consultations with official mentors, should establish a specific set of plans and deliverables from the outset, with checkpoints or mileposts throughout the academic year. Adhering to this course of action will create a record of progress that will permit evaluation and accountability. In line with indicators such as the Faculty Scholar Productivity Index (see http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/soc/pdfs/productivity.pdf), deliverables should at the very least include publications and evidence of applying for research funding. Although citations of journal publications as well as awards and honors are useful and excellent markers of successful achievement in research, these may not be imminent until a junior faculty member is about to be considered for promotion and tenure (see Curry 2009 P & T Policies and Procedures). Specific deliverables should include, but not necessarily be limited to, all of the following:

- **Grant Applications**: Evaluate whether these are in development, submitted, awarded, not awarded, or under revision. Take into account the number of such proposals, the amount of funding requested, and the level of student (graduate and undergraduate) involvement.

- **Journal manuscripts**: Assess whether these are in preparation, under review, in revision for resubmission, accepted, in press, or published. Consider both the number of manuscripts and the quality of the journal (i.e., peer-reviewed, impact factor, etc.).

- **Other publications (as appropriate for the mentee’s area of specialization), including**: books, book chapters, conference proceedings (abstract), technical reports, or online journal articles.

- **Conference presentations and posters**: Take into account the number as well as whether these were presented at international, national, regional, or local meetings.
The Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development will work with junior faculty members, their mentors and Chairs to provide the support needed to produce these deliverables. This support can come in the form of assistance in developing ideas for external funding; preparing grant proposals; reviewing drafts of manuscripts for submission to scholarly journals; finding statistical or other kinds of training opportunities, and if necessary, funding travel for such training; and providing seed money for conducting pilot research. Additionally, the Associate Dean will develop Research Roundtable/Brown Bag Lunch sessions focusing on relevant topics, such as: developing grant applications; managing a grant; multi-tasking with respect to research, teaching and service; etc.

**Timelines.** It should be noted that advancement toward producing the agreed upon deliverables cannot be completely linear, and that a variety of factors may influence a junior faculty member’s rate of progress. That being said, the use of checkpoints as a basis for making formative evaluations should ensure that the faculty member is: a) making reasonable progress, and b) not working on so many different things simultaneously that few of these would be likely to come to fruition. Chairs should work closely with mentors and Program Coordinators to make certain that individual timelines are reasonable and the goals achievable, given the required teaching and service responsibilities of junior faculty. If progress is not being made or if milestones are not being reached in a timely fashion, Chairs, mentors, and Program Coordinators, in consultation with the Associate Dean, should make necessary adjustments to ensure that junior faculty have every opportunity to produce the agreed upon deliverables in a timely fashion.

**Sample benchmarks:** a) the submission of at least two or three manuscripts to a refereed journal by the end of the first year; b) the submission of at least one grant proposal to an external funding agency by the end of the first year.