

FACULTY MENTORING

OVERVIEW

Faculty are integral to USC Aiken's mission to provide transformative teaching opportunities through high impact learning practices that encourage excellence in research and creative pursuits and prepares students to think critically and creatively.

Mentoring is a highly successful, adaptable, and practical set of strategies for supporting faculty members' success and satisfaction across their career here at USC Aiken. Not only has mentoring been shown to enhance teaching effectiveness (Fountain & Newcomer, 2016; Williams, 1991), it also contributes to increased research productivity (Byrne & Keefe, 2002). Mentoring also positively impacts faculty retention, recruitment, and general sense of workplace satisfaction.

Though mostly envisioned (and practiced) as a single, formalized, hierarchical relationship between a senior and a junior faculty member (Zellers, Howard, & Baric, 2008), there are, in fact, a handful of alternate mentoring models to choose from (Phillips & Dennison, 2015; Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007). Successful mentoring relationships – in whatever form they take – require the active and committed engagement of both the mentor and the mentee with both equally contributing to the mentoring process.¹

PROGRAM GOALS

The purpose of the faculty mentoring program at USC Aiken is to help new faculty – both tenure-track and instructors – adjust to life on campus. In conjunction with the assistance and advice from the dean and/or chair, a respected and valued mentor can ensure a successful start to one's career at USC Aiken. The mentor and the mentor network will collaboratively work to help new faculty acclimate to the institutional culture at USC Aiken, increase their understanding of and visibility in both the university and professional community, establish important relationships, set priorities, and, for tenure-track faculty, understand and get a “jump” on the tenure process. A successful relationship ultimately depends on a commitment to the mentoring process and a willingness to invest the time and energy necessary in that process.

UTILIZING A MENTORING NETWORK

In conjunction with departmental/unit-level mentoring, the establishment of a campus-wide network of mentors provides mentees with an array of diverse expertise that supports and extends the experience at the individual departmental/unit level.

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USC Aiken has established a mentoring network whereby faculty at all stages of professional development may seek both informal and more structured mentoring. The mentoring network will consist of:

- A department-designated mentor (selected by the dean or chair)
- Faculty Excellence Award Recipients (in Teaching, Research, Service, and Advisement)
- Quality Course Design Certificate (QCDC) Program Recipients

Please see below for a list of Network Mentors.

FACULTY EXCELLENCE NETWORK MENTORS

Teaching Mentors:

- Dr. Amanda Warren, Department of English
- Dr. Brian Parr, Department of Exercise and Sports Science

Scholarship/Creative Endeavors Mentors:

- Dr. Nathan Hancock, Department of Biology, Environmental and Earth Sciences
- Dr. Laura Swain, Department of Psychology

Advisement Mentors:

- Professor Jamie Craps, Department of Exercise and Sports Science
- Dr. Jason Munsell, Department of Communication and Emerging Media

Service Mentors:

- Dr. Tim Lintner, School of Education
- Dr. Matt Miller, Department of English

QUALITY ONLINE COURSE DESIGN CERTIFICATE MENTORS

- Professor Kate Channell, School of Business Administration
- Dr. Emily Nobles, School of Nursing
- Dr. Drew Geyer, Department of English
- Dr. Briana Aaron, School of Nursing

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DEAN OR DEPARTMENT/DIVISION CHAIR

As soon as the faculty appointment is made, the department/division chair or dean of the college or school assigns a faculty member to serve as mentor. This identified faculty member should

have the necessary skills and dispositions (and desire) to serve as an effective mentor. For new tenure-track faculty, the mentor should be a tenured faculty member. The dean or chair is responsible for advising new faculty on matters pertaining to academic reviews, including the promotion and tenure process. The dean or chair may also suggest possible structure (number of meetings, duration of meetings, outcomes) and substance (issues to cover). Deans or chairs have the flexibility to create, monitor, and adjust their mentoring program as needed based upon the needs of the mentee and the individual department/unit.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MENTORS

Before the new faculty member arrives on campus, the mentor should contact the new faculty member to welcome them to the University and to introduce themselves. Ideally, the mentor should meet with the new faculty member on a regular basis (at least monthly) over the first two years. This should be supplemented with regular “reach outs” to their assigned mentee. Such contact may come in the form of dropping by their office, impromptu meetings (over lunch or coffee), or via phone conversations or email exchanges.

The mentor’s role includes providing informal advice and guidance concerning teaching, research, and service. The mentor should also be able to direct the new faculty to appropriate University offices, services, and individuals. The mentor should respect the confidentiality of all exchanges and interactions with the mentee. While the mentor may provide constructive criticism, it is important to remember that the mentor does not assess or evaluate the new faculty member. The mentor’s role is solely to provide support and guidance.

Mentors can take on various roles, such as coach, friend, champion, advocate, career guide, role model, instructional resource, or confidant depending on the needs of their new faculty and the nature of their mentoring relationship. Sharing knowledge and experience with formal institutional processes as well as informal networks can provide a valuable orientation to new faculty members and can aid with retention and success of new faculty.

MENTORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Taking the initiative for contacting their mentees and staying in regular touch with them.
- Devoting time to the relationship and be available when requested.
- Assisting new faculty with their various questions, needs, or concerns.
- Sharing their knowledge and experience.
- Maintaining confidentiality (Source: Northern Illinois University).

MENTOR GOALS

Short-term goals

- Familiarization: Assist new faculty with “navigating” the campus, in terms of both physical navigation (buildings, offices, services) as well as system navigation (USC Columbia).

- Networking: Guide new faculty in establishing a professional network both on and off campus.
- Policy awareness: Help new faculty understand policies, procedures, and practices pertinent to USC Aiken and to the mentee's individual department.
- Prioritization: Work with new faculty on balancing teaching, research, and service expectations.

Long-term goals

- Develop visibility and prominence within the mentee's department, across campus, and within the profession.
- Achieve career advancement (Source: UC Davis).

TIPS FOR MENTORS

- Consider exchanging your CV with your mentee. This will help to stimulate discussion about opportunities and expectations.
- Tap into your knowledge and experience to help leverage the strengths and aspirations of new faculty.
- Be in contact with your mentee at least twice monthly for their first two years at USC Aiken. This can be done by dropping by their office, going out to lunch, phone calls, or emails.
- Assist new faculty in understanding and preparing for their annual review. Ask to preview the review prior to it being submitted to the dean or chair.
- Aid new faculty in exploring the institutional and departmental/school culture (i.e. What is valued? What is rewarded?)
- Share knowledge of important university and professional events that should be attended.
- Encourage your mentee to contact you, or any member within the mentoring network, with questions or issues that may arise.
- Be sure to remind your mentee that it is always best to collect and ultimately weigh advice from multiple sources (other mentors within the network, the dean and/or chair, support staff).
- Assure that confidences are respected and kept.
- Be honest. Don't be afraid to end your mentoring relationship if changing professional or personal circumstances limit your availability and effectiveness as a mentor, if your mentee's needs change dramatically, or if you find you are ill-matched. If necessary, your department chair or dean or the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (AVCAA) can arrange a new mentor for your mentee.
- Remain available if your mentee seeks your council in the future. (Source: UW-Madison)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NEW FACULTY

MENTEES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Devoting ample time to foster and support the mentoring relationship.
- Interacting with the mentor(s) frequently.
- Making use of the opportunities and resources provided by the mentor(s).
- Keeping the mentor(s) informed of academic progress, difficulties, and concerns (Source: Northern Illinois University).

TIPS FOR MENTEES

- Make your scheduled meetings with your mentor(s) a priority. Stay in touch informally via email or phone.
- Be willing to ask for help. The primary goal of all mentors in the network is to assist you.
- Let your department chair, dean or the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs know if you have questions or concerns about the mentoring program itself.
- Begin networking with colleagues both inside and outside of your department.
- Become familiar with the resources available to support and strengthen your teaching, research, and service.

SUGGESTED MENTORING ACTIVITIES

- Discuss short -and long-term career goals and professional interests.
- Invite to and attend workshops or other faculty development programs and events.
- Share information on academic and student support services on campus.
- Discuss effective instructional techniques, course development, and curricular issues.
- Explore research and sponsored funding opportunities.
- Discuss academic policies and guidelines and the university governance structure.
- Share information on instructional resources useful to new faculty.
- Discuss student issues such as advising, motivating, and handling issues of academic dishonesty.
- Share experiences on managing time, handling stress, and balancing workload effectively.
- Discuss preparing for tenure and promotion and career advancement. (Source: University of Northern Illinois).

SUGGESTED TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- How is the new faculty member's department organized? (Divisions, Committees?)
- How are decisions made both at the departmental and campus level? What are the opportunities for new faculty involvement, both departmentally and across campus?
- What supplies and expenses are covered by your department? By your school? Are there other resources available to cover expenses related to teaching and research?

TEACHING

- What are you expected to teach? Graduate, undergraduate, seminar, lecture, practicum, recitation, special topic, service courses? Are some types of teaching more valued (graduate v undergraduate; online v in-person?) How much flexibility is there in what, when, where, and how (deliver mode) of teaching? Who controls the schedule?
- Is it good to teach the same course each semester? Or should you teach an array of courses?
- Is it good to develop new courses? Specialized courses in your research area?
- How can you use a special topics course to get a new research project off the ground?
- How much time should you spend on your course preparation? Where's the line between sufficient preparation and over-preparation?
- Are there departmental/school standards for grading? What degree of freedom do you have in determining course content? Does your department expect midterm and final exams?
- How are you evaluated on teaching? What importance is placed on peer observation of your teaching? On student evaluations? If senior faculty do observe your classes, who asks them to come? To whom do they report, and in what way? What resources are there for improving your teaching?
- What kinds of peer review of teaching should I expect?
- Are there other teaching and learning resources I should explore?
- If a classroom problem arises you aren't sure how to handle, what are your options for seeking advice, help?
- What documentation related to teaching should you keep? Syllabi? Exams? Student evaluations?

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

- What conferences should new faculty consider attending? How much travel is allowed/expected/supported? How do you choose between large conferences and smaller events? What can you do at professional gatherings to gain the type of exposure that can lead to good contacts, and potential names of tenure-file reviewers?
- Where should you publish? What are the leading journals in the field? What should you publish? How much/how often? What are your department/school's expectations regarding publication before tenure and promotion? How do journal/chapters in edited collections/conferences compare? How much "new" work is necessary to make something a "new" publication? Where should your publishing energy go: is a single-author book always preferable to an edited collection? May published material be submitted elsewhere? When is it time to worry if you haven't published?
- Is collaborative work encouraged or discouraged in your department/school/fields? With other members of your department? With international colleagues? With colleagues who are senior/more established? With other junior faculty/graduate students? Long-standing collaborations, or single efforts? How important is it to have some (or all) single-author papers to your credit or papers with multiple authors in which you are first author or senior author?

- What do you see as your research "niche" in your department, in your area of research? What does your chair see your area of research contributing to the department, eventually to the school?
- How do I gain a spot on the program at academic colloquia, symposiums, and conferences?
- How do people in my field find out about, get nominated for and win assistantships, fellowships, grants, awards, and prizes?

SERVICE

- How much committee work should you expect to perform within your department? School? University? What committees should you push to serve on? Are there any you should avoid pre-tenure? How much time should you expect to devote to committees and other forms of service as a new faculty member?
- What organizations should I join?
- Who sits on relevant committees?
- How important is professional service outside of the university? How much paper and proposal reviewing is reasonable? Review boards? Journal assistant editorships?

REVIEW PROCESS

- Are there informal as well as formal criteria for promotion and tenure?
- Who can help clarify my department's expectations?
- When, and how, do you start building a tenure file?
- How long is your appointment? When will you come up for review? What sort of reviews? How is a third-year review, for example, different from the tenure review?
- What is the process? (What do you submit for review? When? How do you hear the results? How are the reviewers selected? Do you have a role in that process?)
- If you are responsible for submitting your own list of potential outside reviewers, how do you go about assembling such a list? What kind of reviewers should you try for? Are international and domestic reviewers regarded equally? How much prior contact with a potential reviewer makes them unsuitable for your list? (Is having been on a panel together acceptable, but not a professional friendship?)
- What information is important in your vita? Is there any activity too trivial to include? Should you send copies of congratulatory letters to your department chair, or simply retain them for your file?
- How can you get feedback on how you're doing at any point in your pre-tenure career?

PERSONAL ISSUES

- What are appropriate and accepted ways to raise different kinds of concerns, issues, and problems?
- What policies does USC Aiken have for family and personal leave? How do you go about asking for such leave? Do you begin at the department level? Is there an appeals process if your request is denied?
- What programs/assistance does the university provide for childcare?

- How visible must one be in the department? Is it expected that you'll be physically present on campus each day? Is it acceptable to work at home?
- What concerns/issues does the university's Employee Assistance Program deal with?
- What are the university's sexual harassment policies?
- If you're involved in a controversy or dispute, where do you go for help? (Source: Emory University and UW-Madison)

SUMMARY of Mentor Support

The following mentor opportunities are available to new faculty:

Department-designated mentor (selected by the dean or chair): This mentor will initiate contact with you and will meet with you throughout the year.

Faculty Excellence Network Mentors: These former award recipients in Teaching, Research, Service, and Advisement will present workshops and welcome questions from new faculty about succeeding in these areas at USCA.

Quality Course Design Certificate (QCDC) Mentors: These recipients of the QCDC have successfully completed USCA's online course design program. They welcome questions from new faculty.

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RESOURCES

[Faculty Mentoring Best Practices \(UMASS Amherst\)](#)

[Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Mentoring \(Columbia University\)](#)

[Resources on Faculty Mentoring \(University of Michigan\)](#)

[Faculty Mentoring Resources \(University of Kentucky\)](#)

[Mentoring Resources \(UC San Francisco\)](#)