2.3 Checklist: Developing a Faculty Mentoring Program

PHASE 1: UNIT ASSESSMENT
The most effective mentoring programs are grounded in the needs of the unit and can be supported by available resources. Therefore, it is critical to conduct a systematic needs/resources assessment versus making decisions based on limited perspectives and assumptions. An assessment uncovers what is most important to faculty members, current resources to address mentoring needs, and gaps in resources. Assessments can be conducted in multiple ways such as interviews, public forums, online/hard-copy surveys, review of archival records/data, and observations. Check “How to carry out a needs assessment survey.” Use the following checklist to guide the whole process. It will help assure your program is aligned with University policy.

- **First Things First: A Planning Meeting**
  The first step is having a mentoring program planning meeting with major stakeholders who have an interest in, can inform and make decisions about a mentoring program (e.g. FAC chair, administrators, faculty representing different career stages). Appoint someone to oversee the design/planning phase.

- **Assess Existing Programming and Alignment with University Mentor Policy**
  Does a unit mentoring program exist? *If yes*, use the following checklist to determine if it addresses all principles in the university mentor policy. *If no*, use the checklist for planning purposes.
  What processes already exist that can serve as a program foundation?
  
  - At minimum, every pre-tenure faculty member has access to a formal mentor.
  - Mentoring needs at different career stages are taken into consideration.
  - Faculty members with joint appointments are ensured one plan, coordinated between units, led by primary unit.
  - Potentially different challenges faced by diverse faculty including women, persons of color and other facets of identity are addressed.
  - Policies/procedures are in place to minimize conflicts of interest and protect confidentiality.
  - Faculty members can choose whether or not to have a mentor.
  - Mentoring policies, expectations and roles are clearly communicated to all faculty.
  - Formal mentoring is considered in the annual review of mentors.
Collect Additional Data
___ Assess the mentoring needs of faculty members and resources in the unit using interviews, focus groups, surveys, and observation. What do people want and need?
___ Determine what resources exist that can support a mentoring program.
___ Learn about the range of mentoring models - See Mentor Models handout.

Create a Timeline for Program Development Planning
___ Take into account planning meetings, needs assessment, data collection/analyses, implementation, and evaluation.
___ Program plan accounts for time to gain the buy-in of faculty.
___ Consider summer schedules.
PHASE 2: Designing Your Program
The following are examples of key program elements and decisions you might make for each element.

- **Determine Program Goals (both unit- and mentor/mentee-level)**
  
  Examples:
  - To provide support for new faculty
  - Clarify expectations for promotion and tenure
  - Increase retention
  - Increase productivity (e.g., number of publications, grants submitted/funded, etc.)
  - Tenure for early career faculty
  - Sustain vitality and productivity of senior faculty
  - Build community, collegiality, positive climate
  - Promote acculturation to values and needs of the department, college and institution
  - Assist faculty in balancing teaching, research, service, department politics
  - Provide a “safe” venue in which to discuss concerns

- **Determine Specific Measurable Outcomes for Each Program Goal**
  
  Examples:
  - All tenure track faculty will obtain tenure
  - Unit publications will double
  - Mentee satisfaction surveys will be completed by all mentees
  - Mentoring is provided by senior faculty from different departments

- **Determine Desired Program Design Elements that Meet Needs and Goals**
  
  Examples:
  - For whom (e.g., pre-tenure only, all faculty, mid-career faculty, etc.)
  - By whom (e.g., internal or external mentors)
  - Mentor criteria (e.g., expertise in research and/or teaching, grant funded, etc.)
  - Opt in/out policy (e.g., written, clear, form used for faculty to opt out)
  - Selection/assignment process (e.g., by chair, mentor coordinator, mentor, committee)
  - Mentor model (See Section 1.3) (e.g., mentor/mentee dyad, committee)
  - Role of mentor in review process (e.g., should mentors be tenure champions? Should they recuse themselves from tenure decisions about their mentee?)
Confidentiality guidelines (See Section 1.4)
Duration of relationships (e.g., one year, until tenure is earned, etc.)
Termination policies
Training/orientation
(e.g., for mentors/mentees, initial/ongoing)
Rewards/recognition (See Section 2.5)
Evaluation plans
(e.g., needs assessment, ongoing monitoring to determine if mentoring is taking place [performance measures], and outcome measures)
Overview/oversight plan

- **Determine Budget and Resources**
  - Program Coordinator
  - Clerical support
  - Honoraria for Mentors
  - Other incentives/rewards
  - Training materials
  - Food and events
  - Guest speakers
  - Supplies/copying
  - External Evaluator

- **Determine Evaluation Plan and Protocols**
  Evaluation is meant to help measure success at both formative and summative stages. Formative evaluation assists in creating the best possible program by assessing components of structure and process throughout the life of the program for continuous quality improvement. Summative evaluation assesses the impact of the program on desired goals. Below are some basic steps to guide evaluation planning and delivery.

  - Identify WHY you would be most interested in evaluating your program. WHY is it important for you to know whether your mentoring program works or not? For example:
    - We need to do a better job of retaining women faculty.
    - We need faculty to be more successful at obtaining funding.
    - We want faculty to be satisfied with their job in this unit/department.
  - Use your program goals and objectives to guide your evaluation.
Identify measurable indicators of change for each program objective. How will you know whether your program is working? What are indications of program success? (See Section 2.6)

Examples:

- If short-term goals are focused on mentee satisfaction, then mentee level of satisfaction with the program would be an indicator of success and would need to be tracked.

- If a long-term goal is to have every new faculty member obtain tenure status in the next 5 years, then an indicator would be overall success rates. A short-term goal of progress toward tenure could be measured by identifying benchmarks that need to be completed within an agreed upon timeframe. These indicators could be assessed each year through the annual review process.

Collect data on each indicator. It may be that needed data are already being collected such as in annual review letters and committee meeting minutes. Using existing records will reduce workload and increase the chances of evaluation becoming embedded in standard practice. Otherwise, ways in which to collect data will need to be determined. For example, if you determine that the length of the mentor/mentee relationship indicates program success, then track pairs, the length of time they work together, and reasons for ending the relationship. If mentee satisfaction indicates success then conduct mentor satisfaction surveys regularly. Anonymous, open-ended surveys may be most informative. Data can also be collected through focus groups, interviews, reports, etc.

Use results to adjust the program as necessary to meet goals. Findings of data analyses will help identify strengths and weaknesses and where to target improvements. For example, if mentee satisfaction surveys indicate that mentees feel they can’t switch mentors without negative personal or professional consequences, consider establishing a process by which “no fault” changes can be made. For more immediate feedback, consider a confidential, anonymous way for faculty to provide feedback (e.g., a suggestion box, feedback to FEAs).

For more ideas about how to use results to adjust programs to meet goals, see:

**PHASE 3: Program Implementation**
The following is a general framework for implementation and evaluation:

- Inform administrators and faculty about the program
- Identify mentors
- Train mentors
- Invite mentees to participate
- Provide orientation program for mentors and mentees
- Provide venues for mentor-mentee relationships to develop
- Provide ongoing support and communication with mentors and mentees
- Provide events for mentors and mentees based on the program model
- Evaluate and report outcomes to key constituencies
- Modify model as appropriate

**PHASE 4: Evaluation**
Evaluation is important because it helps you understand whether your mentoring program is working. Good practice involves continuous formative and summative evaluation. Follow the evaluation plan that was established during the program planning phase (Phase 2). The Michigan State University Faculty Mentoring Policy requires that colleges assess the effectiveness of their mentoring programs on a cycle not to exceed five years.