

Faculty Mentoring

The College of Engineering believes that effective mentoring is important to the professional development and advancement of new faculty members. Traditionally, departmental chairpersons have provided mentoring through articulation of expectations and performance reviews. However, other responsibilities inherent in the faculty-chairperson relationship may interfere with the open and frequent communication needed for effective mentoring.

The College of Engineering therefore recommends that each department develop a formal process by which new tenure-track faculty will be mentored by one or more senior faculty members, other than the chairperson. The mentor(s) should provide independent advice, active support, and timely information across all areas of professional activity—research, teaching, and service.

The College of Engineering recommends that each department explicitly document its mentoring program, indicating how mentors will be assigned and what their responsibilities will be. A mentor should be familiar with both the new faculty member's professional sphere and the performance standards likely to yield favorable action from evaluation committees. Mentors are expected to commit at least two years to the effort, which should be reported annually as a service activity and appropriately recognized by the department and college. Formal assignment of a mentor to a faculty member should not discourage other faculty members from also offering professional advice. However, all mentoring discussions should be considered privileged.

Conversation regarding suitable mentors should begin at the time of hire, and the mentoring process should begin soon thereafter. While mentoring activities are expected to vary, mentors should be available to meet frequently with the candidate and assist in the following ways:

- Serve as a collegial confidant and, upon request, as a liaison to administrators
- Clarify department and college expectations for promotion and tenure, and discuss strategies for success in evaluation processes;
- Encourage submission of proposals and papers, and help critique drafts
- Advise on development of new research collaborations
- Advise on recruitment and retention of graduate students
- Assist with procedural details of laboratory and infrastructure development
- Offer suggestions on course preparation, classroom delivery, examinations, TAs, and grading
- Help identify appropriate service activities and other professional opportunities
- Advise on optimal time allocation across research, teaching, and service missions
- Provide periodic, off-the-record reviews of professional progress