



## Frequently Asked Questions about the MSU Mentoring Policy

The following questions and answers are offered to help clarify the Michigan State University Faculty Mentoring Policy. For more information or to submit additional questions, please contact ADAPP-ADVANCE at [adapp@msu.edu](mailto:adapp@msu.edu), 353-8818, or [www.adapp-advance.msu.edu](http://www.adapp-advance.msu.edu).

***Q: Why does Michigan State University have a University-wide Faculty Mentoring Policy?***

A: Evidence clearly shows that formal mentoring based on best practices makes a positive difference in achieving career success. This policy sends a clear message that Michigan State University is committed to every tenure system faculty member having access to formal mentoring as a tool to advance their academic career.

***Q: When is the University Mentor Policy effective?***

A: Every college is required to have a formal faculty mentoring program by 8/15/2011.

***Q: What constitutes a formal, college-level mentoring “program”?***

A: A formal mentoring program intentionally ensures that every faculty member has access to formal mentoring relationships and resources. It is written, based on best practices, incorporates the principles of the MSU policy, and is explicitly communicated to all faculty. In addition to formal mentoring relationships, the college “program” can include an array of other college led resources such as workshops, speakers, mentor recognition, mentor/mentee social events, and evaluation. Check ADAPP website for handouts on best practices at college/unit level for leaders, and designing effective mentoring programs.

***Q: Will every department be required to have a formal policy and/or program?***

A: This is up to the individual college. Colleges may opt to administer formal mentoring relationships at the college-level or require that each department or school develop a program, with college oversight.

***Q: What is formal mentoring?***

A: Formal mentoring is when one or more mentors are intentionally assigned to a mentee and assume responsibility for facilitating the professional development of the mentee through activities such as providing information, advice, encouragement, and connections to other mentors, colleagues and professional networks. It is voluntary and can result in a two-way, mutually beneficial relationship. No one mentor can fulfill all of a mentee’s needs. Mentees have a responsibility to maximize and build on the mentor/mentee relationship with other mentors and career development activities. Check the ADAPP website for handouts on mentor models, the role of mentors and a sample of typical mentor behaviors.

***Q: Will every faculty member be required to have a mentor?***

A: The policy explicitly states that a faculty member may choose not to participate in the formal mentoring program. College programs should, therefore, include language specifying that faculty members can opt out with no penalties. The unit policy should also specify that faculty members who opt out can join/rejoin the mentor program at a later date upon request. It is recommended that there be a process in place by which faculty members

designate in writing their decision to opt out. Related to this, the policy should allow the mentee to change mentors without penalty.

***Q: Will specific mentoring models be mandated for colleges, units, or individuals?***

A: On the contrary, beyond the nine principles outlined in the policy, the policy intentionally provides flexibility for colleges/units to choose mentor program models that best meet the needs of their faculty, and faculty are encouraged to build on these models for maximum benefit. Many mentoring models now exist in addition to the traditional single mentor/mentee dyad. The intent is that colleges and departments should choose models that provide the highest likelihood for individual career development. Check the ADAPP website for a list of mentor models.

***Q: What is the best model of mentoring to use?***

A: The traditional model is the mentor/mentee dyad with the mentor being either from within or outside the unit. However, current wisdom suggests that it is much more productive to have multiple mentors. Mentors and mentees are both encouraged to build on and supplement a primary mentoring relationship with other mentors [formal and/or informal] and career development activities. The model chosen depends on the needs and resources of the individual faculty member, unit and college. The first step is to conduct an assessment of existing needs, resources, and challenges at the unit or mentor/mentee level. The ADAPP-Advance team and the Office of Faculty & Organizational Development can provide guidance and tools on how to go through this process. In addition, each college has a college-appointed Faculty Excellence Advocate (FEA). The FEAs are available as a resource for information related to the ADAPP-Advance goals including mentoring. Check ADAPP website for needs assessment instruments.

***Q: How should mentoring programs address faculty members with joint appointments?***

A: For faculty members with joint appointments, there should be one mentoring plan for the faculty member, coordinated among the units, with leadership from the faculty member's lead unit. Each unit should address joint appointments in their respective mentoring policies. For example, the policy may state that unit leaders from participating departments will determine, in consultation with the faculty member, a mentoring plan that best meets the faculty member's needs. The plan may follow the model of one department or the other, be a hybrid, or be highly individualized. It should be written, and include clear expectations for all parties and leadership.

***Q: Are colleges expected to provide a mentoring program for all faculty members or only for pre-tenure, tenure system faculty members?***

A: Faculty members need different kinds of mentoring at different stages of their career. Initially, at minimum, colleges are expected to provide a mentoring program for pre-tenure, tenure system faculty, and build upon the program as capacity allows. Ideally, mentoring programs should be available for mid-level and senior faculty members, HP faculty, and fixed term faculty for whom there is a long-term commitment.

***Q: How can colleges and units demonstrate sensitivity to potentially different challenges faced by diverse faculty including women, persons of color, and other facets of identity?***

A: Administrators and mentors first need to have appreciation for the potential, unique challenges faced by diverse faculty and of their own biases, both conscious and unconscious. Michigan State University provides seminars on bias that offer the opportunity to raise

awareness. Second, the college/unit should proactively build a culture of appreciation for diversity. For example, ensure that the pool of people being considered for hiring, promotions and key assignments is diverse and reflects the diversity in the unit. Careful consideration should be given to the choice of a mentor as it should be someone who understands the potential challenges and can serve in a developmental role. The mentor can help overcome challenges in many ways including being willing to openly discuss them to avoid “protective hesitation”; encouraging assignments that build competence, trust, and confidence; acknowledging achievements, publicly when possible; proactively helping their mentee build a large, heterogeneous professional and mentor network that reflects diversity in demographics, expertise, and roles; observing for signs of unfair criticism, scrutiny, assignments or other harmful treatment, both explicit and subtle undertones of bias; be willing to challenge it; and help focus discussions on actual performance.

***Q: Should mentors also serve on their mentees’ review committees?***

A: Ideally, mentors would not serve on their mentee’s review committee. However, in cases where this is unavoidable, the mentee should be clearly informed of the mentor’s dual role. The extent to which the mentor will be reporting to the committee should be discussed and clarified at the first mentor/mentee meeting. This will guide the nature of the mentor’s and mentee’s roles within their relationship. Check ADAPP website for handouts on alternate mentor models, confidentiality, and negotiating mutual expectations and roles.

***Q: How can conflicts of interest be minimized, confidentiality protected, and all faculty members provided an environment in which they can feel safe and address concerns without fear of retribution?***

A: It is important that mentor’s/mentee’s roles are agreed upon and clearly stated at the outset of the relationship. Conflicts of interest and confidentiality should be openly discussed. If possible, it is recommended that a mentee have multiple formal mentors for different roles, with at least one that doesn’t serve on the review committee. Many mentoring models now exist in addition to a traditional single mentor/mentee dyad. One mentor may be external to the department, college, even university and would therefore not have a conflict of interest. One may be assigned to help advance teaching skills, another for research skills. Mentees should build upon their formal mentor(s), establish a “mentoring network” and draw upon the different strengths of each. In addition, a procedure should be in place by which a mentee can change mentors without penalty. Check ADAPP website for handouts on alternate mentor models, confidentiality, and negotiating mutual expectations and roles.

***Q: What incentives are there for senior faculty members to serve as mentors?***

A: Mentoring early career faculty is expected as an important role for all tenure system faculty members. In recognition of the significant time required to provide good, formal mentoring, the University Mentoring Policy clearly states that, at minimum, mentoring excellence will be considered in the annual review of faculty. In addition, colleges/units are encouraged to provide other incentives for excellence such as mentoring awards, special events, release time, and news write-ups. Check ADAPP website for incentive ideas.

***Q: Do formal mentors need to be trained?***

A: It is recommended that formal mentors, even experienced ones, go through an initial orientation which can be provided at the unit, college, or university level. The University Office of Faculty Organization & Development (F&OD) offers seminars related to best

mentoring practices. Formal mentors should be encouraged to attend additional workshops to improve mentoring skills and network with other mentors.

***Q: How will mentoring programs be evaluated or assessed for effectiveness?***

A: As the policy states, formative evaluation should be incorporated into the design of college and/or unit-level programs to be able to track performance, quality and outcomes. More broadly, colleges should formally assess the mentoring program(s) in five-year cycles, at minimum. Evaluations should map to the college/unit mentoring plan and goals. There will be administration level goals such as establishing a program and measures of academic productivity and then there will be mentor/mentee level goals such as the perceived value of the relationship. Specific evaluation strategies and tools should be chosen based on the level of evaluation, set of goals, and mentoring model. ADAPP-ADVANCE team members and the Office of Faculty and Organizational Development are available to help colleges/units decide on assessment strategies that are relevant to their program.

***Q: Will colleges be held accountable at the University level for their mentoring programs and if so, how?***

A: Colleges will be asked to report on their mentoring programs to the Office of the Provost. Other ways in which the University can help track the existence and quality of mentoring programs in all colleges are currently under discussion.

***Q: How can colleges ensure that mentoring policies, expectations and roles are clearly communicated to all faculty members?***

A: Multiple communication strategies should be used on an ongoing basis and should emanate from the dean, chairs, directors, and mentors. In addition, each college has a college-appointed Faculty Excellence Advocate (FEA). One of the FEA's roles is to communicate with administration and faculty on a regular basis and serve as a conduit and resource for information related to ADAPP-Advance goals. FEA's and their contact information should be clearly identified. They will be proactively engaged in working with units and faculty. The college policy/program should be clearly stated in the college handbook. Regularly scheduled meetings, faculty orientation, special events, newsletters, television monitors, annual reports, and news publications are all good venues for disseminating information.

***Q: What resources exist to assist colleges/units in developing formal mentor programs?***

A: Mentoring workshops have already been presented, and will continue to be offered. An online Faculty Mentor Resource Center has been launched where tools can be found to help colleges as they establish programs and mentors/mentees as they build relationships. Many more resources will be added to the site, including a Mentor Toolkit, so please check it regularly for updates. <http://www.adapp-advance.msu.edu/faculty-mentoring-resource-center>. College-appointed Faculty Excellence Advocates [FEA] are available to answer questions and assist colleges and faculty. The ADAPP grant team can provide consultations. The MSU Office of Faculty and Organizational Development also provides consulting and has comprehensive resources to support mentoring: <http://fod.msu.edu/index.html> and <http://fod.msu.edu/LeadershipResources/mentoring/index.asp>

For more information about the mentor policy, current or planned resources, or consulting services, contact your FEA, or contact ADAPP-ADVANCE at [adapp@msu.edu](mailto:adapp@msu.edu), 353-8818, or [www.adapp-advance.msu.edu](http://www.adapp-advance.msu.edu).