

**CENTER FOR INNOVATION
IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH**

**NEW FACULTY
MENTOR PROGRAM**



**WESTERN
ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY**

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NEW FACULTY MENTOR PROGRAM

WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring can best be defined as a one-one relationship designed to nurture personal and professional growth. It is a flexible and dynamic relationship that focuses on and adjusts to the unique needs and concerns of the new faculty member as he/she acclimates to a new job role and environment. While orientation, training, and direct coaching from the department chair play a critical role in helping new faculty achieve early success in their faculty roles, the mentoring relationship supplies an equally critical safe channel for questions, explorations, informed guidance, and in some cases stress-relief and social support. The mentor is the friendly face in a sea of new people, processes, rules, and norms.

WHY FORMALIZE A MENTORING PROGRAM?

Research has shown that mentored faculty experience higher levels of job satisfaction, better student evaluations, greater academic productivity, and a stronger likelihood of remaining at the new institution. While mentoring relationships can occur naturally, and while some faculty prefer to seek out mentors on their own, research also shows that the most successful programs provide the initial matching of mentors with new faculty and supports each pairing in defining the extent and objectives of the mentor relationship.

The *New Faculty Mentor Program* at Western Illinois University is designed with this in mind. Mentors in the program are experienced faculty members who volunteer to be matched with an incoming faculty member. Support is provided to mentors and new faculty, but the specific objectives of the relationship are defined by the needs of the participating members. Shared expectations are documented on the Mentor-Faculty Agreement. Networking events that support the mentor relationship are scheduled periodically by the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research. In addition, CITR will monitor the success of the program through the Mentor and New Faculty Feedback Forms.

IDENTIFYING MENTORS AND DEPARTMENT CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research (CITR) maintains a directory of experienced faculty members who have been recommended by Departments or who have volunteered to serve as mentors. In consultation with Department Chairs, CITR assigns a faculty mentor to each newly-hired faculty member. For new faculty appointed as Associate Professor or Professor, assignment of a mentor can be less critical, but highly encouraged to serve as a means of familiarizing the new faculty member to WIU culture. *Faculty mentors will not be from the same discipline in order to avoid linking a new faculty with a future tenure/promotion committee member.*



The Chair is still responsible for the formal advising of new faculty on matters pertaining to academic reviews and advancement. As the mentor may also be asked to provide informal advice, it is also the chair's responsibility to see that mentors have current information on WIU's academic personnel process.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To facilitate exchanges between new faculty and experienced members of the WIU and Macomb communities.
- To benefit the new faculty member and the University by enhancing productivity, encouraging collaboration, and facilitating personal and professional growth.

SUGGESTED MENTOR RELATIONSHIP OBJECTIVES

- To provide a resource for questions and concerns of the new faculty member as he/she becomes acquainted with WIU and the surrounding community.
- To assist new faculty in becoming familiar with the range of WIU academic offices and services.
- To support new faculty in preparing for faculty roles, with emphasis on teaching and classroom management.
- To help new faculty interact effectively with the diverse students who attend WIU.
- To share perspectives with new faculty regarding career, service, and research opportunities at WIU.
- To familiarize new faculty with the culture, norms, and social opportunities of WIU, Macomb and surrounding communities.
- To facilitate the introduction of new faculty to others across campus in order to establish a network that will provide collaborative opportunities.

THE MENTORING PROCESS

In general, the mentoring relationship will change as it moves through the stages of the mentoring process. Further, the mentor and the new faculty member will approach the mentoring relationship with a distinct set of expectations, concerns, and needs. As such, it is important to open communication channels early and to discuss expectations as part of the first or second meeting.

Following are some suggested guidelines for building an effective mentoring relationship through each of these stages:

Introduction and Initial Networking

- Focus on getting to know each others' interests, backgrounds and experiences.
- Identify common interests.
- Discuss the importance of trust and confidentiality in the mentoring relationship.
- Reaffirm the goals of the mentoring program.
- Schedule a first meeting, phone conference or other mentored event within the first 2 weeks after the initial networking.

The Mentor-Faculty Agreement

- Discuss what each person's expectations and hopes are for the mentoring relationship.
- Discuss the availability of the mentor and boundaries for the mentoring relationship.
- Discuss the preferred channels of communication (e.g., meeting, email, phone) and the schedules/commitments of each participant.
- Commit to the confidentiality of the mentoring relationship.
- Commit to the supportive and safe nature of the mentoring relationship.

The First Meeting

- Gauge the length, location, and type of meeting against the needs and interests of the new faculty member. You may wish to keep the first meeting short and light.
- Keep the communication balanced between listening and advising. Avoid letting the mentor dominate the discussion with too much prepared and sage advice.
- Continue to build trust in the mentoring relationship.
- Discuss and schedule the next meeting or mentored event.

Clarify Specific Needs, Objectives and Expectations

- Within the first 1-2 meetings, make an effort to discuss and document the specific needs, interests, and concerns of the new faculty member.
- Brainstorm specific objectives and events that could be addressed by the mentoring relationship.
- Identify and facilitate participation in at least one “anchor” activity at WIU that might be in tune with the new faculty member’s personal or professional interests.
- Identify key resources, tools, and materials that may support the new faculty member in reaching stated objectives.

Monitor the Mentoring Relationship

- Establish a means for keeping communication channels open.
- Discuss and identify a schedule for ongoing contact and meetings.
- Check in with new faculty periodically (e.g., once every two weeks) to determine if there are new needs, expectations, or objectives.
- Provide feedback to mentors and/or to CITR regarding the success of the program.
- Identify and share ideas with CITR for ongoing networking events and activities that can support the mentoring relationship.

Duration and Exit

- The New Faculty Member Program mentoring relationship is expected to last for one year and may or may not continue after that depending on the participants in the mentoring relationship.
- If for some reason the relationship is not functioning as expected, CITR should be contacted in order for an adjustment to be made.

THE MENTOR'S ROLE

The following factors define the essence of the mentor role:

- **Be available**....schedule opportunities to meet, communicate and collaborate.
- **Listen**...be a sounding board; empathize; zero in on specific interests and concerns.
- **Facilitate**...tap in to your experience; lead the way; help locate a resource or solution.

In practice, the Mentor's role will vary depending upon the unique needs and concerns of the new faculty member and could include any of the following:

- **Sounding Board**...listening to and supporting creative ideas and suggestions.
- **Resource**...leading the new faculty member to information or the person with the answer.
- **Advisor**...offering your opinion or advice on a real or hypothetical problem.
- **Guide**...helping to navigate the maze of buildings and offices.
- **Interpreter**...deciphering policies, contracts, campus acronyms and "codes."
- **Reviewer**...providing feedback on a proposal, paper, or handout.
- **Role Model**...sharing your teaching and research practices, tips and techniques.
- **Advocate**...facilitating the new faculty's social and professional network.

EXPECTATIONS OF MENTORS IN THE NEW FACULTY MENTOR PROGRAM

- Maintain regular and frequent contact with the new faculty. We suggest a minimum of three contacts per semester, and at least one of those should be a face-to-face exchange.
- The content of all exchanges with the new faculty member are subject to the expectations of *professional confidentiality*. Although this confidentiality is legally limited, subjects discussed as part of the mentoring relationship should NOT be shared with others without written permission from the new faculty member.
- The mentor is NOT expected to formally evaluate the new faculty member or his/her work; rather, the mentor may help the new faculty identify and interpret feedback on his or her performance. Strive to avoid judgmental and evaluative comments.
- Mentors are expected to conduct an annual review of the mentoring relationship, and to report on the mentoring activities to the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research.



THE NEW FACULTY MEMBER'S ROLE

The *New Faculty Mentor Program* is designed to provide the new faculty member with “customized” assistance and guidance. However, it is not designed to replace the faculty member’s personal responsibility to seek out information and experiences that will advance his or her career at Western Illinois University. Following are the key elements of the faculty member’s role in the mentoring relationship:

- **Engage**...ask the mentor questions, share comments, voice concerns and identify issues.
- **Seek**...look for and utilize opportunities for professional growth and excellence in teaching, research, and service.
- **Take personal responsibility**...for your academic career; be an active agent and judge of the appropriate course of action for career advancement.

EXPECTATIONS OF NEW FACULTY MEMBERS IN THE NEW FACULTY MENTOR PROGRAM

- Maintain regular contact with the mentor. Help establish a regular phone, email or meeting schedule with the mentor.
- Share your career plans, recount your initiatives on behalf of your professional development; ask for advice; reflect on your mentor’s observations; and inform your mentor about the results of your efforts.
- Keep the content of your mentoring relationship confidential; your mentor may share with you personal information that he or she wishes you to honor as a confidence.
- Faculty Members are asked to complete an annual review of the mentoring relationship to the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research.

MENTOR-NEW FACULTY MEMBER AGREEMENT

I,, agree to meet with, at least time(s) per academic semester, and to otherwise be in communication time(s) per month. In addition, as a WIU new faculty mentor, I agree to the following:

- To maintain confidentiality of all discussions.
- To avoid any form of performance evaluation of my the new faculty member.
- To provide constructive feedback to the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research (CITR) at WIU regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the New Faculty Mentor Program.

I further agree to support the following specific goals/objectives of the new faculty member in the mentoring relationship:

-
-
-

Signed,

Mentor

Date

New Faculty Member

Date



MENTOR FEEDBACK CHECKLIST

- How often did you meet with the new faculty?

- How often did you communicate with CITR regarding the process?

- Did you and your mentee establish and follow a formal/informal agreement?

- Were teaching observations part of your mentoring relationship? If so, to what extent?

- Did you participate by yourself or with your mentee in any CITR or WIU event for professional development?

- How would you rate your overall experience with the mentoring program?

- Would you volunteer to be a mentor again?

- What, if anything, would you like to see changed regarding the New Faculty Mentor Program at WIU?

- What year in the mentoring process are you in? 1 2 3

