

Best Practices for Faculty Mentoring

(Developed by the UF/IFAS Faculty Assembly Professional Welfare Committee, October 2019)

Rationale: Faculty mentors can help meet a variety of needs for junior faculty: professional development, emotional support, a sense of community, accountability, institutional support, access to networks, and project-specific coaching and feedback.¹

Recommendations:

- 1) Faculty serving in tenure-track positions and in non-tenure track positions such as Lecturers, Extension Scientists, County Extension Faculty and Research Scientists, should all be provided with mentoring in their various roles.
- 2) Formation of mentoring relationships should be considered an integral part of new faculty onboarding. Ideally, mentoring committees will be formed within the first six months of employment.
- 3) Mentees and mentors should play a role in choosing mentoring relationships. "There is excellent evidence that when participants in assigned or matched developmental relationships perceive some choice about with whom they are paired, the relationship success and mentoring outcomes are stronger."²
- 4) Mentoring teams or committees are preferable to single mentors. Teams should consist of at least two members (three is preferred). "Teams offer the benefit of greater access to a range of information, support and modeling."³ Mentees should choose mentors with demonstrated expertise and success in their primary areas of T/R/E responsibilities. Faculty rank of the mentor is less important than experience and interest in supporting the mentee.
- 5) Faculty at RECs may wish to have mentors from their REC (outside their home department) in addition to mentors from their home department in Gainesville.
- 6) Once committees are formed, frequent interaction early on in mentoring relationships is important. Ideally, communication between the mentor and mentee will continue to be frequent, and both formal and informal. A formal review should take place at least once a year, at which time mentors may look at the mentee's annual report and any other documents the mentee wishes to provide. In addition to the formal review, more frequent informal check-ins are highly recommended and should be sought out by mentees and offered regularly by mentors.
- 7) Mentors and mentees may wish to formalize the relationship through the discussion of expectations and responsibilities and the length of the mentor-mentee relationship (till tenure or promotion, or beyond).

Administrative support for a culture of mentoring:

- Academic leaders should promote and support an atmosphere of collegiality, where most senior faculty commit to mentoring new faculty. Reward and recognition for good mentorship should be considered. However, demonstrated poor mentors should not be forced to participate. Expectations for length of commitment to mentoring relationship should be clarified. If mentoring relationships are unproductive, leaders should help faculty make adjustments.
- In supporting the mentoring process, academic leaders should focus on support and reinforcement for mentoring over monitoring and assessment. "If mentoring programs come to be seen by your faculty as onerous and burdensome, it is quite likely that willingness to mentor will be easily undermined."⁴

¹ National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity - Monday Motivator - April 8, 2019 - "There is no Guru"

² Johnson, B. "On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty," page 250.

³ Johnson, B. "On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty," page 172.

⁴ Johnson, B. "On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty," page 251.