

Mentoring for Tenure-Track Faculty

Department of Mathematics and Statistics

Mentor Selection

Each new tenure-track candidate will be formally apprised in their offer letter that part of the department culture includes mentoring of new faculty, including both the development of a mentoring plan and the assignment of a tenured faculty member as a mentor. As the candidate accepts the offer, the chair should work with his/her colleagues to develop a mentoring plan for the new faculty member for at least the first three years of his/her appointment. The plan should include attention to teaching, graduate supervision, and research. The new faculty member should be consulted in developing this plan. After appropriate consultation, the chair will assign the new faculty member a mentor from among the senior faculty no later than the mid-point of his/her first semester at Texas Tech.

Mentoring

The relationship between the faculty mentor and mentee should grow naturally out of a shared commitment to the life of the scholar-researcher-teacher. The mentor will serve as an important source of guidance and advice in areas ranging from university policy to teaching approaches to securing extramural funds and building a productive research program. The mentor will also serve as a point of contact for advice about policies and procedures in the department and the university in general, and can also provide information about other academic activities and resources, such as recruitment of new students, addressing personnel issues, and sources of internal funds. Mentors may also provide advice with manuscript preparation and responses to reviews, when appropriate. In addition to a formally assigned mentor, it is likely that other less formal “mentoring” relationships will develop with both junior and senior colleagues in the department. These relationships are encouraged, as they can provide additional opportunities for advice and counsel from faculty colleagues with different experiences, perspectives, and expertise.

The duties of the mentor are generally to provide evaluation and support for career development of the junior faculty member at Texas Tech with special emphasis on his/her progress toward obtaining advancements and tenure. To a large degree, it will be up to the mentor and mentee to decide how often to meet and what topics to discuss, but each pair will have at least one formal meeting each year to discuss the mentee’s progress during the year in teaching, research, and service and his/her goals for the coming year based on a review of the mentee’s activities for the past year. The mentor and mentee will write a brief joint report of these issues that will be sent to the chair, but will not be included in the mentee’s official record.

The chair will retain ultimate responsibility for advising new faculty on matters pertaining to annual evaluations, third-year reviews and progress towards tenure. However, in many cases the mentor can also provide informal feedback on progress towards tenure, and can assist with interpreting and responding appropriately to periodic reviews of progress, such as annual reports and third-year reviews.

Goals of the Mentoring Program

- Familiarizing new faculty with the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and Texas Tech University – its campus and its academic environment.
- Networking—introductions to colleagues, identification of other potential mentors or collaborators.
- Developing awareness—helping tenure-track faculty understand policies and procedures that are relevant to their work environment.
- Providing constructive criticism and encouragement, compliments on achievements.
- Helping to manage professional priorities—budgeting time, balancing research, teaching, and service.
- Assisting new faculty with developing strategies to balance professional responsibilities with personal commitments.

Annual Reviews

The following three evaluative and summative processes will be implemented annually for each tenure-track faculty member to provide feedback from the department level to the faculty member:

- Annual Report (by the chair)
- Peer Teaching Observation (by an assigned tenured senior faculty member)
- Peer Evaluation (by the chair and the Executive Committee)

The chair should have a friendly conversation in a formal appointment with each tenure-track faculty at the end of each Spring semester. That conversation should include a discussion of the above annual reviews and a discussion of the candidate's research and his/her teaching experience for the year. It should offer advice and encouragement to the candidate and should seek to find constructive ways of addressing any emerging problems.

In cases of joint appointments, the two chairs and/or directors may wish to meet together with the candidate to ensure that their respective advice to the candidate is consistent. In addition, the chairs and/or directors of their units should review each year their respective requirements of the candidate to ensure that they are not, together, demanding too much. Particular attention should be paid to teaching and service requirements to make sure that candidates are not doing "double duty" in, for example, teaching large introductory lectures or committee and advising assignments.

Regardless of whether the tenure-track faculty member holds a single or a joint appointment, his/her chair(s) and/or director(s) should review their work assignments carefully to ensure that they are not being unduly burdened by an excessive number of new course preparations, large classes, or demanding service assignments. The tenure-track faculty member should be given the opportunity to teach in the area(s) of their research at the senior undergraduate and graduate levels during his/her first three years. Such opportunities may include team teaching. Service assignments to the tenure-track faculty member should serve as mentoring contexts in which the

candidate learns about the values and operations of the university (e.g., the curriculum committee rather than the hospitality committee).

Changing Mentors

In cases of changing commitments, incompatibility, or where the relationship is not successful, either the junior faculty member or mentor should seek confidential advice from the chair. It is important to realize that changes can and should be made without prejudice or fault. The junior faculty member, in any case, should be encouraged to seek out additional mentors as the need arises.

Mentor Responsibilities

It will be presumed that mentors are acting in good faith, and are working to help the junior faculty member become a productive and effective contributor to his/her profession and academic institution. The new faculty member's intellectual independence from the mentor must be carefully preserved and the mentor must avoid developing a competitive or domineering relationship with the new faculty member. Under these premises, the mentor will not be held responsible for any shortcomings or negative evaluations of the junior faculty member, but may certainly list mentoring activities as part of his/her service contributions.

Reporting

The chair will include in his/her annual assessment report a section summarizing departmental mentoring efforts and activities and assessments of those efforts and activities.