

LEVEL UP

A GUIDE FOR MID-CAREER FACULTY



Introduction

“Level Up: A Guide for Mid-career Faculty” was developed by the Center for Faculty Excellence in collaboration with experienced UNO faculty members from across campus. This guide provides ideas, suggestions, tips, and hints that might inspire, reinvigorate, and guide our colleagues to advance UNO’s pillars of:

- Educating all learners through dynamic and supportive teaching
- Advancing research and discovery through scholarship and creative work
- Enhancing community engagement

The guide can also help you explore your interest in academic and community leadership.

Mid-career faculty often find themselves asking, what’s next? We hope this resource helps you ponder this question and consider the many options to take your career to the next level.

The contributors to “Level Up” represent the collegial spirit that makes UNO a great place to be a faculty member. If you have a chance, thank them for their guidance and insight.

Whether you elevate your career through teaching, research/creative activity, community engagement, leadership, or a combination of these - we have great confidence in you and look forward to your successes.



Connie Schaffer
Director, Center for Faculty Excellence



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ELEVATE YOUR TEACHING PROFILE

IDEAS TO MAXIMIZE
LEARNING AND
REINVIGORATE YOUR
TEACHING

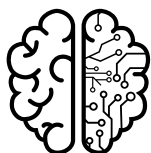
Reinvigorating Your Teaching

Teaching is dynamic and evolves throughout your career. As a mid-career faculty member, you have likely viewed your teaching as both satisfying and at times perhaps, stagnant. If you feel your classroom approach could use a refresh, don't worry - you are not alone. Now can be a great time to reignite your passion for teaching. Reinvigorating your teaching doesn't require drastic changes but rather a willingness to grow and adapt. Embracing new strategies can bring fresh energy into your classroom and to all that you do to inspire your students.

1 Start by reflecting on why you chose to teach in the first place. Reconnecting with your initial motivation can reignite your enthusiasm. Research shows that teachers who reflect on their teaching practices tend to experience greater satisfaction and student engagement. Consider journaling or discussing with colleagues how your teaching philosophy has evolved over the years.

2 Next, experiment with active learning strategies. Active learning, where students engage directly with content through activities such as group work, debates, or problem-solving tasks, can improve student learning. You do not have to overhaul your entire syllabus or abandon lectures, but introducing one or two new techniques can make a substantial difference in the classroom atmosphere. A step instructors often miss when implementing active learning is explaining its purpose to students. Taking time to do this helps students anticipate transitions in your lesson and cognitively prepare to engage with their peers.

3 Finally, don't underestimate the power of peer collaboration. Discuss new teaching methods with colleagues and share resources with each other. Sometimes, simply exchanging ideas can open up new pathways for your teaching. Teaching can feel isolating, but collaboration can be an excellent way to bring fresh perspectives into your work.



Other avenues to explore include AI and competency-based learning. As AI continues to evolve, you will be learning alongside your students. You can have students experiment with AI in an assignment or have AI assist you in grading or providing individualized feedback to students. Competency-based learning allows students to move through content on more individualized timeframes and focuses on mastery of specific learning outcomes or goals.

References:

- Deslauriers, L., et al. (2019). Measuring Actual Learning versus Feeling of Learning in Response to Being Actively Engaged in the Classroom. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.
- Bain, K. (2021). What the Best College Teachers Do.



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Advancing Critical Thinking Skills

No matter the topic we cover, enhancing critical thinking in our students is a vital part of our teaching. A liberal arts education goes beyond just imparting content expertise; it's about helping students connect ideas across different fields while emphasizing problem-solving and analytical skills. We should aim to actively engage our students and strengthen their critical thinking abilities. Here are some steps to help foster these essential skills in your classrooms.

01 >> **Reflect on Your Teaching Practices**
Take a moment to assess how you currently encourage critical thinking. Are you asking open-ended questions? Are your students engaging in discussions that challenge their viewpoints?

02 >> **Incorporate Active Learning Techniques**
Try using strategies like case studies and debates. These methods encourage students to apply concepts and think critically about real-world issues, which are keys for developing their critical faculties.

03 >> **Utilize Technology Wisely**
Make the most of available resources, like the UNO AI Learning Lab, to enhance your teaching and improve student outcomes. Consider refining your AI skills to better integrate technology into your lessons.

04 >> **Foster a Growth Mindset**
Encourage students to see challenges as opportunities for growth. Share your own experiences with intellectual hurdles – this openness can inspire them to embrace critical thinking.

Also, cultivate your own growth mindset! Consider taking classes to expand your knowledge and skills. Use UNO's Employee or Dependent Scholarship Program to take or audit a class or explore free online platforms like Coursera or edX for courses on critical thinking.

05 >> **Stay Connected with Peers**
Take advantage of UNO's Center for Faculty Excellence to explore new ideas and strategies, such as joining a Community of Practice to network with colleagues, share resources, and spark new ideas that keep you inspired.

06 >> **Evaluate and Adapt**
After trying out new strategies, gather feedback from your students. Use surveys or informal discussions to find out what works and what doesn't. This ongoing process can significantly enhance your teaching effectiveness.



Higher education isn't just about teaching content - it's about cultivating a culture of inquiry, and enhancing critical thinking is a necessary component of that culture.

References:

- hooks, b. (2009). Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom.
- Wilson, J. (2017). Critical Thinking: A Beginner's Guide To Critical Thinking, Better Decision Making and Problem Solving!



Troy Romero

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Guiding a Study Abroad

Guiding a study abroad program is an exciting and rewarding experience. As a faculty member, you're not only teaching, you're also responsible for student well-being while they're immersed in a new culture. Planning is key for a successful experience for you and your students.

Plan early. Work with your chair/director, dean's office, and UNO's Global Course Coordinator to clarify related processes and policies and to promote the experience with students who will need time for their own planning (meet with academic advisors, discuss with their family, apply for a passport, save money, apply for scholarships, and make arrangements with employers). Talk with colleagues who have led past trips to get their insights and suggestions. Ask to see their detailed itineraries, syllabi, and other resources they used.

Plan detailed information. Provide timely information to students. Be responsive to students and have the following information available when you announce the opportunity:

- ➔ **Cost of trip** – Passport fees, travel insurance, included meals/transportation/activities, and additional expenses (souvenirs, snacks, sightseeing, and cell phone plans). Information about exchange rates, credit card usage, access to ATMs, and average costs of meals can be helpful. Encourage students to apply for scholarships or travel funds.
- ➔ **Timelines** – Deposit/payment deadlines, departure/return dates, and daily itineraries. Identify “free” time during the experience and suggest options for students to maximize this time based on their interests.
- ➔ **Academic expectations** – When/how to register, course number, syllabus, and assignment information/deadlines.
- ➔ **What to pack** – Technology, climate appropriate clothing, and expected attire for each place you will visit.
- ➔ **Destination information** – Websites, blogs, podcasts, books, movies, and TV shows that provide cultural context, as well as conversational language tutorials.

Plan cultural immersion. Encourage students to step outside their comfort zones. Organize activities to interact with locals - whether it's a cooking class, a language exchange, or riding public transportation. Help students navigate cultural differences (tipping, legal drinking age, and bartering).

Plan to be accessible. Students may face challenges, whether it's homesickness, academic stress, or cultural misunderstandings. Establish communication channels and expectations (daily meetings, texting, and messaging apps) that will help you respond to student needs.

Plan for the unexpected. Anticipate unpredictability (health issues, lost passports/luggage, delayed flights, and inclement weather). Discuss security and safety at your destination. Have an emergency plan in place. Make sure students know what to do in case of an emergency and are aware of local resources.

Plan to reflect. Reflection activities (journals, discussions, and short assignments) help students process and synthesize their experiences and can enrich the academic components of the trip.

References:

- Burnside, K. E., Wildermuth, C., & Rohach, M. (2024). Jacks of All Hats: Role Complexity, Ambiguity, and the Experiences of Short-Term Study Abroad Faculty. *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education*.



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Conducting Pedagogical Research

Many academics experience a lull post-tenure. You may feel like your research has slowed, your teaching is routine, or your service obligations are overwhelming. Pedagogical research can reinvigorate your research, renew your passion for teaching, and give service new meaning. Whether you are starting new or returning to research, here are a few words of advice and resources.

Pedagogical research taps into your teaching experience to enhance student learning. You've engaged in good teaching thus far in your career, but do you know if it is effective teaching? An easy entry into pedagogical research is to test whether a teaching technique you view as highly successful leads, objectively, to greater learning for students.

A positive outcome of pedagogical research is evidence that you've established an impressive track record of good teaching post tenure! The information you've gathered can be put back into practice to improve activities and assignments or create new ones – both of which can energize your classroom. It also contributes to teaching and learning beyond your own classroom.

Scholars of teaching and learning use methods such as content/discourse analysis, interviews, and surveys to regularly evaluate the effect of a teaching intervention. Like all research, the method chosen must match the question you are asking. If you're unsure about pedagogical research methods, read pedagogical journals to acclimate yourself to various approaches. Remember, you were once a novice researcher in your discipline and were able to successfully master that.

Knowing what question to ask is often dependent upon discipline. I recommend becoming familiar with disciplinary teaching journals and resources. For example, sociology has a journal, a peer-reviewed teaching resources database, and a teaching-focused community. My own scholarship on teaching and learning began because I started reading from our journal. I was just looking for best practices in teaching sociology but discovered a research interest that has sustained my career and improved my teaching.



If your discipline doesn't have a pedagogical journal, there are many that focus broadly on teaching and learning in higher education. Look online for different lists if you don't know where to start!

➤ If you have a specific journal in mind, understand its publication guidelines and norms surrounding research and data before designing your project. Recently published articles will reveal whether student evaluations or reflections are sufficient data or whether you'll need to collect more rigorous evidence of teaching effectiveness. Pedagogical research requires IRB review so you'll need to create protocols for your classes and receive expedited approval before collecting data.

➤ Finally, pedagogical research is unique in that it can be combined with service. By publishing your research, you add your expertise to larger conversations about best practices in teaching and learning. You can give back to the community of scholars and teachers at UNO by sharing your work publicly via workshops, talking with colleagues, or starting a Community of Practice to support pedagogical research on campus.

References:

- Boudah, D. J. (2011). Conducting Educational Research: Guide to Completing a Major Project.
- McKinney, K. (2007). Enhancing Learning Through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Challenges and Joys of Juggling.
- Nind, M. & Lewthwaite, S. (2017). Methods That Teach: Developing Pedagogic Research Methods, Developing Pedagogy. International Journal of Research & Method in Education.



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Redesigning Curriculum

Thinking about Redesigning Curriculum?

Consider the following:

- Are you updating official syllabi?
- Are you creating a new course?
- Are you working on a gen ed course?
- Are you adding a minor or certificate, or are you adding a new program?
- Are you thinking about distance friendly options?
 - Hybrid v. online
 - Synchronous v. asynchronous

Updating Syllabi?

Determine if it is a minimal or significant change.

- Minimal (title change, prerequisite changes, or rewording). Just do it! Go to CIM-Courseleaf and make updates then click "Start Workflow". (If you do not click "Start Workflow" – the process will NOT begin.)
- Significant – (changing level, credit hours, objectives, or content). You must go through the approval process. After entering updates, save and click "Start Workflow".

Distance Friendly Courses

What if you want to move a course from an on-campus class to a hybrid or create a completely online course?

① First Step: Talk to the department chair/school director. There may be a department or college approval process.

② Second Step: Contact the Division of Innovative and Learning-Centric Initiatives (ILCI).

Funding is available for course redesign and online course development. You also get the support of instructional designers through this process who will make sure your course is designed in a way that is accessible to all.

Creating a New Course (internal review)

New courses are created in CIM-Courseleaf and then go through an internal review through committees before being added to the catalogs. Consider the length of the process to ensure it fits your timeline for offering the course.

Undergraduate

- Department/School curriculum committee
- College Academic Standards and Program Committee (AS&P)
- Educational Policy Advisory Committee (EPAC)
- Gen ed courses are reviewed by the Gen Ed Committee

Graduate

- Department/School curriculum committee
- College Graduate Program Committee
- UNO Graduate Program Committee
- Educational Policy Advisory Committee (EPAC)

New Minor, Certificate, or Program (internal and external review)

Academic Affairs has resources that walk you through the process. Note: Please understand the process to add a new certificate, minor, and/or program will take up to a year to get all approvals.

References:

- Cho, H. J., Wang, C., Bonem, E. M., & Levesque-Bristol, C. (2022). How Can We Support Students' Learning Experiences in Higher Education? Campus Wide Course Transformation Program Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Innovation in Higher Education*.
- Clayton, P. & Clopton, J. (2018). Business Curriculum Redesign: Integrating Data Analytics. *Journal of Education for Business*.



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ELEVATE YOUR RESEARCH/ CREATIVE ACTIVITY PROFILE

TIPS TO MAINTAIN A LOVE
FOR RESEARCH/CREATIVE
ACTIVITY AND START YOUR
NEXT PASSION PROJECT

Continuing Research/Creative Activity Post-Tenure

Regardless of your level of involvement prior to tenure, UNO has many resources to get engaged with research/creative activity. Depending on your needs, intentionally build a community to help you get started, elevate your activities, or support your journey. Here are some strategies for planning and sustaining momentum post-tenure.

Reassess and Set New Goals

Post-tenure is a perfect time to reassess and establish fresh goals. A new proposal led by a tenured faculty member signals to external funding agencies that the institution is committed to supporting future development in that area. With this change, think about how you want to expand your existing projects or explore new avenues. Identify long-term aspirations, such as leading high-risk, larger collaborative projects or pursuing interdisciplinary projects with an extended longitudinal arc. This could also be a time to build capacity through unique instrumentation and infrastructure. Additionally, consider adding technology transfer or workforce development projects to your portfolio.

Balance Teaching and Research/Creative Activity

With increased teaching and service responsibilities post-tenure, finding an effective balance between teaching, service, and research/creative activity is crucial to sustaining progress. Scheduling dedicated research/creative activity time during your most productive hours and setting clear boundaries will help you maintain a consistent output. Collaborative projects build support networks and add accountability that may motivate you to make progress despite a busy schedule.

Intentionally Seek Out Opportunities to Collaborate Across Disciplines

Engage with colleagues from other fields to get fresh perspectives and open new opportunities. UNO offers many opportunities to attend interdisciplinary seminars and workshops. When serving on university-level committees, engage colleagues from other disciplines and be curious about their research/creative activity. Attend the Nebraska Research Initiative (NRI) annual meeting. It is designed to foster such interactions through breakout sessions with researchers from all four NU campuses.



Boost Your Efforts

Use internal funding (University Committee on Research and Creative Activity - UCRCA, NRI) to build strong grant proposals and scale your scholarly work. Stay connected with your professional organizations, college leadership, other faculty, research support staff, and the Office of Research and Creative Activity (ORCA) to identify and apply for external grants. Consider mentoring graduate students, postdocs, and junior faculty to build cohesive research/creative activity clusters. This could include creating a research group, co-authoring publications, planning a collaborative exhibit/performance, or delegating portions of grant writing to provide hands-on experience.

At an Urban Research Campus, Engage the Community

Community-engaged and use-inspired research/creative activity can broaden your impact. Whether through collaborative projects or participating on advisory boards for local organizations, your work can benefit the university and the surrounding community. To identify community needs, conduct surveys or focus groups with local stakeholders to understand their priorities. UNO's Office of Engagement can help make connections with communities.

References:

- Morrison, D. (2012). The Grant Application Writer's Workbook.
- Rockquemore, K. A. (2017). Posttenure Planning. Inside Higher Ed.



Robin Gandhi

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Sharing Expertise with the Public

Academics are uniquely qualified to share our expertise with the general public as we are able to speak confidently from a position of well-informed authority. It can be challenging at times, as fears of being mis-quoted or frustrations over re-writes are common. However, if you choose opportunity over hesitation, those challenges disappear and the rewards quite high.



What are the rewards?

1

You can have a very broad reach into the local, national, and even international communities. Writing non-technical, short articles for public consumption, such as for *The Conversation* can have substantial outreach. Many such articles get picked up by news outlets across the globe. It gets your name “out there” and has the added benefit of supporting the university’s directive to promote community engagement. Readership rates can be very high - several UNO authors have had tens of thousands of reads of a single article.

2

You will receive repeat requests for commentary. With additional public exposure, there are often future engagement opportunities as news outlets of all types (print, online, television) often seek follow-up input from you. This further enhances your expertise. According to the Ipsos Veracity Index, professors rank as some of the most trusted sources for news and information, well ahead of business leaders, journalists, and politicians. According to Gallup, college teachers still rank comparatively high in ethics ratings as well.

3

Public scholarship can enhance your academic research agenda. There are instances where sharing your expertise with the public can lead to new, interesting, and valuable academic research projects. At times, discussions with non-specialists regarding issues you research can lead to provocative questions that would likely not have come to mind had you only interacted with other academics.

4

If you find teaching rewarding, you’ll find public engagement rewarding as well. Public scholarship is similar to teaching in many ways. Often, your audience is not as educated in your area of expertise. You have an opportunity to share your knowledge in the same way you do with your students. And there is an added benefit: Often the public can be more engaged with and attentive towards you!

5

Public scholarship improves your writing and speaking skills. The order of the day in engaging with the public is: Be brief and to-the-point. Technical details are not necessary, but clarity is. You will learn to choose your words carefully and with intent. This will make you a better academic writer as well.

References:

- Ipsos Veracity Index (2023). Trust in the Professions Survey.
- Miller, D. & Wai, J. (2015). Here’s Why Academics Should Write for the Public. *The Conversation*.



Chris Decker

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Maximizing Sabbatical

On an academic sabbatical, faculty members typically engage in activities that enhance their research, teaching, or service, allowing them to contribute more deeply to their field upon returning to campus. To make the most of a professional development sabbatical, start planning well before your leave begins and consider these tips.

1 Set Clear ATTAINABLE Goals

Define specific objectives before starting your sabbatical. This might include skills you want to acquire, projects you want to pursue, or personal achievements you hope to accomplish.

2 Set Boundaries

Use an out-of-office auto-responder to let your colleagues know that you are on sabbatical. Saying “no” to asks that do not directly link with your goals will be essential.

3 Create Structure

Shifting from a highly scheduled calendar to the freedom of sabbatical can be jarring. Create a weekly schedule that helps you reach your objectives and build in time for rest.

4 Prioritize Learning

Identify a course, workshop, or certification that aligns with your career. Use this time to dive into areas you may not typically explore, expanding your knowledge and skill set.

5 Network Strategically

Attend a conference, reach out to industry leaders, or join professional groups to grow your network. Connecting with others can spark ideas and create opportunities you can bring back to your role.

6 Work on a Passion Project

Use your sabbatical to start or advance a project you’re passionate about, whether it’s writing, volunteering, or creating something new. Projects like these can provide a sense of fulfillment and potentially add value to your professional life.

7 Reflect and Recharge

Build in time for reflection, rest, and recharging. This break is a unique chance to step back, assess your career path, and consider your goals without the pressures of day-to-day responsibilities.

8 Document Your Journey

Keep a journal or a portfolio of what you learn and achieve during your sabbatical. This record can be a valuable resource when you return, helping you share your experiences and new insights with your colleagues.

9 Plan for Reintegration

Before your sabbatical ends, outline how you’ll apply your new skills, experiences, and perspectives back at work. Having a transition plan can help make your return smoother and more impactful.

References:

- Brown, B. (2024). How My Academic Sabbatical Offered a Chance to Hit the Restart Button on My Career. *Nature*.
- Philbrick, A. M. & Pittenger, A. L. (2024). Practice Faculty Also Need Sabbatical Leaves. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*.



Sofia Jawed-Wessel

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Considering a Fulbright

Congratulations on considering a Fulbright award! The Fulbright Program offers grants for U.S. citizens to go abroad and for non-U.S. citizens to come to the U.S. The goal of this program is to provide opportunities to study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas, and contribute to finding solutions to complex global challenges.

Start Planning Early

Deadlines vary, and Fulbright planning should begin years in advance. There are many different types of Fulbright award opportunities available to faculty members who are at various stages of their careers.

Initial planning may include:

- Registering your interest to receive application resources and program updates.
- Discussions with colleagues in your discipline, including Fulbright alumni in your field or region of interest, to learn about discipline-specific Fulbright opportunities.
- Conversations with colleagues overseas about research and teaching opportunities/collaborations.
- Attending Fulbright office hours and webinars to learn more about the application process and programs.
- Preparing materials for the application, including an essay, CV, and additional items.
- Discussions with UNO colleagues, chairs/directors, deans, UNO's Fulbright liaison, and other administrators about the timing of the Fulbright application.

Find the Right Fit for You

The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program offers over 400 awards in more than 135 countries for U.S. citizens to teach, conduct research, and carry out professional projects around the world. As a faculty member, you are eligible to pursue many opportunities, including:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ➤ The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award | ➤ Fulbright Amazonia |
| ➤ Fulbright Global Scholar Award | ➤ Fulbright Distinguished Scholar Awards |
| ➤ The Fulbright Arctic Initiative | ➤ The Fulbright Specialist Program |

Consider Your Strengths and Career Goals

Remember that there is no one single profile of a typical Fulbright scholar. Lean into your strengths as a scholar and educator and consider your personal and professional goals. Remember that Fulbright scholars represent the diversity of the U.S., and the programs offer opportunities for scholars to come away with enhanced skills, new connections, and greater mutual understanding. Good luck!

References:

- Fulbright Scholar Program. (2022). 5 Tips to Jumpstart Your Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program Application.



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Editing a Journal

Before agreeing to edit a journal, the best advice you should get from your colleagues, your chair, the former editor, and anyone else you talk to, including yourself, is to be tenured. Journal editing pre-tenure can be a recipe for disaster. If you are tenured, your work as an editor can be quite rewarding.

Editing a journal:

- Allows you to shape and influence the direction of scholarship in your field.
- Enhances your professional profile, demonstrating leadership and scholarly expertise. It offers networking opportunities, to connect with leading scholars, reviewers, and emerging voices in the field, which can lead to new collaborations, research opportunities, and greater visibility within the academic community.
- Ensures that you are current with the latest research, allowing you to engage with cutting-edge scholarship and to see where the field is headed before it is published.
- Contributes to maintaining high scholarly standards and ensuring the integrity of the publication process, which is vital for the advancement of knowledge.
- Offers intellectual satisfaction by allowing you to engage deeply with a wide range of topics and ideas, pushing you to think critically about the quality and impact of scholarly work.
- Can bring prestige to a faculty member's institution, as it recognizes that kind of involvement as leading and shaping discourse in a scholarly discipline, building capacity positively for both the individual and the university.

Before agreeing to edit a journal, consider these truisms:

1

Editing will take way more time than you can imagine. Editors manage multiple tasks simultaneously, reviewing submissions, communicating with authors and reviewers, copyediting, and ensuring that each issue meets publication deadlines. These activities can add significantly to your time commitment on top of regular teaching and research duties.

2

As an editor, you and you alone are responsible for making decisions on manuscript submissions. This process involves coordinating peer reviews, reading manuscripts carefully, and determining which ones meet or could meet the journal's standards.

3

A huge part of an editor's role is selecting appropriate peer reviewers, following up with them, and handling their feedback. This process is time-consuming, especially when reviewers have huge academic egos, decline invitations, are late with their reviews, or provide conflicting feedback, which happens far more often than you would expect.

4

Editors often shape the direction of the journal, focusing on emerging trends, thematic issues, or special topics that align with scholarly advancements. This process can be intellectually exhausting.

5

Editors help craft an identity for the journal and sometimes work with guest editors to enhance its visibility, a responsibility that will weigh on you at all times.

6

Being an editor offers a sense of satisfaction in contributing to the academic community by promoting rigorous scholarship and guiding emerging work that not only helps you stay at the forefront of the latest research in your field but also creates more academically challenging work.

References:

- Huff, C. (2020). How to Become a Journal Editor. American Psychological Association.
- Journell, W. (2023). Why Would Anyone Want to Be a Journal Editor. Inside Higher Ed.



Tracy Bridgeford

College of Arts and Sciences

ELEVATE YOUR COMMUNITY PROFILE

THREE

SUGGESTIONS TO GET
INVOLVED AND CONNECT
WITH OTHERS IN THE
COMMUNITY

Serving on Community Boards

Serving on a community board is a way to become more involved in the community we serve, and it can have beneficial and surprising outcomes for your professional development, your department or program, and your students.

There are many different types of boards to join.

It can be beneficial to join a board in an area at least tangentially related to your discipline and expertise. Consider if your time would be better spent serving on the board of a local non-profit, a school board, or an organization that supports your discipline.

Why Me?

A board should be selective in its choice of members and should have an idea of what they hope each board member can contribute. Try and gain a clear understanding of why you have been solicited to be on the board.

Time Commitment

Before committing, find out more about how often the board meets and what your time commitment will be. Expect to put in some time, but you won't want to feel overburdened.

Grow in a Role

You might be asked to serve in a capacity outside of your current skill set, including being an officer, monitoring the board's finances, or helping with marketing and social media. Taking on something new could be a good way to develop skills and networks that may serve you in current or future roles.

Stay Open to Possibilities

It is inevitable that you may feel irrelevant or out of your comfort zone at a particular meeting based on the discussion topics. Consider introducing yourself to a speaker or board member after the meeting. The conversations that take place outside the meeting may be more important to making connections.

Possible Outcomes

- **Building personal and professional relationships**
- **Internship opportunities and scholarships for students**
- **Creating connections for the board to your area and other UNO programs**
- **Greater understanding of community needs**

References:

- Kraemer, H. (2023). How to Become a Board Member Early in Your Career. Harvard Business Review.



Amy Morris

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Using Social Media to Advance Your Career

Consider these basic principles to help you use social media as a positive force in your career.



Separate professional from personal social media accounts. For example, you may only have a LinkedIn account and no personal social media accounts or you can maintain clear professional and personal identities on multiple accounts.



Social media can be a helpful networking tool. Don't be shy about "connecting" with professionals you meet at conferences, review meetings, workshops, etc.



Connecting with others right away can be helpful later. Be sure to leave a personal note with connection requests to help others remember how they know you. It can be as simple as "It was great to meet you at the luncheon today."

Be positive and encouraging!



Post regularly. Do not feel that you must be overly creative. Share relevant articles from institutional and organizational newsletters you receive. Write something brief about your connection to the article or event and tag appropriate people and organizational pages.



The easiest way to have an active feed is by re-sharing other people's and/or your institution's content. It can be shared directly, or you can add thoughts if you have a close connection.



Social media designed for academics such as Academic.edu (nearly 115 million users), ResearchGate (over 15 million members), and Mendeley (in addition to citation management, it is a social network with over 6 million users) can advance your career and promote your research with other scholars.



There are many platforms to use and your choice will depend on your intended audience. Consider the following possibilities:



LinkedIn: Key for building professional networks with industry colleagues as well as other academics. Share articles, research findings, and professional accomplishments to demonstrate thought leadership in your field.



X (Twitter): Ideal for commenting on trending topics in your field. Use hashtags (#AcademicTwitter, #HigherEd, etc.) and concise updates to showcase your expertise and contribute to ongoing academic discussions.



Instagram: A highly visual platform to share behind-the-scenes glimpses of your academic life, like photos from conferences, research projects, or student activities. Post infographics, quotes from your research, or short videos.

Social media can be an easy way to support others, show appreciation, and celebrate milestones, promotions, and accomplishments.



References:

- Yue, C. A. (2022). The Paradox of Using Public Social Media for Work: The Influence of After-Hours Work Communication on Employee Outcomes. *Journal of Business Outreach*.
- Dailey, S. & Martinson, M. (2024). The Process of Personal Social Media for Work: Unveiling the 'Work' Behind Social Media. *Sage Journals*.



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Learning Best Practices for Community Partnerships

Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

- ▶ Mutually beneficial and reciprocity are the key terms for effective community partnerships. Effective partnerships require a deep understanding of the community partner as well as respect for that partner's expertise and full participation in developing the partnership.
- ▶ While community partnerships are critically important, for faculty it can be challenging to develop and sustain partnerships. Community-engaged work is inherently messy and not as controllable as more traditional teaching and scholarship.
- ▶ Fortunately, because UNO values community engagement and partnerships, there are significant resources to support faculty in this work. Either as you begin or deepen your work with community partnerships, take time to explore and get to know what UNO offers to support you.

Key UNO Resources for Community Partnerships

The UNO Office of Engagement serves as a central resource to provide faculty with opportunities to learn effective practices, connections to potential community partners, and on-going support to sustain those partnerships.

Take advantage of UNO's institutional memberships in national and international associations focused on community engagement and partnerships. Their websites, webinars, professional learning communities, and conferences provide great opportunities for professional development and scholarship.

[A quick Google search for these organizations will get you started!](#)



Campus Compact



Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities



Engagement Scholarship Consortium

Explore UNO's Community Engagement Partnership Initiative to learn about previous and current UNO/community partnerships.

References:

- Allen, J. A. & Reiter-Palmon, R. Eds. (2019). The Cambridge Handbook of Organizational Community Engagement and Outreach.



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Leading in Professional Associations

Engagement with professional organizations and associations serves multiple purposes, including expanding your professional networks, learning about successes and challenges from peers, raising the national profile of UNO and yourself, and developing new leadership skills.

Capitalize and maximize the opportunities that these associations and organizations offer, beyond an annual conference or presentations.

Getting Started

- Sign up for email newsletters, updates, and other informational media. Professional organizations regularly share opportunities for broader engagement and service, both within and outside of the organization.
- Join a sub-group in your professional organization, like a section, committee or special interest group. Membership in these groups presents opportunities to engage directly and meaningfully with other members. If you participate in an annual conference, attend the business meeting, social, or other events hosted by the sub-group.
- Participate in on-line professional groups - engage with others formally via email groups, discussion boards, and other community forums.
- Volunteer to peer-review for conferences and journals and to moderate conference sessions.



There is tremendous satisfaction in seeing your vision for your profession advance, and your service at the national level will allow you to contribute to and influence the larger dialogue, build your professional reputation, and elevate the profile of the university.

Level Up

- Build your CV and skills by serving local, state, and regional organizations. These groups often are in dire need of leadership, and you'll build your network quickly. Consider seeking board memberships or leadership positions.
- Engage with peers and others external to UNO to raise your name recognition and profile and let your star shine - present on informational or academic panels for your local, state, national, international, or professional organizations or associations.
- Share your appreciation for the staff and leadership of the organization, association, committee, or other group. Create a positive dialogue with them. They are likely to recommend you as a candidate for leadership positions, presentations, and other opportunities.
- Tell others in your networks that you are interested in advanced leadership roles and volunteer to step-up when a position is available.
- Demonstrate your value through active engagement, contributions, and fulfillment of your commitments and responsibilities. Once you become recognized as an active and effective contributor and leader, others will seek you.

References:

- Busby, J., Ernst, J. V., Clark, A. C., Kelly, D. P., & DeLuca, V. W. (2019). Professional Organizations. Technology & Engineering Teacher.
- Hager, M. A. (2014). Engagement Motivations in Professional Associations. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly.



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FOUR

ELEVATE YOUR LEADERSHIP PROFILE

ENCOURAGEMENT TO TAKE
THE NEXT STEP IN YOUR
CAREER AND LEAD OTHERS

Charting a Road to Full Professor

A promotion and tenure committee looks for individuals contributing to the profession through teaching, research/creative activity, and service. When moving to full professor, the committee is also looking for ways you have advanced from a state/regional presence to that of national/international presence.

Preparation

Plan for your move to full professor as soon as possible. Make a list of items to review such as institutional promotion expectations, engaged scholarship opportunities, leadership positions, strategic ways to innovate instructional delivery, and grant opportunities. Share your goals/timeline with others to promote accountability.

Purpose

Seek out opportunities that show innovation, leadership, and high impact for the university and the profession. Prioritize high-profile work. Have a purpose for every time you say “yes,” and know it is acceptable to say “no” if a project/request doesn’t match your professional agenda.

Passion

Large blocks of time and space are the best way to feed your passion for personal growth. Apply for a Faculty Development Fellowship (sabbatical) to explore new topics and build on previous research. Design new courses that promote relevancy for students and rejuvenate your interest in a subject.

The road to full professorship can be filled with potholes and detours; therefore, chart your journey early and refer to the map often.

Persistence

Illustrate persistence through a persuasive portfolio of artifacts/supporting documents. Promotion and tenure committees look for a consistent trajectory of work product and activities. Understand you will probably never know when “enough is enough,” but don’t let perfectionism be a barrier to bringing that article/presentation draft to a close.

Positivity

Approach work with an optimistic attitude. Your positivity can serve as a tool to motivate and inspire students, promote healthy dialogues with colleagues, and contribute to the community. You were hired because of your skillsets and abilities. Remember, you still have more to contribute to the students, the university, and the profession. The university thrives when the faculty thrive.

References:

- Iding, M. & Thomas R. M. (2015). *Becoming a Professor: A Guide to a Career in Higher Education*.



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Mentoring at Mid-Career

Are you a recently tenured faculty member, or did you receive your tenure many years ago and are asking yourself what is next? What happens after tenure? You might need the support of senior faculty to guide you in answering some questions.

1

How do I feel after becoming an associate professor?

It is vital to acknowledge your feelings first. You are now considered a mid-career faculty, and at this level, many of the “protection” systems (mentoring, avoiding service commitments, writing groups) tend to go away. You might feel relieved and free to complete projects you had to leave behind pre-tenured. However, you might also be unmotivated, exhausted, stuck, and disappointed.

2

What goals do I have in this next stage of my academic journey?

After receiving your tenure, you needed a break, but how long? It might be time to complete a promotion plan (to learn more - access the ADVANCE reference below). In your promotion plan, you can include the goal of becoming a full professor, planning engaging classes, pursuing UNO administration positions, writing external grants, etc. The possibilities are endless; mentors could help you narrow your goals and develop a five-year plan.

3

What skills do I need to learn or keep developing to achieve my goals?

As you formulate post-tenure goals, identify the skills and experience you need. For example, to become a full professor, you should complete your promotion plan and recognize your strengths, growth areas, action steps, and expected timeline.

If your goal is to move into a university administration position, it might help to learn about the responsibilities of university administrators and seek out departmental/school leadership opportunities.

4

What support do I need to continue?

There are also many resources at UNO and beyond to support your post-tenure journey. Consider a senior faculty or a peer group that could hold you accountable to work towards goals. Our Center for Faculty Excellence has excellent resources through its Faculty Resources webpage. One resource is a mentor map. A mentor map is a valuable tool for seeing the network of support you have as a mid-career faculty member and what connections you might still need to continue your path.

References:

- Lehigh University ADVANCE (2024). Mentoring Mid-career Faculty.
- Rockquemore, K. A. (2017). Building a Network of Mentors After You Receive Tenure. Inside Higher Ed.
- Welch, A. G., Bolin, J. H., & Reardon, D. (Eds.). (2019). Mid-career Faculty: Trends, Barriers, and Possibilities.



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Leading an Effective Meeting

Due to the nature of our connected work on campus, we often meet to exchange information and ideas. We've all been a part of wonderful meetings AND we've also had experiences that we know could have been accomplished through an email or in another way.

It is important to determine whether a meeting is needed – Does the meeting have a defined purpose? Does there need to be interaction? Does there need to be collaboration? If the answer to all of these questions is “NO”, you can likely have skipped the meeting!

If you have decided that you need to have a meeting to accomplish your clear purpose, now you can ensure that others involved in the meeting have the opportunity for it to be a great experience.

Organizing the Experience

- Be sure EVERYONE is clear on the purpose of the meeting. How many agenda items do you have to cover, and how much time is needed? Who needs to be in your meeting to ensure you have the different perspectives available for the interaction? Every invitee should also receive an agenda. What format will be best for this conversation? Will a virtual meeting work? Does it allow for more people to participate? Does it need to be in-person? (Discussing difficult or complex subjects might best be done in-person.)
- Ensure that you share materials ahead of the meeting for people to review and you will increase the likelihood you'll have more productive discussions.
- Data supports that meetings can be effective whether they are in-person, hybrid, or virtual. If you choose to use a virtual format you should learn to use the meeting platform's tools for engagement to ensure that you can keep people focused on the meeting no matter their situation.

Maximizing the Experience

- Depending on the group of people you are bringing together, you need to leave time and space for introductions and/or pleasantries and allow your attendees to have calendar time for transitions to and from the meeting. Be thoughtful about how many agenda items are allocated to the meeting and how much time you need to schedule. Depending on the length of the meeting, the timing of when to hold it should also be considered. You also need to plan for how ideas will be shared and how you'll ensure meeting attendees can have their voices heard in multiple ways.
- Meetings can be fruitful, enjoyable, and meaningful. We should use the tools we have to determine when meetings are needed, how they can optimally be structured, and principles for conducting them in a productive manner.

References:

- Allen, J. A., Lehmann-Willenbrock, N., & Rogelberg, S.G. (2015). The Cambridge Handbook of Meeting Science.
- Reed, K. M. & Allen, J. A. (2021). Suddenly Virtual: Making Remote Meetings Work.
- Rogelberg, S. G. (2019). The Surprising Science of Meetings: How You Can Lead Your Team to Peak Performance.



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Leveraging Campus Leadership Development

UNO has always been proactive in providing professional development for those who aspire to leadership positions as well as those who are currently serving in leadership roles.

The following programs have been developed to ensure that the university nurtures its leaders to help create a system of leaders for the present and the future.



Academic Administrator Training:

Uses interactive case-based scenarios to facilitate learning and problem solving and focuses on both increasing policy and process knowledge as well as skill development. This training is scheduled throughout the academic year in three-hour blocks. Each session has a different focus related to campus organizational structure (campus leadership, organization, resources), institutional policies and processes typically the responsibility of academic administrators, and tools and resources available to support academic leadership.



Chancellor's Leadership Academy:

Is a 16-month program that includes leaders from all areas of the university in a relatively small cohort. Participants attend 90-120 minute monthly sessions featuring various leadership topics and issues for higher education generally and UNO specifically.



Faculty Fellowships

Provide leaders with the opportunity to work in an area outside their home unit to provide support for another area of the university. Faculty fellows are generally a one or two-year appointment. Fellows have served in roles within Academic Affairs, Service Learning, Division of Continuing Studies, General Education, Graduate Studies, and Division of Innovative and Learning-Centric Initiatives.



NU Developing Excellence in Academic Leaders Program (NU DEAL)

Is a focused, two-year investment in personal growth and development. Participants refine their leadership skills while interacting within the context of the many subcultures of our multifaceted educational enterprise. The program includes leaders from all NU campuses.

**Invest in
YOU**



No matter how you choose to pursue professional development, make sure you set aside this time for yourself. Professional development can positively impact decision-making abilities, adaptability to change, effective communication/collaboration and increase connections with colleagues. Continual development of your leadership skills will help you to be a more effective leader.

References:

- Joubert, S. (2021). How to Develop Leadership Skills for Careers in Higher Education. Northeastern University.



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Exploring the Role of a Chair/Director

Congratulations!

You have been appointed the chair or director of your academic unit!

The role of chair/director is one of the more complex within a university. The roles and responsibilities of a chair span people, programs, and procedures, described in detail in the references below. By applying a few practical practices, the chair can considerably improve their impact and likelihood of success.

Now What?

Lead by Persuasion and Example, with Integrity and Trust

While the academic chairs/directors have many responsibilities, they have few “command and control” tools, and those unit heads who try to lead by directive find that they burn good will very quickly. Faculty will be more willing to work with you when they feel that you are operating in the best interests of the unit and the unit members, understand that they can take you at your word, and believe that you are capable in the task at hand. The chair/director who loses integrity and the trust of the unit is unlikely to succeed.

Solve Problems

Show a preference for solving problems over winning battles. While conflict is inevitable, try to avoid zero-sum situations that create winners and losers, and look for a solution that results in a win-win outcome. Furthermore, remember that you are not alone and not every problem needs to be solved by you. Enlist others and their good ideas.

Give Credit

Acknowledge and promote the success and accomplishments of others. Part of your role is to be an advocate for your unit. Withholding credit or, even worse, taking credit for someone else’s contribution, will damage morale and reduce trust (see above).

Be Organized

A common shock to new chairs/directors is the amount information that flows to and from the chair/director. Finding a system of capturing, organizing, finding, and disseminating information should be an early priority. Learn how to structure meetings to keep them productive and efficient. If you don’t have a system that works for you, consult with colleagues and the Center for Faculty Excellence.



Take Care of Yourself

Be mindful of and prioritize your physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

References:

- Buller, J. L. & Cipriano, R. E. (2015). A Toolkit for Department Chairs.
- Dettmar, K. J. H. (2022). How to Chair a Department.
- Jochum, C. J. (2022). The Department Chair: A Practical Guide to Effective Leadership.



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Applying for Awards and Recognitions

Awards serve as a clear signal of the standards for success, encouraging others to adopt best practices and pursue higher levels of performance.

Recognition not only honors individual achievements but also fosters stronger social cohesion and collective pride, promoting a culture of continuous improvement within the organization.

Identify Awards Early

UNO offers various awards that recognize excellence in teaching, research, and service. Take time to familiarize yourself with these awards early in your career. Look for awards at both the campus and system levels (University of Nebraska President's Excellence Awards and others). Review the specific criteria, deadlines, and nomination processes.

Build a Strong Case

Awards often require a comprehensive dossier. Start by compiling evidence of your achievements, such as student evaluations, peer reviews, published research, and service contributions. Organize these materials in a way that demonstrates your impact. Tailor your submission to the specific award criteria, highlighting relevant accomplishments.

Gather External Letters of Support

Depending on the award, you will need to obtain strong letters of support from external research peers, former and current students, community organizations, and individuals affected by your work. If the minimum requirement is five letters, consider reaching out to ten potential supporters, as some may not have the time to craft a strong letter on your behalf.

Seek Peer Support

Reach out to colleagues who have received recognition in the past for guidance. They can provide valuable insights into the application process and may even review your materials before submission. Additionally, consider participating in award committees to gain a better understanding of what evaluators are looking for. I have greatly benefited from the advice of previous award recipients and have consistently sought their input to enhance my dossiers.

Stay Persistent:

Don't get discouraged if you aren't selected the first time. Many faculty members apply multiple times before receiving recognition. Use feedback to improve your submission and continue building your case.

Celebrate and Be Humble:

Whether you receive the award or not, take time to celebrate! It's an accomplishment in itself that you felt your work met the standards for consideration. At the same time, once you receive the award, remember to stay humble - you'll soon realize that without the support of UNO's ecosystem that fosters excellence, success would be not just difficult, but nearly impossible to achieve!



Pursuing faculty awards at the campus or system level can be a rewarding way to highlight your teaching, research, and service contributions.

References:

- Seppala, N. (2019). Teaching Awards in Higher Education: A Qualitative Study of Motivation and Outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*.
- Bluteau, P. & Krumins, M. A. (2008). Engaging Academics in Developing Excellence: Releasing Creativity Through Reward and Recognition. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*.



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Managing Work and Personal Commitments

The phrase “work/life balance” is not only trite but also a misnomer. It suggests an even harmony of obligations, which doesn’t exist because that’s not how life works. Life is messy and we may feel out of control when the dog needs to go to the vet, papers need grading, family members are coming for a visit, and, oh, you feel like you are coming down with a cold.



Every semester, season, and year offers an ebb and flow of commitments. Hopefully, these suggestions will help you manage them in a healthy and productive way.

Honor yourself with grace. Many people are often too hard on themselves, take on too much, and have higher expectations for themselves than they do for others. If this sounds familiar, give yourself permission to say “no,” ask for help, or request an extension. Rather than feeling like you failed, reframe it as self-care. Generally, others understand, want to help, and you are modeling positive behavior for them.

Keep on task. This may be accomplished in a variety of ways. Keeping a “to do” list allows you to recognize your accomplishments. Setting daily goals can be prepared when you are alone on your commute. Recognizing your bandwidth assists with telling people “No, I can’t take on that project until I complete the two others I have started.”

Prioritize what matters: self, family, work, other. It may feel uncomfortable or even selfish to put yourself first, yet if you don’t, you can’t attend to your other commitments. This includes your physical and mental well-being. Take time to eat healthily, stretch, exercise, rest, and do what makes you happy – without distraction.

Limit distractions. Research shows that multitasking is not possible and while you think you are doing it, you are not. Our electronic devices can be interruptions but use them to your advantage - use timers, reduce screen time, change settings to turn off disrupting functions, alter notifications. Another way to limit distractions is to simply shut the door or let others know that you need uninterrupted time.

Rethink and redefine how you choose to manage your obligations. By doing this, you take control and dismiss the negative idea that you do not maintain an appropriate work/life balance.

References:

- Holsman, J. (2022). Work Life Balance Survival Guide: How to Find Your Flow State and Create a Life of Success.
- Storch, S. L. & Ortiz Juarez-Paz, A. V. (2023). To Negotiate or Not Negotiate: Professional Boundaries Surrounding Mobile Device Usage.



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