

NEW FACULTY MENTORING FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT INITIATIVE

In welcoming new faculty to the university, we want to ensure their success in settling into their departments, faculty life on campus, and developing a sense of belonging in the city of Omaha. Proposed is a faculty mentoring framework that draws on existing best practices of all the colleges.

Mentoring Focal Areas

Recognizing diverse responsibilities and identities of each new faculty member, mentoring should cultivate a sense of belonging and address the following areas, as manifested within the context of UNO's engaged, metropolitan mission:

- Getting to know the department, college, and institution
- Excelling at teaching
- Launching and advancing your research/creative activity program
- Understanding faculty evaluation processes (i.e., RPT, annual review)
- Creating work-life balance
- Developing professional networks
- Getting to know Omaha and the community
- Belonging, inclusivity and navigating marginalized identities

Mentors and Mentees

It is recommended that all new faculty have a departmental (or college) mentor, who helps socialize them to the department (e.g., evaluation and advancement expectations, committee structure, department policies/processes), advocate in terms of teaching and service assignments, and help them get started with teaching and/or research support questions, for example.

New faculty may also benefit from an external mentor, whose home department (and/or college) differs from that of the mentee and who is identified with mentee needs/interest input (e.g., affinity group member, teaching mentor, research mentor). An external mentor can provide a safe space for conversations a mentee may not want to have with a departmental colleague (e.g., health, family matters, inclusion).

Matching a mentee with a department (or college) mentor is largely coordinated by the department chair (or dean's office) in consultation with the new faculty member and in advance of their arrival at UNO. To facilitate optimal matches, both mentees and mentors would be invited to share interests in advance and support of the matching process in the faculty onboarding process each summer/fall.

For various reasons, mentoring relationships may become untenable. Mentors and mentees can both request a "no fault" end to the mentoring relationship through their department chair or CFE.

Mentoring Meetings

It is recommended that mentor/mentee meetings take place regularly on approximately a monthly basis. A mentoring plan can also be a useful tool, as it typically contains meeting frequency, goals and objectives, and action steps, for example, and it can help with reviewing progress toward goals at the

end of the year. Though some topics are important for all mentees, there should also be an opportunity for more organic conversations to take place.

Institutional Support for Mentoring

To support the development and continuation of successful mentoring relationships and to communicate the value of mentoring, the following would be offered...

- 1) Mentor professional development: CFE would provide training for mentors focused on mentoring strategies, tips on being a good mentor and mentee, expectations for the mentoring relationship, etc. The training would be offered 1-2 times/year and may include group executive coaching.
- 2) Community of practice for mentors: Department and external mentors would be invited to connect with other mentors to discuss best practices, challenges, etc.
- 3) Refreshments: Mentors would be provided funds for beverages and snacks during monthly mentor/mentee meetings (e.g., approximately \$20-30/month * 9 months).
- 4) Mentor/mentee email group: Monthly email to mentors and mentees from CFE with conversation starters, resources, and ideas for activities/events.
- 5) Mentoring recognition and reception: Mentors and mentees would be invited to attend a mentoring recognition event with senior academic leaders intended to celebrate and recognize the work of mentors and encourage networking among mentors, mentees, and academic leaders. The event would include a brief program and reception.
- 6) Establish a mentors' guild: Identify criteria for membership (e.g., current training, mentoring history). Develop promotion and advancement pathways that recognize mentoring, search advocacy, leading professional development for faculty (e.g., Distinguished (Associate) Professor and Senior Lecturer).

Accountability and Evaluation

Accountability is important for an effective mentoring program. Recommended are an informal check-in with both mentor and mentee mid-year, and a more formal check-in at the end of the academic year with questions focused on if support has been provided/received related to the focal areas noted previously (e.g., teaching, research, etc.). Feedback should be constructive and help focus on next steps. Aggregated feedback data from both mentors and mentees will facilitate assessment of program impact.