Best Practices for Mentoring Probationary Faculty

Introduction

The Retention, Tenure and Promotion (RTP) process at Humboldt State University emphasizes, as one of the professional responsibilities of experienced members of the HSU academic community, the importance of fostering a university-wide culture of supportive and proactive mentoring of probationary faculty. Faculty mentors provide an important service to the mentee as well as the university at large.

This document outlines a number of best practices in providing effective mentoring to those faculty involved in the RTP process and establishes a formal procedure for ensuring that probationary faculty members receive adequate support throughout their RTP experience. These procedures are intended to enhance, not replace, successful mentoring practices already in use throughout the university, and to serve as a springboard for the development of additional mentoring strategies that will assist probationary faculty members in receiving tenure and promotion. The specific strategies outlined below will be supplemented by mentoring workshops to provide more detailed methods of successfully addressing the RTP criteria.

Academic Department or Unit (unit defined here as the Library and Counseling & Psychological Services)

1. Each academic department or unit develops a general mentoring plan that applies to all new probationary hires. New Position Requests include a copy of this general mentoring plan. (See Addendum for a listing of mentoring strategies that might be included in such a plan.)
2. Once an individual is hired and, when appropriate, prior to arrival on campus, a department or unit mentor is assigned who assists the new hire in developing an individualized mentoring plan. With the assistance of the Faculty Development Coordinator, the new faculty member and mentor further develop and review the individualized mentoring plan during New Faculty Orientation (see number 1 below under Faculty Development Coordinator).
3. New probationary hires meet with their department chair or equivalent and the Faculty Development Coordinator at least once per semester during their first probationary year, and once a year thereafter to discuss their mentoring experiences. On a yearly basis, the department chair or equivalent and the Initiating Unit Personnel Committee (IUPC) review the effectiveness of the mentoring process. A new mentor may be assigned to a probationary faculty member when it is deemed appropriate or necessary by the reviewers.

4. When possible, during their first year of teaching at HSU, probationary faculty members are given a limited load to allow sufficient time for orientation, new course preparations, etc. Strategies might include, but are not limited to:
    - Phasing in advising responsibilities by assisting their mentor or another faculty member in the first semester and taking on a limited advising load in the second semester;
    - Providing a one-course release in the first semester or year;
    - Teaching multiple sections of the same course in order to reduce preparation time;
    - Limiting the amount of committee work or other collateral duties assigned to the new faculty member.
5. The department/unit mentor, department chair or equivalent and IUPC assist the RTP candidate in preparing the Professional Development Plan (PDP).
6. Prior to each biannual Performance Review (Appendix J, Section VII):
    - The RTP candidate provides a list to the IUPC of individuals within and/or outside of the university who can comment upon the candidate's teaching effectiveness, scholarship and creative activities, and/or service to the university, community and profession. The IUPC solicits evaluative letters from the individuals identified on this list, and others if it chooses, such solicitations to include the RTP areas of review on which to respond.
    - The department chair or equivalent and/or IUPC request evaluative letters from department/unit faculty members that comment upon the candidate's performance in the RTP review areas.
    - For teaching faculty, members of the IUPC or designees ensure that student evaluations are conducted for classes taught by the candidate during the RTP cycle. According to Appendix J, VII.A.2.a): "Teaching faculty must have at least two classes evaluated each year...RTP candidates are encourage to have all classes evaluated for at least one year preceding their candidacy." In-class student evaluations should be administered by members of the IUPC or their designees, not by students.
    - The IUPC gathers additional student comments for teaching faculty either by soliciting student letters, conducting open forums, or through some other means.
7. Department chairs or equivalents, IUPC members and mentors are strongly encouraged to attend mentoring workshops that offer training in best mentoring practices.

College and Library Deans/Health Center Director

1. The appropriate administrator meets with the RTP candidate department chair or equivalent for Periodic Evaluation (Appendix J, Section VI) and

goal setting (PDP). At the request of the candidate, his/her mentor may be present at this meeting.
2. Annual administrative of department chairs or equivalent include a specific question(s) relating to their leadership role in facilitating mentoring activities as well as their own contributions to the RTP process.

Faculty Development Coordinator

1. During New Faculty Orientation, conducts a session with new faculty and their mentors to assist in developing and reviewing their individualized mentoring plans.
2. Makes available to new probationary faculty a list of individuals who have a commitment and demonstrated desire to serve as outside mentors. New faculty may approach such individuals to serve as mentors, but are not obligated to do so.
3. Serves as a resource for all mentors and oversees the mentoring process for each probationary faculty member.
4. Assists the Faculty Development Committee and the University Faculty Personnel Committee (UFPC) in developing workshops for mentors, department chairs or equivalents, IUPC members, the general faculty and other interested parties.

Faculty Development Committee

Develops, promotes and offers yearly best practices workshops for mentors, department chairs or equivalents and IUPC members. These workshops also include opportunities to share effective mentoring techniques currently in use by university departments/units.

UFPC

Develops, promotes and offers to the general faculty a series of training workshops each year that focus on professional and productive collegial evaluation techniques.

Office of the President

The university president or designee, in conjunction with the Faculty Development Coordinator, establishes a process for recognizing mentoring excellence provided by groups (departments/units, committees, etc.) and/or individuals.

ADDENDUM to *Best Practices for Mentoring Probationary Faculty*

Mentoring Activities and Strategies

The following list offers suggestions for mentoring activities and strategies that might be included in a general mentoring plan. It is not intended to be exclusive, nor will every item be appropriate for a given department or individual.

Prior to a new faculty member's arrival at HSU provide:

- A contact person within the department/unit who will be available to respond to questions from the new hire.
- An HSU Catalogue, and a schedule of classes and individual course schedule for the semester of hire.
- Sample syllabi for courses assigned to the new hire and, when appropriate, syllabi for co-requisites and/or pre-requisites to these courses.
- Assistance in ordering books for courses to be taught by the new hire.
- Information regarding the surrounding community, including demographics, housing, schools, childcare, area maps, etc.
- HSU and other websites that might assist in orienting the new hire to the university, local community, CSU, etc.

Upon arrival at HSU provide to the new faculty member a mentor from within the department/unit who:

- Ensures that the new hire meets all members of the department/unit, and other individuals who can assist in orienting and supporting the new hire in his/her professional responsibilities.
- Provides a tour of the HSU campus and surrounding communities.
- Familiarizes the new hire with special department/unit and university facilities and offices, including the library; health center; bookstore; special classrooms, laboratories, studios or performance spaces; parking; Office of Human Resources; Computing & Telecommunication Services; etc.
- Supplies a list of teaching resources available on campus, such as mid-semester evaluations, the Courseware Development Center, Student Support Services, Media Services, etc.
- Offers access to the Faculty Handbook, as well as a department handbook, if available, or a summary of departmental/unit operations and its policies and procedures.
- Reviews faculty governance procedures and the role of the California Faculty Association.
- Discusses Appendix J as it specifically relates to a first year probationary hire, as well as those provisions that will subsequently apply.

- Provides information on special university offices, resources and programs that assist faculty in research and creative activities, such as grant opportunities, the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, etc.

Ongoing mentorship activities include:

- Inviting the new hire to sit in on student advising sessions.
- Assistance in preparing the Professional Development Plan for Periodic Evaluation.
- Assistance in preparing the Working Personnel Action File for Performance Review, which may include helping the candidate to identify faculty members who are willing to offer examples of such files for the candidate's perusal.
- Support in addressing issues that may arise regarding teaching effectiveness or other areas of performance review.
- Help in pursuing scholarship and/or creative activities specific to the candidate's areas of interest and expertise.

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Academic Senate