Faculty Mentoring: A Document in Progress

(developed by John Ernest, Michael McCamley, and Emily Davis)

Making Connections

Mentoring Events

> In addition to the regular events and receptions organized by the departments, the Chair will support mentoring lunches or dinners to connect new faculty to one another and to possible mentors.

Collaborative Work

> Develop and support opportunities for collaborative work between senior and junior faculty (team teaching, grant work, collaborative research presentations, etc.)

Publishing Workshops

> The Chair will support a publishing workshop for junior faculty preparing their first book. This can include bringing in scholars from other institutions to comment on the manuscript. The chair will also talk regularly with junior faculty about how to prepare work for publication and what kinds of research plans and publication venues might be best to pursue.

External Mentors

> The Chair will support junior faculty in identifying and meeting with potential mentors from other institutions.

University Connections

> The Department will work with others in the College and the University to establish both a mentoring network and contacts with appropriate UD offices to prepare for those times when there is serious conflict in the department, when senior faculty in the field are polarized, and/or when the stakes for the shape of the department or the new faculty member's professional career and mental well-being are high--from academic disputes within the disciplines to harassment. We will also connect faculty to available advocacy groups–the Women's Caucus, for example–to help them address systemic imbalances or obstacles at UD and in the profession.

Topics to Consider

Research

Publishing strategies, trajectories, and time-lines
- What projects should I prioritize?
- How do I keep my book project in the mix while still attending to other publishing possibilities?

- When should a book manuscript be completed so as to ensure publication before the tenure process begins?
- How do I go about making and sustaining professional contacts with senior scholars in the field?
- Someone asked me to co-edit a project, or contribute an essay to a book, or submit an essay to a journal? Should I?

Publishing articles
- What journals should I be reading?
- To what journals should I submit my work?
- How do I handle the "revise and resubmit" process? What is the time-line, and how do I decide what revisions to make, how those revisions affect the rest of the article, and how to summarize the revisions when I re-submit my article?

Publishing Books
- What makes a good book proposal?
- How to select a press, and what do these selections mean for a scholarly career?
- How do I handle email correspondence or in-person meetings with acquisition editors or other representatives at the press?
- How do I respond to the readers' reports, and how to I go about revising the manuscript?

Getting Grants
- What kinds of grants are available to people in my field?
- How do I write a successful grant or fellowship?
- When should I apply for a grant or fellowship?
- Where should I look for grant or fellowship opportunities?

Professional Life
- How many and which conferences should I attend each year?
- How do I organize a conference session, and how approach senior scholars to include in the session?
- What social opportunities at conferences should I look for, and what is the etiquette for interacting with senior scholars, editors, and other junior scholars in the field?
- Also, how do I decide which sessions are worth my valuable time?

Teaching

Choosing Which Courses to Teach
- How do I align department teaching needs with my promotion goals?
- How many different courses should I teach per semester?
- How many new courses should I develop per year? per contract term?
- How do I propose new courses?
- How can I help students see the connection between my course and other English Department courses?
- Is team teaching a possibility?

Designing Courses
- What should I think about when preparing a syllabus for UD classes?
- How much reading and writing should I assign? What can I expect from students?
- How can I develop an effective set of learning goals?
- How can I design instruction to achieve those goals?
- How can I assess learning at the levels of individual classes, assignments, units, and entire courses?
- How do I interpret the assessment results to improve my teaching?

Encouraging Teaching Innovation and Identifying Campus Resources for Teaching
- How can I develop new approaches or methods in my teaching?
- How do I learn about multimedia tools and support?
- How can I develop new material or approaches while still maintaining control over my overall schedule?
- What resources are available in the department/college/university to help me develop as a teacher?

Documenting Teaching Effectiveness
- How do I determine what materials to put in my dossiers?
- How do I write effective narratives?
- What is the difference between reappointment dossiers and promotion dossiers, and how do I create dossiers for each?

Service

- When should I say yes to service requests, when (and how) can I say no?
- How can I be effective on committees and in other service roles?
- How can I be an effective mentor to others?
- How do I document excellent or high-quality service contributions?
- What service is expected of CT faculty members?
- What service is expected of TT faculty members?

Arcane Knowledge, or the Information in the Secret Manual You Never Got

Research

- The implicit expectation is that TT Literary Studies faculty will publish books for tenure, though multiple faculty have been tenured on a significant collection of articles in other areas in the department. Excellence in scholarship is the standard that all TT faculty must meet, and the department rubric identifies how excellence is measured by the department's Faculty Review

Committee and Promotion and Tenure Committee. If you're planning on a book for tenure, three or four articles should ideally accompany the book.

- While CT faculty in our department many not have a research component to their workload, research related to your teaching is certainly valued farther up the line and will enhance your case for promotion, since it will help make the case for your national reputation in the field. An article or two in a mid-tier journal would be great, but you can also show research productivity through several conference presentations.

- TT faculty should aim to submit a book proposal by the beginning of year three if possible. Department precedent is that the final acceptance letter from the press is the requirement for promotion; the book may not yet be out.

- For new faculty, especially those on the tenure track, strongly consider participating in the Faculty Success Program (http://www.facultydiversity.org/?FSProgramDescription) as early as possible. UD has an institutional membership, and the department can nominate you for a spot paid by the office of the Vice Provost for Diversity. Stephanie, Jessica, Emily, Meg, Siobhan, and several others have participated in the program and can give you more information. The program runs for a semester or summer and focuses on prioritizing research productivity, building mentoring networks, and generally staying sane while getting your work done.

- On article revisions: the advice I (Emily) have received is the faster, the better. Try not to sit on revisions more than 6 weeks if they do not give you a set deadline.

- Feel free to ask for sample book proposals from colleagues, and don't be shy about asking people to read proposal drafts. The designated department mentors will be happy to read these drafts, but others will as well. Colleagues are also a great resources for handling those weird correspondence situations like readers' reports and can help you respond strategically.

- A grant or fellowship can be a great way to extend a junior faculty leave to a year. There are some grant writing superstars in this department. Ask for samples from Melissa, Gabrielle, Martin, Stephanie, and Siobhan. Here again, don't be shy. One really nice thing about this department is that your colleagues want you to be promoted. Really!

- Tenure track faculty generally present at 2-3 major conferences each year in their respective fields. For CT faculty, consider at least one major conference in your field per year.

Teaching

- For both CT and TT faculty, be wary of designing too many new courses at once. If possible, aim for one new prep per year or two.

- More and more, the department and university expect to see course goals/outcomes on syllabi. For other statements to put on syllabi, great teaching resources, and good advice on documenting teaching innovation for your tenure/promotion case, check out the Center for Teaching and the Assessment of Learning (CTAL) web site: http://ctal.udel.edu/. Especially CT

faculty, consider attending CTAL's Summer Faculty Institute at least once before going up for promotion.

- If you're not a techie person, don't suffer through learning Canvas, Sakai, web site design, etc. yourself. The new Faculty Commons at 116 Pearson Hall has helpful tech folks on hand to help you with instructional technology questions and serves free coffee.

Service

- It can be really hard to say no to service requests as a new faculty member, but you have to be as mercenary as you can about protecting your time without pissing everyone off. Part of our job as department mentors is to help you say no if it's difficult to say no directly. Do not hesitate to use us for this purpose. The chair is also a perfectly appropriate person to approach with this issue.

- Ideally, TT faculty will have some service at each level: department, college, university, and profession. Be selfishly strategic about service that will be meaningful to you and show "impact." Again, feel free to use us to strategically say no to service that does not seem valuable or for which the time required isn't worth the payoff.

- For CT faculty, the precedent for promotion in our department has been a leadership role/office in a national organization as a way to show national impact, as well as targeted service to the department and possibly university.