School of Social Welfare Mentoring Policy

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Formal mentoring is a useful way of helping new faculty members adjust to their new environment and role in the scholarly community. It also supports pre-tenure faculty members in their ongoing scholarly development as they move toward tenure.

Unclassified academic staff who hold faculty equivalent rank of assistant are eligible for mentoring pursuant to this policy and references to pre-tenure faculty in this policy include assistant rank unclassified academic staff to the extent they are eligible for mentoring using the standards and procedures of this policy, with due regard for their distinctive roles and professional responsibilities.

This document describes the formal mentor (from now on ‘mentor’) process in the University of Kansas (KU) School of Social Welfare (from now on ‘the School’). The purposes of this policy are to ensure that pre-tenure faculty members have an identified mentor available to them from early in their first year at KU and to provide for changes in the identified mentor as needed. In addition to the formal mentoring outlined here, pre-tenure faculty members are encouraged to develop collaborations and informal mentoring with other faculty members, perhaps for different purposes. Faculty members are encouraged to take their roles as mentees and mentors seriously, as this is important for supporting pre-tenured faculty members’ success.

Distribution of Policy to New Faculty

New faculty will be notified of this policy and procedure in three ways in order to help them prepare to select a mentor. (1) The Dean will provide a copy of this policy at time of appointment to the faculty. (2) The orientation for new faculty will include a brief presentation about the mentoring policy by a member of the Faculty Executive Committee. (3) In the first week of the new faculty member’s first semester, the Chair of the Faculty Executive Committee will send a reminder including an attachment of the policy and will lay out the specific steps which are outlined below that the Faculty Executive Committee is responsible for facilitating.

The Formal Mentoring Relationship

New faculty members will have varying needs and areas of focus upon their arrival at the School and as they move toward tenure. Therefore, the nature of each individual mentoring relationship will be unique and should be defined by the mentee. Once a mentoring relationship is established, it is helpful for the mentee and the mentor to discuss their hopes and expectations for the mentoring relationship. In general, the mentor can serve as a guide and resource for navigating the formal and informal policies, procedures and expectations in the School and the University. Additionally, a mentor can act as a sounding board and supporter who provides tips and strategies for success in the School and the broader University as well as in the mentee’s areas of scholarship and teaching. Mentor responsibilities do not include evaluation. Questions
about evaluation and promotion and tenure should be directed towards the School’s Promotion, Retention and Tenure (PRT) Committee. Mentors also need to be cautious to avoid actions that may communicate the appearance of conflict of interest or pressure to engage in collaborations.

Below are some examples of how a mentor can provide a mentee with support. These are examples rather than requirements as the need for these various activities will differ from mentee to mentee over time. Also, this list is not inclusive of all ways that mentors can provide support.

- Provide guidance and feedback on scholarly activities (e.g. read manuscripts, review grant applications, etc.)
- Provide guidance and feedback on teaching
- Advise or collaborate on research, scholarship, and writing
- Introduce mentee to colleagues and experts across the campus and local community
- Introduce mentee to colleagues and experts in local, national, and international social work community
- Clarify School and University policies and expectations (formal and informal)
- Clarify questions about School or University governance
- Clarify roles of different School faculty and staff and who to go to for what
- Support the balance of research, teaching, and service
- Offer advice and support for the mentee regarding the School’s expectations and procedures for retention and promotion, for example,
  - Attendance at mentee’s annual PRT Committee review meeting
  - Providing support and aid during the mentee’s third year review process (read materials, provide feedback, provide examples)
  - Providing support and aid during the mentee’s tenure review process

Mentees and mentors are encouraged to reflect on how they can best engage in this relationship. Helpful resources about mentoring can be found by internet search under the terms ‘pre-tenure faculty mentoring’ or ‘junior faculty mentoring’. One example is the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (https://www.facultydiversity.org/home).

**Process for Selection of Mentors**

- New faculty members submit a brief statement (maximum 1-2 pages single-spaced) to the Dean and Faculty Executive Committee Chair describing what they would like from a mentoring relationship (i.e. needs, preferences). This brief statement should be submitted prior to the first Faculty Executive Committee Meeting (typically held in September in the fall or late January/early February in the spring) of the first semester in which the new faculty member joins the School of Social Welfare.
- The mentoring statement could include such topics as preferred qualifications of a mentor in terms of substantive or methodological expertise for research or teaching; level of structure in mentoring, such as involving regular and organized contact or occasional as-needed meetings; and interpersonal or communication style. Of course, these needs and preferences can change over time.
In this statement, new faculty members should also include names of 2-3 faculty members with tenure or faculty equivalent position for unclassified academic staff (FEP) who they believe may be a good mentoring fit for them. A brief rationale should be given for choice of each potential mentor.

- New faculty members are encouraged to obtain information about potential mentors through a variety of means to help them identify these names. For example, mentees can explore common interests directly with potential mentors, visit faculty members with tenure or FEP websites, review CVs, and discuss potential mentors with trusted colleagues.

In this statement, the new faculty member should rank the potential mentors based on who they believe would be the best match for their mentoring relationship needs.

- Based on the new faculty members’ statements, their substantive area and/or methodological approach and the list of potential mentees they identified, the Faculty Executive Committee develops a pool of three faculty members with tenure or FEP who are likely to match the new faculty members' needs.
- The Faculty Executive Committee then shares this pool with the new faculty member. If this is a change from the list submitted by the new faculty member, a brief rationale will be given for the change (e.g., mentor is known to be not available or mentee did not identify three possibilities).
- The new faculty member reviews and re-ranks the list as needed, and shares the final list with the Faculty Executive Committee.
- The Faculty Executive Committee provides the mentee’s statement and list (with rankings) to the Dean.
- Taking into consideration the new faculty member’s statement, the proposed pool of mentors provided by the Faculty Executive Committee, and knowledge of faculty members’ interests and workloads, the Dean approaches the top ranked potential mentor to determine their willingness to serve as a mentor. The Dean repeats this process until one of the ranked potential mentors agrees to serve. If none of the identified potential mentors are available, the process described above is repeated until a potential mentor agrees to serve.
- The Dean informs the chair of the Faculty Executive Committee of the assigned mentor of the new faculty member.
- The chair of the Faculty Executive Committee notifies the new faculty member of the assigned mentor.
- The chair of the Faculty Executive Committee notifies the Dean and the chair of the PRT Committee of the new faculty member’s assigned mentor.

NOTE: The entire initial mentor selection process must be completed by the end of the new faculty member’s first semester in the School of Social Welfare.

**Evaluation of Mentoring Relationship**

**Regarding Mentees:**

- Each year as part of the annual merit review, the Dean will ask all pre-tenured faculty members about their mentoring relationships to determine if the current mentor-mentee
relationship is meeting the current needs of the pre-tenured faculty members. If it is not, the Dean can initiate the above selection process again to match the faculty member with a new mentor. A prompt to inquire about mentoring will be included on the annual merit report form.

- During these meetings, the Dean and pre-tenure faculty member can also discuss replacement of a mentor if the mentor is going on sabbatical, taking a leave of absence, or leaving the university.
- If a mentoring relationship is not meeting the needs of a pre-tenured faculty member, a conversation between the mentee and mentor about the pre-tenured faculty member's mentoring needs and the need for a change should occur if possible and then the need for a change can be brought to the Dean for further action. If such a conversation is not possible, the mentee can request a change of mentor without it.

Regarding Mentors:

- Each year as part of the annual merit review, the Dean will ask all faculty members with tenure or FEP who serve as mentors about their mentoring relationships to determine if the current mentor-mentee relationship is able to continue. If it is not, the Dean can initiate the above selection process again to match the mentee with a new mentor. A prompt to inquire about mentoring will be included on the annual merit report form.
- If a mentoring relationship is not meeting the expectations of a mentor, or performing as a mentor is no longer possible, a conversation between the mentee and mentor about the need for a change should occur if possible and then the need for a change can be brought to the Dean for further action. If such a conversation is not possible, the mentor can request a change without it.

NOTE: If a change of mentee/mentor assignment is needed before waiting for an annual merit review meeting, either the mentee or the mentor can bring this to the attention of the Chair of the Faculty Executive Committee who will discuss with the Dean how to initiate the change.