

COBA Mentoring Program for New Faculty¹

The College of Business Administration at the University of North Texas recognizes that new faculty are among the most important resources of the college. As such, there are a number of formal processes in place to ensure that new faculty members receive feedback necessary for their development and retention from their department chair, PAC/PAT, and the dean. It is also recognized, however, that much of the adjustment to a life in academe for a new faculty member comes from less formal interaction with their colleagues. While such interaction is best when it occurs naturally, it is important to ensure that new faculty have at least one trusted colleague to whom they can turn for interaction and help on matters that may not be directly addressed through more formal mechanisms.

The college, accordingly, has established this mentoring program. It is meant to complement the more formal guidance provided through the official policies and procedures and to help new faculty members acclimate to their new environment. While the program is meant to be non-evaluative and to provide interaction in a relaxed atmosphere, there are nonetheless important responsibilities in the program for the department chair, the mentor, and the new faculty member. Each of these is outlined below. It is also important to note that, as outlined here, the program is a minimum standard to be followed by every department. Departments are encouraged to consider their own policies for new faculty development and to supplement this program with additional standards should they see fit.

Department Chair Responsibilities

The department chair is responsible for assigning a mentor to each new faculty member before the new faculty member arrives on campus. Care should be taken in assignment of mentors, and every effort made to ensure a good fit in terms of interests and personalities. Recognizing, however, that establishment of interpersonal relationships is an inexact process, the chair is responsible for checking at least once per semester to ensure that both the mentor and the new faculty member are comfortable with the arrangement. The chair should offer confidential advice on improving the relationship should any problems arise. If necessary, the chair can and should make changes in assignment without prejudice or concern for assigning fault. Such monitoring should continue for at least the first three years for faculty new to academe and as necessary for more experienced new faculty.

Mentor Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the assigned mentor to make contact with the new faculty member before s/he arrives on campus, to meet on a regular basis thereafter, and generally to be available should the new faculty member desire additional interaction. Topics of discussion might include specific advice related to faculty member responsibilities in teaching, research, and service, but should also include helping the new faculty member become acclimated to life in the college by

¹ This document was created after examining a number of other university mentoring programs on the web and has benefited from the knowledge gained from those programs. Of particular value was the program at the University of California at San Diego. While an effort was made to establish this program as our own, the format and spirit borrows heavily from that program (see <http://academicaffairs.ucsd.edu/faculty/programs/fmp/default.htm>)

discussing where and how to get things done, helping the faculty member establish a network with other colleagues, and interpreting university, college and department policies and procedures. The mentor should treat all interaction with the new faculty as confidential. The mentor's role is one of providing support and guidance rather than evaluation or assessment.

New Faculty Member Responsibilities

The new faculty member is responsible for maintaining contact with his or her mentor and keeping the mentor informed of any problems or issues as they arise. Recognizing that the mentor has duties and responsibilities beyond his or her role as mentor, the new faculty member should allow sufficient time for the mentor when specific feedback is sought on aspects of the faculty member's work.