

Discussion Topics* and Best Practices for Mentoring Faculty

*topics that ~70-90% WSU faculty respondents “somewhat agreed” or “strongly agreed” were important (WSU Faculty Mentoring Survey, 2011)

- Understanding unit culture/expectations
- Tenure and promotion progress
- Balancing research/teaching/service
- Understanding institution culture/expectations
- Publishing issues
- Developing collaborations
- Developing long-term professional goals
- Grantsmanship
- Service issues (e.g., how to balance/select service commitments)
- Classroom instruction issues
- Student mentoring issues
- Work-life issues
- Other topics?

General Recommendations:

- Do not rely on a single mentor (misdirection less likely with greater diversity of input)
- Engage discipline-specific mentor(s) in addition to institution/unit-specific mentors (to increase relevance of career guidance to mentee’s particular sub-field)
- If too few senior colleagues in unit/on campus, engage those outside unit/campus (this is a good practice anyway, so that mentees gain perspective from those outside the unit but within the college/university)
- Ask mentee to identify possible mentors (increases likelihood of functional matches)
- Before each meeting, mentee circulates c.v., and identifies topics that s/he wants to discuss
- Before each meeting, mentors peruse mentee’s c.v., and identify topics that they want to discuss
- At each meeting, review the criteria for promotion as stated in the unit T&P guidelines.
- Recognize/reward service as mentor to faculty colleagues (to provide incentive or at least recognize such service)
- Do not require service as mentor (to avoid reluctant and therefore likely poor guidance)
- Chair/unit director should meet periodically with all senior faculty to maintain consensus on unit tenure/promotion evaluation & guidelines
- Mentoring committees should discuss any lack of consensus with all senior faculty and unit director, to try to resolve stark disagreements among mentors – and then get back to the mentee.