

Purpose – Our faculty are at the core of what Coe College is all about – as our mission statement says:

It is the mission of Coe College to provide students an education of superior quality that aims at preparing them for life following graduation. Our reason to exist as an institution is to ready students intellectually, professionally, and socially to lead productive and satisfying lives in the global society of the 21st century.

Those who implement this statement – who meet students every day and lead them through challenging intellectual arguments, who work side-by-side with students on scholarship, who engage in shared governance to constantly move the institution forward – are clearly key to the success of the college. Furthermore, departments and the college invest a great deal of resources in the search process to find the person who will be the best “fit” for the position. Helping our new faculty colleagues get off to a good start at Coe is clearly a worthwhile investment of time and resources.

BENEFITS OF NEW FACULTY MENTORING

For the new faculty member

- individual encouragement
- development of a network
- constructive criticism and informal feedback
- advice on balancing teaching, research, committee work, grant writing, and other responsibilities
- inside information on the workings and culture of the college
- knowledge of the informal and formal rules for advancement
- knowledge of the procedures of the college
- advice on scholarship/teaching
- reduction of stress

For the mentor

- satisfaction in assisting in the development of a colleague
- satisfaction of contributing to overall good of the college
- ideas for and feedback and collaboration about the mentor’s own teaching/ scholarship/service
- retention of excellent faculty colleagues
- increased commitment, productivity, and satisfaction of new faculty
- retention—prevention of attrition of new faculty
- encouragement of cooperation and cohesiveness for those involved in the program

So – it makes sense to make sure that when new faculty members arrive on campus, we as a community will make every effort to be certain that they are successful in adapting to life at Coe. Our mentoring program is an attempt to make sure that happens.

Responsibilities of the mentors – New faculty will likely have questions about teaching, the Coe student profile, scholarly expectations, work-life balance, finding resources, college culture, Corridor activities,

and many other issues. Since no one individual is likely to have expertise in all of these areas, our new faculty mentoring program will include three different types of mentoring. In doing so, we hope to help new faculty develop an extended network which can serve as a long-term resource.

- College mentor – the new faculty member (with assistance from the associate dean for faculty development and the department) will select a professor (preferably tenured) from outside of the division of the new faculty member to serve as a college mentor. We will ask for volunteers from among eligible faculty, who will fill out a simple online form to assist in the process. College mentors will receive an initial orientation regarding best practices¹ in mentoring as well as suggested areas of focus. Monthly meetings between the college mentor and new faculty during the first year would be a suggested minimum, though this can be adjusted accorded to the preference of the mentor and mentee. Example of useful interactions could include exchanging classroom visits, attending campus events together, and informal conversations over coffee.² The college mentor should provide informal advice on aspects of teaching, scholarly work, internal funding sources, campus politics, and committee work and should be able to direct the new faculty member to the appropriate individuals or offices as needed. Often the greatest assistance a mentor can provide is simply the identification of which staff, program, or office one should approach for specific questions or concerns. College mentors will typically not be asked to provide any type of evaluation of the mentee unless requested specifically by the mentee.
- Department mentor – the chair of the department (or someone in the department designated by the chair) will serve as the departmental mentor. The departmental mentor will typically be in contact with new faculty on a daily basis and will serve as a resource for many of the initial questions of new faculty. Share documents of importance to your department – assessment plan, curricular review, departmental budget – and explain their history and development.³ The departmental mentor –given the regular interaction with new faculty members – may also be the best person to advise on *ad hoc* requests such as independent studies, honors theses, and search committees which can take up a great deal of a new faculty members time. While there may be some overlap in responsibilities with the college mentor, expectations about scholarship and professional development are key areas best addressed by the departmental mentor. Identifying successful strategies for finding resources, identifying collaborators, and integration of scholarship with teaching are possible topics for discussion.
- Peer mentors – regular meetings of the new faculty cohort in a given year (organized by the associate dean for faculty development) will provide opportunities for new faculty to share

¹ See, for example,

<https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/11661/A%20Model%20for%20Mentoring%20University%20Faculty%20in%20Educational%20Forum2.pdf?sequence=1> One of the better overviews of the small amount of research done specifically on mentoring college/university faculty.

² Carleton has excellent materials for mentoring new faculty. See <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/mentoring/mentors/>.

³ Knox has an extensive document on department chair responsibilities, including mentoring new faculty. See <https://www.knox.edu/Documents/pdfs/ChairsGuide-2010.pdf>.

insights, discoveries, and questions. These meetings will often feature other members of the faculty or administrators addressing issues of interest for new faculty.⁴

It should also be understood that if a mentoring relationship does not work – as is the case with any type of human relationship – either the mentor or the mentee may inform the associate dean for faculty development, and another mentor may be assigned.

Some additional suggestions for college and departmental mentors:

- Meet regularly. It is important to meet regularly, even when one of you feels too busy. Set agendas for each meeting so you are certain to cover important topics.
- Leave time for unstructured conversations. While agendas are good for orientation purposes, be sure to leave time to discuss issues that have arisen for your mentee. Be certain you hold those conversations in strictest confidence in order to maintain the trust that is important to your mentoring relationship.
- Help establish a social and professional network. Introduce your mentee to colleagues across campus—both as a social act and as a way to help build professional connections. Consider attending university events together, like lectures, receptions, faculty meetings, etc. Introduce your mentee to the crucial staff people in offices across campus.
- Be proactive. Your mentee will not always know the right questions to ask, or may not always feel comfortable admitting to a teaching problem or lack of knowledge. Ask specific questions that will generate conversation.
- Understand your mentee’s needs. It seems to go without saying, but it is important to get to know your mentee’s background, goals, interests, and needs to understand the person you are mentoring. New hires range widely in their previous experiences and expertise, so learning about your mentee early on can make your mentoring efforts more focused and productive.

The associate dean for faculty development will meet with mentors at the beginning of the academic year to further discuss expectations and best practices in mentoring found at other institutions.⁵

Responsibilities of Mentees

As with any relationship, a successful mentor/mentee relationship requires work from all persons involved. A new faculty member cannot simply sit back and “be mentored,” but must be an active participant in the process. The new faculty member should raise questions or issues for conversation, and use the mentor’s perspectives to learn about the college and community. Mentees should keep their mentors informed of any problems or concerns as they arise.

- Make time to meet regularly with your mentor. You will be very busy the first semester, but it is important to make time to meet regularly with your mentor, even when you feel

⁴ The Carleton mentoring website has a good sample schedule with topics.

⁵ For example, <https://www.insidehighered.com/career-advice/how-be-great-mentor>.

overwhelmed... or especially when you feel overwhelmed. Research shows that a good mentoring relationship leads to a “more rapid socialization to campus” as well as improved ratings of teaching. So look at mentoring as an important long-term investment of your time, not just another hassle in your short-term schedule.

- Ask for help or feedback when you need it. Ask questions when you have them; floundering around or fixing mistakes later will take too much of your valuable time. Don’t worry that you are bothering your mentor, or how asking for help might appear. You are new and need assistance; that is the precise reason we have a mentor program in place!
- Be willing to listen and learn. Part of your professional identity probably involves being self-reliant, but take the time to listen to the advice your mentor provides and look at this as an important learning opportunity. Sure, not all advice is useful or accurate in any situation, but be open to learning from your experienced colleagues.
- Take advantage of the opportunities presented. Again, consider various opportunities—classroom observations, teaching circles, writing retreats, mini-grants, etc.—as investments in your long-term professional development. Find time for these opportunities, and consider asking your mentor for guidance on which uses of your time might be most beneficial.
- Be open and honest. Honesty is vital to getting you the guidance and assistance you need. Because your mentor understands the need for confidentiality, you can feel safe in sharing these thoughts. Remember that confidentiality works both ways, and that your mentors will be best able to advise you if they know confidentiality will be respected by you as well.

Assessment

All participants in the program will be surveyed at the end of the academic year – not to evaluate any individuals – but to evaluate the program and identify areas which may be improved.