

University of Utah College of Pharmacy: Junior Faculty Mentoring (2011)

The University of Utah College of Pharmacy is committed to the success of its faculty and their full participation in the academic mission of their respective Departments, the College and the University. The quality and success of the College in fulfilling its missions of student learning (teaching and professional training), the creation of new knowledge (research), and contributions to the university, the community and the profession (service) is dependent on the quality and success of each of its individual faculty. In recent years, the missions and scope of contemporary pharmacy programs and education of today's professional pharmacist have changed, and will continue to do so into the future. The information explosion and the changing classroom environment and expectations have mandated innovative didactic teaching methods and restructured curricula. The landscape of the research endeavors and the means to support them has also changed dramatically. These dynamic changes in the missions of the College and the continued hiring of faculty often trained in disciplines and cultures other than pharmacy have led to an increased emphasis on the need for the mentoring of junior faculty, and the need for senior faculty participation in the process. Each new junior faculty hire is a substantial investment of University and College resources of many types that should be carefully managed to maximize return on this investment through the continual professional mentoring and effective guidance of new faculty. College faculty recognize that junior faculty requests to their colleagues for help and guidance in defining and achieving their professional goals through partnered mentoring are a sign of strength, and that offering assistance and professional guidance is an obligate responsibility of senior faculty in providing and sustaining a collegial and nurturing professional environment in which junior faculty might best reach their full potential for success.

In the culture of the University of Utah College of Pharmacy, professional faculty mentoring occurs at several levels: an assigned faculty member-specific mentoring committee, an annual evaluation by the Department Chair, an annual report from the Department RPT Advisory Committee, and at the College level from an annual report of the College RPT Advisory Committee deliberations and the Dean's overall evaluation. In addition, the Associate Dean for Faculty is a designated mentoring resource available to all College faculty at any time.

Mentoring is most critical as junior faculty negotiate their pre-tenure probationary period. In the recent past, departments have varied slightly in the timing of the formation and in the

composition of the faculty-specific mentoring committee. The College is now adopting a uniformly applicable mentoring policy. The assigned faculty mentoring committee comprises three senior faculty members, one from the home department, one from another College of Pharmacy department, and one from outside the College. The individuals on this committee are selected based upon discussions between the junior faculty member and the Department Chair in the first semester of appointment. The committee composition may be subsequently changed if circumstances dictate, but such changes should be kept to a minimum since there is the expectation that the junior faculty member and the committee maintain a trusting and lasting professional partnership. The committee is required to meet in its entirety with the junior faculty member at least once each semester throughout the pre-tenure period. Suggested topics for possible discussion at these meetings are appended to this policy document. After each formal meeting, the junior faculty member will be required to write a brief report of the mentoring discussion and any recommendations, obtain committee signatures and retain the signed report for inclusion in the formal file submitted annually to the Department RPT Advisory Committee. It is expected that the junior faculty member share with his/her mentoring committee any recent accomplishments in the three areas of professional pre-tenure evaluation as described in the Department guidelines for retention promotion and tenure (i.e., teaching, research and scholarly activity, and service). In the area of teaching, it is expected that this will include considerations of any recent student course evaluations and peer observation reports. While peer observations by the College are organized/coordinated by a standing Teaching and Learning Committee, and consist of two faculty attending, ranking and commenting on a didactic lecture, offering immediate feedback, and producing a formal report (that becomes part of the RPT file), it is the responsibility of the junior faculty member to ensure that peer observations are obtained and in a timely manner.

In addition to the advice received from his/her assigned faculty mentoring committee, the junior faculty member should expect further advice and recommendations, on an annual basis at a minimum, from the Department RPT Advisory Committee (DRPTAC) formal reporting, a letter from the Department Chair, from the College RPT Advisory Committee (CRPTAC) formal reporting, and a letter from the College Dean. Thus, the faculty member under review for retention in the pre-tenure period receives annual advice from the entire spectrum of College faculty, and significantly, those who will likely be advising on the faculty's award of tenure. The fourth year (mid-term) retention consideration is a Formal evaluation, and the reports and letters indicated above will possibly also contain mentoring elements derived from external evaluators.

To facilitate effective committee mentoring and collegial advisory and review meetings, the College of Pharmacy has compiled the following list of topics for discussion, information dissemination, or evaluation and performance criteria on which junior faculty might solicit professional guidance and advice (and that mentors might also willingly and actively provide in a constructive manner):

General:

- Department, College and university administrative structures and cultures, salary structure, benefits and resources (HR).
- Review of personal statements that include philosophy, goals, and future plans, and CV and biosketch compilations.
- The RPT process and interpretation of annual reports from various levels.
- Time management skills and priorities including time and effort allocations to teaching, research and service and any variations over time.
- Personnel and inter-personal team management skills, group management.

Teaching:

- Criteria for RPT excellence in teaching.
- Teaching reports interpretation, and resources available for improvement.
- Teaching load, graduate & professional curriculum distribution, semester distribution, coursemasterships, new course/lecture development, exam preparation/compilation and grading practices.
- Graduate student supervision and mentorship, numbers, post-doctoral fellows/summer/undergraduate training, trainee timely progress.
- Today's classroom environment, today's student profile, techniques for engaging multiple learning styles.

Research:

- Criteria for RPT excellence in research, including expectations on research funding.
- Grant and manuscript pre-submission review and post-submission post-mortem.
- Funding agencies, funding limitations and success levels, local versus national, campus/college resources and officialdom.
- Budgeting and accounting, rules and regulations, and what is negotiable.
- Space needs, independent research needs versus core facility availability, major equipment acquisition.
- Manuscript numbers, major versus minor works, journal quality/standing, single versus multiple authors, co-authorship sequence, chapters and reviews versus primary literature generation.
- Independence and collaborations (whether with senior or junior), perceived value to department, college, university.
- Visibility and presentations: local, national, invited talks versus attendance/posters, student versus faculty presentations, small (narrow focus) versus large conferences, networking and potential external reviewer identification.
- Research group workforce distribution and selection/recruitment: graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, technician, etc expectations of each and project/task suitability.
- Research group productivity, efficiency, morale, personnel and workplace management.

Service:

- RPT expectations and criteria at department, college, university, and national levels, and relative values.
- Professional society involvement, event/conference organizing, committees.

- Manuscript and grant reviewing, expectations and documentation.
- Non-supervisory thesis committee service.