

Ad Hoc Committee on Junior Faculty Mentoring
Final Report to University Senate
June 1, 2005

Committee Membership:

James Groccia (Chair), Arthur Appel, Carole Johnson, Fran Kochan, Vivian Larkin, Michel Smith, Pam Ulrich, Marie Wooten

Committee Charge:

"The purpose of the Junior Faculty Mentoring Program is to enhance Auburn's ability to retain ALL talented young tenure track faculty. Once developed and approved by the administration, the initiative will be open to ALL Junior Faculty, with special emphasis on women, African Americans and other people of color. This Ad Hoc Committee, chaired by Dr. James Groccia, will be asked to study the best faculty mentoring programs in the country and presently at Auburn University and design a model that is conducive, broad and comprehensive for Auburn University. The Committee will be prepared to make its first report to the Senate at the January 18, 2005 meeting. A second report will be presented and discussed at the February 8, 2005 Senate meeting. The Senate will be asked to approve a final version at the March 8, 2005 Senate meeting, with a recommendation forwarded to the Provost on March 9, 2005."

Introduction¹

The following statement by Professor Marjorie A. Olmstead of the Department of Physics at the University of Washington serves as a good introduction to junior faculty mentoring and provides a rationale for the recommendations that follow.

"The myriad new opportunities and responsibilities that burst upon a brand new faculty member can be both exhilarating and overwhelming. Almost overnight, a new faculty member is faced with brand new courses to teach, a laboratory empty of both equipment and students, implicit departmental taboos and traditions, insufficient funding, and demands for one's time coming in from all sides. On top of all this, there is considerable personal upheaval: finding a new home, adjusting to a new city, and having very few friends who won't also have a vote on one's tenure.

The above problems have always faced new faculty. However, the problems have been magnified recently. In many departments, it has been five to ten years since the last tenure-track hire in a given sub-field, and the old expectations may not be appropriate for current hires. In the intervening years, funding has become much more difficult to obtain

¹ Olmstead, M.A., Introduction and Overview of Junior Faculty Mentoring: Mentoring New Faculty: Advice to Department Chairs, University of Washington, retrieved 5/24/05 from <http://faculty.washington.edu/olmstd/research/Mentoring.html>

and maintain, and the technical sophistication, capital funds, and time required to start a competitive research program from scratch have increased dramatically. In addition, pressure for improved teaching at research universities, and for improved research at four-year colleges, is changing the traditional balances. New faculty hear contradictory messages about expectations regarding teaching, research, service and funding, and have difficulty sorting out the priorities that will achieve tenure. ...

When a department makes a new hire at the assistant professor level, it has invested one of its most valuable resources: a tenure-track faculty position. If the department does not nurture that new professor, it greatly reduces the probability of a good return on that investment. On the other hand, if the department facilitates access to the knowledge and resources required to develop a new faculty member's career, the payoff is likely to be a valued colleague for many years. If a new faculty member is successful, everyone benefits. If a new faculty member is unsuccessful, not only the faculty member suffers. If the physics community perceives that the department was at least partially responsible, then the department may suffer repercussions in future attempts to recruit faculty and students.”

Committee Report:

Due to the date of committee formation, it was impossible to meet the timeline indicated in the committee charge. The committee has met four times: January 11, 2005; January 24, 2005; February 22, 2005; April 18, 2005. Committee minutes of each meeting are attached as Appendix 1.

The Committee distributed the following articles (Appendix 2) for its own educational purposes: Faculty Mentorship, CTE Occasional Paper; Best Practices in Mentoring: Teachings from Experience; Principles of Good Practice: Supporting Early-Career Faculty; Creating Successful Mentoring Programs and Relationships; Systematic Mentoring for New Faculty Teachers and Graduate Teaching Assistants.

The committee collected the following data (Appendix 3): Faculty Needs Assessment Survey Responses from Faculty with Less than 5 Years of Teaching Experience at AU (Biggio Center); Auburn University Comparison of Annual Faculty Turnover by College/School (Institutional Research); Departmental Survey on Junior Faculty Mentoring (Committee Survey)

The results of the Departmental Survey on Junior Faculty Mentoring are especially revealing and are included below:

More than 30% of all department chairs responded to the committee survey on the current status of junior faculty mentoring and indicated:

- that they have mentoring programs but most focus on research;
- they would be supportive of university wide mentoring program;
- new faculty need mentoring for teaching;

- the interdepartmental socialization and networking aspects of a university wide mentoring program would be especially helpful;
- new faculty are successful in achieving tenure and promotion.

Final Report and Recommendations:

The following recommendations are presented to the University Senate for their support and referral to the Auburn University administration.

- **Continuation and expansion of Biggio Center's New Faculty Scholars Program.** The AU New Faculty Scholars Program supports departmental efforts enhancing faculty acclimation to new roles and responsibilities and is a coordinated attempt to build collegiality and individual capacity for academic success. New Faculty Scholars are selected from tenure-track faculty and faculty from the clinician title series with continuing appointments who are in their first three years of employment at Auburn University (It is estimated that 20 new faculty will participate in this program annually). It is expected that new faculty members who participate in this program will be better supported to address their specific departmental requirements while simultaneously, over the period of one year, be exposed to topics common and helpful to all new faculty regardless of where they work. ***Budget Request: Allocate \$10,000 from the Provost's Office to support this program. This money will be used to provide a \$500 stipend for each participant to be used for professional development expenses.*** The Biggio Center will continue to fund the operational expenses (retreats, books, Colleague Circle meals, etc.) for the program.

General Goals:

- To support departmental activities to facilitate new faculty acclimation to the roles and responsibilities of teaching, research and service at Auburn University
- To expose new faculty to interactive instructional methodologies that assist in the creation of student-centered learning environments and a campus culture of teaching and learning
- To assist in the development of campus-wide collegiality and a network for future teaching, research and service collaboration
- To support faculty research and outreach productivity
- To support faculty retention at Auburn University

Main Components:

- *Course Design Retreat* focusing on principles of effective course design, instruction and assessment
- *Colleague Circles Faculty Mentoring.* A series of monthly luncheon or dinner meetings focusing on small group mentoring
- *Workshops and Seminars* focusing on topics related to college teaching, research, outreach, and service

- *Capstone Academic Portfolio Retreat* focusing on describing and documenting one's academic role (research, teaching, outreach, service)
- **Develop a trained group of faculty to serve as individual mentors.** The Biggio Center will facilitate an annual workshop for senior faculty on effective professional and academic mentoring (including research, teaching, outreach, and service topics). Will contain special focus on women and minorities
- **Provide professional development workshops for Department Chairs aimed at mentoring.**
- **Develop programs/services for new faculty on mentoring graduate students.** The Biggio Center will deliver an annual workshop to prepare new faculty for their graduate student mentoring roles
- **Developing an awards or recognition process to identify and reward outstanding new faculty and graduate student mentors.** *Budget Request:* *Allocate \$2,000 for two outstanding faculty mentor award*
- **Create an ongoing standing senate faculty mentoring committee with representation from each college (replacing the current Ad Hoc committee).** Junior faculty mentoring is necessary for recruiting and retaining new faculty, therefore the university must stay current with what others are doing. The committee concluded that due to the importance of this issue it needs additional and continued Senate attention. This standing committee would be charged with the oversight of university new faculty mentoring and would conduct additional research, such as:
 - Survey other SREB institutions to find out what they are doing
 - Create a mentoring needs assessment survey for new faculty and administer this on an every-other year basis
 - Survey recently tenured/promoted faculty assessing what worked and what were the obstructions to success
 - Survey the University Tenure and Promotion Committee concerning their experiences; what are keys to successful T&P; what are shortcomings leading to unsuccessful T&P decisions?