

Marshall University College of Science

Policy No. COS-Adm-06

Faculty Mentoring

October 13, 2025

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support the professional development and success of faculty members through structured and effective mentoring programs. Mentoring aims to foster a collegial environment, enhance faculty performance in research, teaching, and service, in order to facilitate career advancement.

Policy and Procedures

1. Mentoring Committee Formation and Termination

- 1.1. Each junior faculty member (tenure-track and three-year term in their first term) shall have a mentoring committee established. Ideally, at least one member can be tentatively identified before a new faculty member arrives and can aid the mentee in learning university and culture and connect them with key campus resources.
- 1.2. The mentee's department chair is responsible for the appointment of the committee, consulting with mentees to ensure an appropriate match between mentors and mentees. The department chair will designate one member as chair of the committee. Department chairs may not serve on a mentoring committee. However, the department chair is expected to provide regular, independent mentoring to junior faculty formally as part of annual evaluations and mid-tenure review, as well as on a more informal basis.
- 1.3. The committee will consist of three to five senior faculty members. For tenure-track faculty, all members will be tenured and at least one will be a full professor. For term faculty, the committee will have a mix of tenured and experienced three-year term faculty. Membership is not limited to the department of the mentee. Prospective mentors can decline appointment to a committee.
- 1.4. In some circumstances mentors external to the University may be appropriate. External members may include professionals, academics, industry experts, or practitioners who have demonstrated significant expertise and experience in the relevant field unavailable internally. An external member cannot serve as chair of a mentoring committee.
 - 1.4.1. A nomination form for an external member should be prepared which includes a justification highlighting the external member's qualifications and potential contributions to the mentoring process, along with an attached CV of the external mentor. It will include the signed agreement of the proposed external mentor to adhere to all relevant Marshall University policies and procedures related to professional conduct, conflict of interest and to maintain strict confidentiality regarding all information shared with them in the course of their mentoring duties. Confidentiality extends to, but is not limited to, personal and professional details about the junior faculty member, any sensitive academic or research-related information, and any discussions held within mentoring committee meetings. The nomination must be approved by the mentee, department chair, dean, and provost.
 - 1.4.2. Certain types of information discussed in committee meetings may necessitate the temporary exclusion of an external mentor to maintain confidentiality and

compliance with University policies or law. These may include, but are not limited to:

- 1.4.2.1. Information related to research projects that are proprietary, classified, or involve intellectual property concerns that require restricted access.
- 1.4.2.2. Information pertaining to student records, performance, or personal issues protected under FERPA or other privacy regulations.
- 1.4.2.3. Discussions involving sensitive personnel issues, including performance evaluations, disciplinary actions, or employment disputes concerning University staff or faculty other than the mentee.
- 1.4.2.4. Discussions touching on internal University policies, strategic decisions, or administrative matters that are not directly related to the mentoring objectives and are considered confidential to the institution.
- 1.4.3. In such cases, the committee chair or relevant administrative authority will inform the external member in advance and ensure they are excluded only for the duration of the specific discussion.
- 1.5. Maintaining continuity is valuable for the mentee's development, nevertheless committee composition can change for various reasons. The department chair may revise the membership of the committee as needed. External members may resign at their own discretion, and the chair may consider requests from internal members to have mentoring duty removed from their service assignments. If a mentee feels that a mentoring relationship is not working favorably, they may bring this concern to the department chair, who may adjust the committee's membership if they agree it is appropriate.
- 1.6. The formal mentoring committee is disbanded at the end of first three-year term for non-tenure-track or immediately after the submission of the tenure and promotion package for tenure track faculty.
- 1.7. Mentoring committees can also be convened to support faculty post-tenure or after the first three-year term at the request of the faculty member, department chair, or the dean.

2. Scope and Activities of Mentoring Committees

- 2.1. Examples of subjects that the faculty member can be mentored on include but are not limited to promotion and tenure processes, the supervision and mentoring of graduate students, setting an agenda for research and scholarship, seeking and securing external funding, developing excellence in teaching, the process of preparing and submitting publications, understanding the policies, procedures, and organizational culture of the department, college, and university, building external relationships and collaborations in the discipline through conference attendance and professional organizations, and advice about appropriate selection and extent of service commitments.
- 2.2. Mentors may review grant proposals and manuscripts prior to submission, visit classes and research spaces, talk to undergraduate and graduate students to gain their perspectives on the mentee, and advise on reappointment and tenure review materials.
- 2.3. The committee will begin to meet in the first semester of the first year of the mentee's employment. Formal committee meetings with the mentee will occur at least once a semester, with informal interactions happening throughout the year. The committee chair will be responsible for scheduling these meetings.
- 2.4. At the meeting, mentors will provide an honest assessment of the mentee's performance and plans, offering affirmative as well as critical feedback. Meetings should allow time for discussion and for both mentors and mentees to ask questions. If useful, follow-up meetings with the entire committee or individual mentors may be scheduled in the same semester.

- 2.5. Mentoring is most effective as a collegial, advisory, and supportive activity. It can and should inform evaluation and review processes but is not intended to replace them. The provision of mentoring support and the reports or opinions of the committee do not commit a department, the college, or the university to a particular action or outcome regarding reappointment, tenure, or promotion. Again, the aim is to offer collegial support that will enable the success of a junior faculty member. While mentoring can make attaining career goals more likely, the responsibility for attaining those goals lies with the individual faculty member being mentored. Any perceived or demonstrated deficiency in mentoring cannot be grounds for reconsidering or contesting negative promotion, reappointment, or tenure decisions.
- 2.6. The committee can write or draft letters of nomination or support for appropriate fellowships, grants, or awards.
- 2.7. Each department may develop its own policies and procedures to extend or elaborate upon this overarching framework.

3. Reporting and Evaluation

- 3.1. Mentees will submit to the committee one week before the first meeting a current CV and a succinct career plan outlining their goals, a timeline of milestones toward those goals, and steps required to achieve them. While this plan might include some longer-term goals, its primary focus should be on goals to be accomplished over the expected duration of the mentorship period. For tenure-track faculty, the key goal is tenure and promotion. After the meeting, based on feedback received, the mentee may revise the plan and circulate it to the committee. The final version of the plan will then be sent to the department chair after the meeting.
- 3.2. Before each subsequent formal meeting, the mentee will submit a current CV and a progress report. This report shall include progress toward goals since the last meeting, but should also note where and why goals, timeline, or milestones were not met. A revised version of the plan with updated goals, timeline, or milestones should conclude the report. After the meeting, based on feedback received, the mentee may revise the plan in a timely manner and circulate to the committee for their comment, before the committee sends its report to the department chair.
- 3.3. The mentoring committee chair will submit a report to the department chair and the mentee after each semester meeting, summarizing the meeting and providing evaluation of the plan and the mentee's progress, as well as the committee's recommendations for the mentee going forward. The report will also include the mentee's latest CV, progress report, and plan. The department chair may suggest clarification or corrections as needed.
- 3.4. Final versions of each semester's reports from the mentee and the mentoring committee will be available to the department chair for use in annual evaluations and in preparation for mid-tenure and tenure reviews. These reports are intended for developmental purposes within the department and will not be forwarded beyond the department level or included in official promotion and tenure dossiers.

4. Mentee Responsibilities

- 4.1. Mentees should actively engage in the mentoring process by:
 - 4.1.1. Submitting detailed progress reports before each committee meeting and revising them as needed.
 - 4.1.2. Preparing for meetings and seeking guidance at other times as needed from their mentors.
 - 4.1.3. Clearly communicating their professional goals and seeking advice on achieving them.

- 4.1.4. Being aware of and following University, College, and Department policies and procedures, including the faculty handbook.
- 4.1.5. Becoming familiar with the University, College, and Department strategic plans and goals and aligning with them.
- 4.1.6. Integrating feedback from mentors into their professional activities. A willingness to accept and act upon constructive criticism is vital.
- 4.1.7. Seeking additional mentoring and opportunities to support their career and professional development.
- 4.2. Mentees who feel some aspect of their mentoring is inadequate should discuss this with the department chair. If they are not satisfied with the response the chair provides, they should bring their concerns about the mentoring process to the attention of the dean.

5. Mentor Expectations

- 5.1. Mentors are expected to provide constructive feedback, support mentees' professional goals, and help them integrate into the department and university culture. Pointing out problems or flaws is important, but constructive advice on how to address them is even more important. Mentors should highlight and commend accomplishments and improvements in ways that provide encouragement and reinforcement beyond formal reporting, helping mentees feel that their progress is seen and valued.
- 5.2. Mentors should recognize that while mentees should carefully consider their advice, the final responsibility for career decisions rests with the mentees themselves. Mentees should be encouraged to critically evaluate all advice, including that of the mentor, and to seek additional input and perspectives when making important decisions. Mentees may, after careful consideration, choose a different path than that recommended by mentors. Indeed, one important goal is to foster mentees' autonomy and ability to make their own decisions.
- 5.3. While the mentoring relationship is supportive in its purpose, a mentor may also evaluate a mentee in other formal contexts, such as annual reviews, promotion and tenure processes, internal grant competitions, or classroom observations. In these roles, mentors must provide rigorous and impartial evaluations, holding the mentee to the same standards as any colleague and keeping evaluation separate from mentoring. Insights gained in such evaluations may still appropriately inform the advice offered in mentoring.
- 5.4. Mentors should be open to learning from the mentees about how to improve their own teaching research, and service and become better mentors.
- 5.5. Mentoring is an important service responsibility. Effectiveness as a mentor will be considered in the annual evaluation, post-tenure review, and promotion. If a committee member believes that mentoring within the committee is falling short, or that advice given is inconsistent with the purpose of the mentoring process, they should bring these concerns to the department chair. If not resolved, the concern may be referred to the dean.

6. Support and Resources

- 6.1. Mentoring programs will be supported at the college and university levels through workshops, resource materials, and faculty development programs. This may include resources such as grant writing workshops, teaching excellence programs, leadership training, and access to mentoring resource libraries.