

## **SET Faculty Mentoring Program for the School of Engineering Technology**

### **Introduction**

The goal of this program is to assist new faculty members in adjusting to the environment at the University of Maine. We believe that support by a faculty mentor complements the guidance provided by the Program Coordinator and the Director of the School of Engineering Technology. An outline of the responsibilities of each is outlined below. It is based upon a mentoring program developed by the University of California at San Diego and documented in the paper titled, "Exemplary Junior Faculty Mentoring Programs" by Rachel Thomas.

### **The Responsibility of the Director of the School of Engineering Technology**

As soon as the faculty appointment is made, the Director will assign a mentor. The Director is responsible for advising new faculty on matters pertaining to academic reviews, and advancement. As the mentor may also be asked to provide informal advice, it is also the Director's responsibility to see that mentors have current information on the academic personnel process at the University of Maine. The Director will provide a copy of this plan to the mentor and the new faculty member.

### **The Responsibility of the Mentor**

The mentor should contact the new faculty member in advance of his/her arrival at the University and then meet with the new faculty member on a regular basis over at least the first two years. The mentor should provide informal advice to the new faculty member on aspects of teaching, scholarship and public service work or be able to direct the new faculty member to appropriate other individuals. Often the greatest assistance a mentor can provide is simply the identification of which staff one should approach for which task. Consulting and sponsored programs funding opportunities both within and outside the campus are also worth noting. The mentor should treat all dealings and discussions in confidence. There is no evaluation or assessment of the new faculty member on the part of mentor, only supportive guidance and constructive criticism.

### **The Responsibility of the New Faculty Member**

The new faculty member should keep his/her mentor informed of any problems or concerns as they arise. When input is desired, new faculty should leave sufficient time in the grant proposal and paper submission process to allow his/her mentor the opportunity to review and critique drafts.

### **The Mentor**

The most important tasks of a good mentor are to help the new faculty member achieve excellence and to acclimate to the University of Maine. Although the role of mentor is an informal one, it poses a challenge and requires dedication and time. A good relationship with a supportive, active mentor has been shown to contribute significantly to a new faculty member's career development and satisfaction.

### **Qualities of a Good Mentor**

- Accessibility – the mentor is encouraged make time to be available to the new faculty member. The mentor might keep in contact by dropping by, calling, sending e-mail, or extending a lunch invitation. It is very helpful for the mentor to make time to read critique proposals and papers and to provide periodic reviews of progress.
- Networking – the mentor should be able to help the new faculty member establish a professional network.
- Independence – the new faculty member's intellectual independence from the mentor must be carefully preserved and the mentor must avoid developing a competitive relationship with the new faculty member.

### **Goals for the Mentor**

#### **Short-term goals:**

- Familiarization with the campus and its environment, including the University of Maine system of shared governance between the Administration and the Faculty Senate.
- Networking—introduction to colleagues, identification of other possible mentors.
- Developing awareness—help new faculty understand policies and procedures that are relevant to the new faculty member's work.
- Constructive criticism and encouragement, compliments on achievements.
- Helping to sort out priorities—budgeting time, balancing scholarship, teaching, and service.
- Long-term goals:
  - Developing visibility and prominence within the profession
  - o • Achieving career advancement.

### **Benefits for the mentor**

- Satisfaction in assisting in the development of a colleague
- Ideas for and feedback about the mentor's own teaching / scholarship
- A network of colleagues who have passed through the program
- Retention of excellent faculty colleagues
- Enhancement of department quality

## **Changing Mentors**

In cases of changing commitments, incompatibility, or where the relationship is not mutually fulfilling, either the new faculty member or mentor should seek confidential advice from the Director. It is important to realize that changes can and should be made without prejudice or fault. The new faculty member, in any case, should be encouraged to seek out additional mentors as the need arises.

## **Typical Issues**

- How does one establish an appropriate balance between teaching, scholarship and public service work? How does one say "no?"
- What criteria are used for teaching excellence, how is teaching evaluated?
- How does one obtain feedback concerning teaching? What resources are available for teaching enhancement?
- How does one identify and recruit good student employees? How are students supported? What should one expect from students?
- What are the criteria for scholarship and how is it evaluated?
- How does the Peer Committee review and promotion process work? Who is involved?
- What committees should one be on and how much committee work should one expect?
- What social events occur in the department?

## **Suggested Publications**

- The Department Chairperson's Role in Enhancing College Teaching, A.F. Lucas, JosseyBass, Publisher, San Francisco, 1989.
- Information Brochure for Incoming Women Faculty, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Mentoring: Contemporary Principles and Issues, Bey and Holmes, Association of Teacher Educators, Reston, Virginia, 1992.
- Mentoring Means Future Scientists, Association for Women in Science (AWIS), Washington, D.C., 1993.
- New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 57. Jossey-Bass, Publisher, San Francisco, 1994.