

Provost's Leadership Academy: Mentoring & Professional Development Sub-Group

A workgroup on the topic of "Mentoring across campus" was convened by Diane O'Dowd, Vice Provost of Academic Personnel, as part of the 2017-2018 Provost's Leadership Academy. This document describes the findings and recommendations of the Mentoring sub-group, which was composed of the following members and advised by Doug Haynes, Vice Provost for Academic Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and Frances Leslie, Vice Provost for Graduate Education.

Lisa Flanagan, Department of Neurology
Athina Markopoulou, Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
Annalisa Coliva, Department of Philosophy
Brad Queen, Department of English
Brian Sato, Department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry

Importance of Mentoring:

Mentoring is critical for career development. A growing body of research has overwhelmingly demonstrated that mentoring – as a medium for the transmission of knowledge, skill development and social psychological support – is indispensable to navigating the landscape of graduate education and career readiness. To successfully manage one's career, students and early career faculty must become familiar with and meet professional expectations while integrating work-life balance to achieve mental and physical health as well as a general sense of well-being. Mentoring can help by providing perspectives that can lead to better understanding, prioritization and time management techniques to aid career navigation.

Mentoring occurs across campus currently, but can vary greatly across departments and schools. Our workgroup focused on strategies to create consistent mentoring across UCI. We focused on two groups at critical early phases of their careers - graduate students, and junior faculty - and identified recommendations for each group.

Graduate Students

The Mentoring Campaign for Graduate Education Excellence will focus on developing a culture of mentoring across campus. Operating at the campus and program levels, it consists of elevating mentoring as a competency throughout the career continuum; increasing faculty and graduate student utilization of the Independent Development Plan, and recognizing and rewarding mentoring excellence.

The campaign is a campus-wide coordinated effort to engage academic units to promote a culture of mentoring. It will involve representatives of the Association of Graduate Students, Graduate Council, Graduate Division, the Office of Inclusive Excellence, and Applied Innovation, among others. Beginning in spring 2018 a campus work-group will survey school associate deans and graduate program directors regarding how they intend to implement the IDP. Based on the results, the workgroup will conduct a listening tour to solicit in-put in the spring and/or early fall. This awareness-raising step will be followed by a focus on skill development during the next academic year. In 2018-2019 graduate division and the office of inclusive excellence will partner to pilot faculty mentoring module. This will complement the Mentoring Excellence Program. Third, Faculty DECADE Mentors will serve as a major resource for promoting a culture of mentoring at the program level. This includes sharing evidence-based best practices, participating in DECADE quarterly briefings, and providing information regarding on-line mentoring resources through the campus's institutional membership in the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity. These steps will culminate in recognizing and rewarding exemplary mentors

as well as the use of the IDP. The Mentoring Achievement and Excellence event will continue to award the Tom Angell award for mentoring excellence.

Junior Faculty

We aim to extend the culture of consistent mentoring to junior faculty. Faculty in early stages of their career will benefit from advice on strategies to ensure consistent progress toward promotion. We created new template documents, based on those currently in use by some departments, to serve as mentoring tools across campus. Documents are designed to track career goals of either Senate or non-Senate faculty. The documents include common milestones used in academic reviews (e.g. as on the UCI AP-10 form), but can also be customized for each department. The documents are meant primarily as self-evaluation tools that are shared and discussed with mentors. The goal is not for faculty to feel judged by their departmental peers, but to start a constructive dialogue for advice and prioritization of key areas of professional development.

Senate Junior Faculty:

Topics covered in the template include Research and Scholarly Activity, Teaching and Advising, Service, Other Activities Affecting Overall Performance, and Life-work Balance. The conclusion section includes suggestions to the mentee as well as suggestions to the department and department chair. The template helps to chart progress toward goals and identify areas in which mentoring could be particularly effective. The template can be customized for faculty in different series by re-ordering the focus on research or teaching.

We recommend early-stage faculty meet with their mentors or mentoring committee once per year. The document should be used as a basis for discussion, including goal setting for the next year, discussing any barriers to goals, and making sure progress is on track for promotion. The objective of these template documents is to create consistency in mentoring of junior faculty across all schools and departments at UCI.

Non-Senate Junior Faculty:

Unit 18 lecturers are non-tenure track/non-tenured teachers who contribute to the teaching mission of the university. In many cases, they are not integrated into their home departments and typically are provided with little guidance regarding career pathways. Until Unit 18 lecturers undergo an excellence review after 18 quarters of service, they must reapply for their positions annually.

Our document provides a mechanism that enables both mentor(s) and mentees to evaluate progress and professional development plans, particularly at the mid-point review for Unit 18 lecturers. After 9 quarters, the labor contract between the union representing Unit 18 lecturers and the University of California stipulates that a formal review of progress must take place. This is a new addition to the contract, and therefore presents the opportunity to think creatively about how to conduct such a mid-term review. The IDP offered here allows the mentee to respond to any concerns that the mentor raises regarding the materials submitted as evidence of pedagogical approaches and effectiveness. While it can be challenging to evaluate pedagogical best practices and the expectations for the assessment of Unit 18 lecturers may be unclear or unarticulated, the mentoring and professional development plan template created by this group may help to remedy this situation and open lines of communication in an equitable fashion.