

Department of Religious Studies Faculty Mentoring Program - Guide for Participants*

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Section 1: Mentoring Program Structure

1. Mentor Selection

Although the mentoring program is voluntary, junior and associate faculty members are highly encouraged to participate. The program will be tailored to the specific needs of the faculty member and is intended to maximize effectiveness while minimizing wasted time and effort that may erode sustainability of the program.

The faculty member may choose from one of the following two options:

- a. In consultation with the Department Chair, a faculty member will identify a single senior faculty member to serve as a mentor. This approach may be appropriate for faculty who have been in the system for some time and have already established a mentor/mentee relationship.
- b. In consultation with the Chair and senior faculty in the discipline, the faculty member will identify two senior faculty members to serve as mentors. One mentor may be from the same or similar discipline as the mentee. The other may be selected outside the discipline or department and could provide an “arms length” role in mentoring.

2. Overview of Mentoring Activities

The mentor(s) and mentee should plan to meet at least quarterly.

At each meeting, the mentee should provide the mentor(s) with a brief summary of accomplishments from the preceding quarter and an action plan for the upcoming quarter.

At least one session should include the Department Chair in each academic year.

Mentors are expected to attend some didactic teaching sessions of the mentee and provide a confidential verbal or written critique.

Mentors should provide a brief letter to the Chair annually that details areas of concern as well as areas in which the faculty member is excelling. This letter should first be reviewed with the mentee to ensure confidences are not breached.

Section 2: Guidelines for Junior and Associate Faculty Members

1. The Role of the Junior/Associate Faculty Member

Your career, as the junior/associate faculty member, is the focus of this mentoring relationship. It is your responsibility to prepare for meetings with your mentor by thinking about what kind of support, feedback, and advice would be most beneficial for you. You should be open to feedback and willing to listen to advice, even if you decide not to act on some of the mentor's suggestions. Remember that you are ultimately in the strongest position to recognize and make decisions about what is in your best interest.

2. Terms of the Agreement

By entering into a mentoring relationship, the junior/associate faculty member agrees to:

- Respond promptly to your mentor's invitation for a first meeting.
- Establish meeting times and modes (email, phone, in-person) that work for both parties.
- Meet regularly with your mentor(s). Schedule annual joint meetings with the Chair
- Agree upon a mutual understanding of confidentiality.
- Share specific accounts of professional activities and experiences by providing your CV. [This is best accomplished by keeping your MyInfovault (MIV) data up to date.]
- Be able to articulate what you need or want to know about the University.
- Notify the Department Chair if a change of mentors is necessary.

3. Issues to Address in the Mentoring Relationship

Think about what you need and want from your mentoring relationship. Topics might include:

- University of California merit and promotion policies and procedures. (Appendix A)
- Formulation of career goals and timelines.
- Prioritizing teaching, publishing, and service for faculty members at UC Davis.
- Internal funding sources and resources for external funding support. (Appendix B)
- Help acquiring or improving skills in such areas as giving talks and/or lectures, grant proposal writing, supervising graduate students, managing classroom dynamics, etc.
- Time management methods.
- How to negotiate with colleagues and your department chair.
- How to counter bouts of self-doubt.
- Strategies for how to advance into academic leadership positions.
- Identifying people at UC Davis who may be helpful to you and how to approach them.
- Information about University family-friendly policies and programs. (Appendix C)

Section 3: Guidelines for Mentors

1. The Role of the Mentor

Mentors are trustworthy advisors who are willing to share wisdom gained from their own experiences. Mentors should be accessible and approachable, helpful problem-solvers, and willing to offer advice. Ideally, a mentor is:

- Knowledgeable about institutional culture and faculty life at UC Davis.
- An advocate for scholarly values and academic integrity.
- An advisor who helps the junior/associate faculty member set and attain career goals.
- Helpful in resolving difficult work-related issues.
- Sensitive to the challenges of creating a balance between work and personal life.
- Willing to make a reasonable time commitment.
- A strategist for building relationships that will sustain a successful academic career.

2. Terms of the Agreement

By entering into a mentoring relationship, the mentor agrees to:

- Initiate contact with your matched junior/associate faculty member to set up a first meeting.
- Share information about your own background and experiences at UC Davis and other academic institutions.
- Meet regularly with your assigned faculty member.
- Know how to access University policies on merit & promotion and work-life balance.
- See Appendices A and C for University resources.
- Communicate to assess whether or not the mentoring match is working. Notify the Department Chair if a change of mentors is necessary.
- Make referrals and/or gather resources to respond to questions you may not be able to answer. See Appendix B for resources on teaching and research support.
- Write an annual letter to the Chair and review it in full with the mentee in advance of submission.

3. Tips for Maintaining a Good Mentoring Relationship

The following tips, adapted from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Women Faculty Mentoring Program, can be useful for maintaining a positive mentoring relationship:

- Make it easy for your junior faculty member to meet with and contact you.

- Take advantage of email and telephone as a way of staying in touch.
- Respect your mentee's time as much as you respect your own. Be explicit about your own needs and limits, specifying times you wish not to be disturbed or ones that are particularly good for communication. Your mentee may have similar needs and limits.
- Help your mentee explore options and understand the impact of different choices.
- Encourage your mentee to consider your suggestions along with recommendations received from other colleagues and advisors.
- Do not divulge confidences. Your mentee must trust that anything said to you will be held in the strictest confidence unless instructed otherwise.
- Be willing to discuss strategies or approaches that have helped you balance the demands of work, family, and personal interests.
- Share your failures as well as your successes.
- It is often a mentor's job to encourage the plans of their faculty colleague and to praise their instincts and work. Constructive criticism should be followed by mutual problem-solving and plans for improvement. If possible, provide specific examples based on your experiences and expertise.

Section 4: First Meeting and Relationship Parameters

1. The First Meeting

Both the junior/associate faculty member and faculty mentor should come to their first meeting prepared to share some of their histories in the academy at both UC Davis and elsewhere. To facilitate this opening discussion, we suggest that you exchange CVs ahead of time. Both parties should be ready to talk about their goals for the relationship.

2. The Importance of Confidentiality

You should use some time in your first meeting to establish a mutual understanding of confidentiality – what it means to each party and how it will be handled. Mentors/mentees may need to revisit this as different or particularly difficult issues arise.

You might utilize these questions to begin your conversation about confidentiality:

- Whom can we talk with about our conversations?
- Should our names ever be used?
- What topics or issues feel most in need of protection?
- At what point might the mentor feel she or he has to act on an issue brought up by the junior/associate faculty member?
- Is it OK to share with spouses/partners what is discussed in mentoring sessions, with or without the use of names?
- Both participants should disclose whether or not their spouses or partners are faculty members at UC Davis and, if so, in which departments.
- Are there other confidentiality considerations or concerns?

3. Getting Acquainted

Questions that can help mentoring pairs get acquainted may include:

- Where do you hope to be in five years? What do you need to get there?
- What was your merit or promotion process like? What are you most worried about as you anticipate your merit and promotion process?
- What publishing hurdles are you facing or have you overcome? (Appendix B)
- How do you achieve a balance between your teaching, research, clinical service and personal demands?
- Have you approached a department chair or senior colleague with a difficult issue? What went well? What would you do differently?
- What do graduate students expect and/or need of you in your department?
- Are there faculty members in your department who are marginalized? How does this

occur? What strategies might work to contribute to an atmosphere of collegiality and inclusion?

- What is your most important career goal now?
- How does promotion-clock relief for parenting work in your department? (Appendix C)
- When has your gender, marital/partner or family status, race/ethnicity, or nationality mattered in your academic career?

4. Scheduling Ongoing Meetings

Conclude your first meeting with a discussion about the frequency of your meetings and which modes of communication (phone, email, in-person) will work for each of you. Set a date and time for your next meeting. Confidentiality should be addressed in your first meeting and may need to be revisited as particular issues arise.

Section 5: Sustaining the Mentoring Relationship

1. Success at UC Davis

The purpose of the Faculty Mentoring Program is to match a junior or associate faculty member with a senior faculty mentor who can help the junior faculty member achieve success in her or his career. This includes making institutional processes, procedures, and practices more transparent, and helping junior/associate faculty members clarify what is expected of them if they are to thrive at UC Davis. Mentoring pairs should spend time discussing and seeking resources that will ultimately enable the junior/associate faculty member to easily answer these questions:

Merit and Promotion Criteria (See Appendix A)

- What are the formal criteria and where are they posted?
- Are there informal merit and promotion criteria?
- Who can help to clarify my department's expectations and practices?

Teaching (See Appendix B)

- Where can I find support for developing my teaching skills?
- How is teaching reviewed and evaluated at UC Davis?

University Service

- How is service to the University evaluated?
- What are the powerful and relevant University committees?
- Who sits on those committees?
- How are faculty selected for those committees?

Professional Organizations

- How is professional organization membership and participation evaluated?

2. If the Mentoring Relationship Does not Work

If the junior/associate faculty member wants assistance in an area in which the mentor does not feel confident giving advice, she or he can help find additional resources and/or encourage the faculty member to take the initiative to approach another person for advice in that specific area. However, if the match is not working for either party, or if there is not enough common ground to make the relationship worthwhile, mentoring pairs should not feel pressure to maintain the relationship. If either party feels that her or his intended goals are not being achieved, discuss the situation as openly as possible with each other, and try to come to an understanding of why the mentoring match is not working. Both parties can then agree to a no-fault conclusion of the relationship.

After such a discussion, both parties should notify the Department Chair who will work with the faculty members to try to better meet mentoring needs.

Appendix A: Merit and Promotions Guidelines

A wide range of materials of value to incoming faculty can be found on the UC Davis Office of the Provost Academic Affairs website
<https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/>

Academic Affairs website for Merits and Promotions is a good place to begin
<https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/step-plus-system>

Merit and Promotion guidelines for the various academic series are found in the UC Academic Personnel Manual (APM). In some instances, there are also guidelines specific to UC Davis. Specific parts of the APM that describe appointment and promotion are:

APM-220, Appointment and Promotion/Professor Series
<https://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/files/apm/apm-220.pdf>

The APM can be accessed in its entirety at:
<https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/apm/apm-toc>

Appendix B: Research and Teaching Resources

UC Davis, Office of Research
<https://research.ucdavis.edu/>

UC Davis Teaching Resources website
<https://www.ucdavis.edu/faculty/resources/teaching/>

UC Davis Center for Educational Excellence
<https://cee.ucdavis.edu/>

UCD New Faculty Workshops and Events
<https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/new-faculty-workshop-events>

Appendix C: Work-Life Balance Resources

UC Davis Human Resources Website
<http://www.hr.ucdavis.edu/>

Office of the Provost Work-life Website
<https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/work-life>