

## MENTORING IN THE UCI SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Revised May 2020

### MISSION

***Support faculty on the path to becoming scientific leaders and engaged members of the UCI community who advance through the ranks with outstanding reviews and a high level of job satisfaction.***

### PROGRAM

Assignment of mentors: Departmental mentors are selected through dialog between the mentee and the Department Chair. At least one departmental mentor is identified immediately after the job offer is accepted to help the mentee transition to UCI. This mentor may be an Assistant Professor near tenure or a recently tenured Associate Professor since these individuals have recently navigated the challenges of starting up an independent research lab. A full mentoring committee will be organized by the Department Chair with input from the mentee within 1 month of arrival on campus. A mentoring committee may be shared by all mentees in a department (NBB) or 2-3 individual mentors may be assigned to each mentee (DCB, EEB, MBB). At least one mentor on each team should be a Full professor. In addition, the schoolwide Biosci Mentoring Committee will assign one of its members to serve as mentor from outside the mentee's department. Mentors from other schools or from outside UCI can also provide important insights, and mentees are encouraged to develop a network of diverse mentors that offers all of the expertise needed to meet their career goals.

Who is mentored: All Assistant Professors will participate in the mentoring program until they attain tenure. Mentoring committees can also be convened to support faculty post-tenure at the request of the faculty member, Department Chair, Associate Dean for Academic Personnel, or the Dean.

Annual formal meetings: Formal meetings between the mentee and the departmental mentoring team should occur at least once a year. The spring quarter is often a good time for these meetings, but other times may provide a better fit with the schedules of individual teams. In NBB, the standing departmental Mentoring Committee will schedule meetings with all Assistant Professors in Spring quarter. In other departments, annual meetings will be scheduled by mentees with support from department administrators. In many cases, these meetings are scheduled over lunch or coffee with funding provided by the department.

At these meetings, the mentoring committee will review mentee progress towards tenure and discuss the mentee's plans for the coming year. To facilitate a productive discussion, mentees should provide mentors with an up-to-date CV and AP-10 form and a 1-page summary of progress since the last meeting and plans for the next year at least 3 days prior to the meeting. At the meeting, mentors will provide an honest assessment of the mentee's performance and plans offering both complimentary and critical feedback. Meetings will be long enough to allow time for discussion and for mentees to ask questions; meetings are expected to last at least 30 minutes, but in most cases are expected to require about 1 hour. If useful, follow up meetings with the team or individual mentors may be scheduled.

After the meeting, mentors will prepare a 1-page summary of the discussion and provide a copy to the mentee for review. Following mentee review, this document will be submitted to the Chair and the department administrator along with the 1-page plan the mentee prepared in advance of the meeting – these documents will become part of the mentee's departmental file and will be discussed at the annual meeting between Department Chairs and Assistant Professors.

Outside of formal meetings, mentors and mentees will meet/communicate regularly. While commitment level will vary from week to week and over the mentee's career trajectory, it is expected that mentors are likely to spend 5-15 h per quarter engaging with mentees.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MENTORING TEAM**

On-boarding. Department Chairs will ensure that all new faculty are provided with BioSci's New Faculty Handbook immediately after they are hired. In addition, the Chair will assign one mentor that will assist new hires as they plan their move and set up their lab. This mentor will be a junior faculty member as they will have recently faced and solved similar problems. The senior Assistant professor or recently tenured Associate professor mentor should also help integrate new faculty into peer mentoring networks. Chairs will provide the Equity Advisor with contact information and expected arrival dates for new hires when they have accepted their offers. The Equity Advisor will contact new hires prior to arrival on campus and visit them shortly after they are settled on campus to provide information about family friendly programs and career development activities.

Career Development. Support is available from Departments and the School to support new faculty participation in the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity's (NCFDD) Faculty Success Program, sessions with leadership coaches, career development workshop attendance, travel to meetings with program officers, and other worthwhile career development activities. Mentees should contact their Chairs, the Associate Dean for Faculty Development, and/or the Equity Advisor if they are interested in these opportunities.

Extramural grants. Assisting faculty in obtaining the funding necessary to support a vibrant research program is a central function of the mentoring team. Mentoring teams will help mentees:

- Determine when and where to apply for funding
- Identify appropriate study sections
- Organize and prepare collaborative grants
- Develop grant proposals, providing feedback on Specific Aims, organizing and attending chalk talks, and reviewing proposal drafts
- Interpret grant reviews and develop an appropriate response plan
- Understand how to engage with the PO/SRO pre- and post-review
- Become a grant reviewer (once this is appropriate)

Participation in the NIH Bootcamp within the first 3 years is expected for faculty who will apply for NIH grants.

Publications. Another critical role of the mentoring team is to assist faculty in maintaining an outstanding level of productivity. The committee will assist mentees by:

- Helping to identify appropriate journals for their work
- Discussing how to assign credit and order author lists
- Critically reading paper drafts and providing feedback prior to submission
- Providing guidance on the composition of the cover letter
- Interpreting reviews and planning the response

Teaching and mentoring. Mentoring teams will provide guidance on:

- How will teaching be evaluated
- Teaching assignments (load and content)
- Balancing teaching and research
- Teaching strategies, directing mentees to key teaching resources where appropriate
- Developing and administering exams, grading
- Handling challenging students
- Recruiting and managing TAs
- Recruiting and mentoring graduate students and postdocs

Navigating University service. Mentees will be advised on:

- Appropriate selection and extent of service commitment
- Negotiating service commitments

Merit and promotion. In addition to reviewing the AP-10 annually, mentoring teams will:

- Assist mentee in understanding how they will be evaluated
- Provide honest and constructive feedback on the personal statement, reflective teaching statement, and, if appropriate, diversity statement that mentees submit for merit and promotion reviews
- Help mentees develop a strategy to gain a national reputation and develop relationships with potential letter writers for the tenure file

Leadership and management. Mentoring committees will assist mentees in:

- Hiring lab staff
- Managing lab students and staff
- Mentoring postdocs, grad students, and undergrad researchers
- Budgeting
- Managing and setting up collaborations on and off campus

## **MID-CAREER MENTORING**

Mentoring is valuable at every career stage. At the request of the faculty member, Department Chair, Associate Dean for Academic Personnel, or the Dean, mentoring committees can be formed to support tenured faculty members. Goals for mid-career mentoring teams include developing:

Research.

- Clear goals for a research program that will put faculty at the forefront of their field and establish them as national and/or world leaders
- A reasonable, manageable, but ambitious publication plan to support their research that includes specific goals for publishing impactful research in high-quality journals
- Fundable proposals for appropriate agencies and foundations
- Strategies to develop an effective research network at UCI and beyond
- Plans to advocate for their research program through web sites, conference presentation, outreach, networking, service on committees and panels, etc.

Teaching.

- Specific teaching goals that take advantage of new technologies
- Plans to leverage centers for teaching excellence on and/or off campus

Service.

- Plans to meet service expectations for promotion to the next level

**SHOULD PROBLEMS ARISE:** If mentors or mentees become concerned that mentoring teams are not functioning optimally, they should approach the Department Chair and/or the extra-departmental mentor assigned by the BioSci Mentoring Committee. The Associate Dean for Academic Personnel and the Equity Advisor are also valuable resources that can be contacted by any member of the team to help address concerns, ideally before they develop into major problems.

**PROGRAM EVALUATION:** The Associate Dean for Faculty Development and the Equity Advisor will administer a survey to all mentors and mentees annually to assess the program's strengths and weaknesses. The mentoring plan will be revised annually as needed in response to survey results.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Information discussed by mentors and mentees should generally be considered confidential except in cases involving criminal behavior, sexual abuse, fraud against the university, gross misconduct or threats to personal health and safety where the issue should be brought to the attention of the appropriate higher authority (UCI police, OEOD, Ombudsman, etc.). Confidentiality is important to maintain a culture of trust and mutual respect that is critical for effective mentoring.

## **EXPECTATIONS FOR MENTORS**

Mentors should:

- Respond in a timely manner to reasonable requests by mentees
- Help mentees integrate into the collaborative and supportive environment at UCI
- Be aware of UC's family friendly policies and ensure that mentees feel comfortable exercising these rights
- Reach out to mentees at least once per quarter to check-in
- Provide honest, constructive, and supportive feedback to mentees in writing as well as verbally
- Deliver critical feedback with courtesy and respect
- Recognize that while mentees will carefully consider advice from mentors, they are ultimately responsible for making decisions that affect their careers and may, in some cases and after careful consideration, chose a different path than recommended by a mentor
- Serve as an advocate for the mentee on and off campus as appropriate (e.g. nominate for speaker invitations at meetings or on other campuses, nominate mentee for appropriate awards)
- Practice careful and active listening
- Work across boundaries of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, and religion
- Maintain confidentiality and foster trust among the team
- Respect personal boundaries

## **EXPECTATION FOR MENTEES**

Mentees should:

- Demonstrate a commitment to professional excellence, actively engaging in activities and tasks related to advancement at UCI and in their field
- Take the lead in organizing meetings with mentors, setting and sharing an agenda to ensure a productive discussion
- Ask for help when they need it
- Be respectful of mentors' time by set up appointments and reviews well in advance, providing deliverables with adequate time for review, and by preparing materials with care
- Demonstrate initiative and follow through in setting and achieving agreed-upon goals
- Display a commitment to hard work and integrity
- Engage with members of the department and contribute to the collegial environment at UCI
- Cultivate listening skills and willingness to work outside of "comfort zones," across boundaries of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, and religion
- Maintain confidentiality and foster trust among the team
- Respect personal boundaries

In some departments, mentors and mentees who meet these expectations may be recognized with a small stipend that can be applied to publication costs, meeting registration costs, or other career development activity approved by the Chair.

## APPENDIX

Possible questions mentors may ask mentees to encourage conversation during annual meetings:

1. What skills necessary to meet your career goals do you feel that you have most improved on in the last year?
2. What aspect of being an Assistant Professor do you find most challenging? How can I (we) help you meet this challenge?
3. What do you like best about being an Assistant Professor?
4. What aspect of your academic life would you most like to improve? How can I (we) help you to make this change?
5. What do I (we) do that most helps your career development?
6. What would you like me (us) to do differently to facilitate your career development?
7. Are you comfortable with your relationship with other members of the department? If not, is there something I (we) can do or help you do to improve the environment?
8. Do you feel like you are meeting your personal goals in terms of hours spent:
  - a. Doing experiments?
  - b. Writing papers?
  - c. Writing grants?
  - d. Interacting with peers on campus?
  - e. Mentoring postdocs?
  - f. Mentoring graduate students?
  - g. Mentoring undergraduates?
  - h. Participating in service activities?
9. Do you feel like your research projects are on track? If not, how would you like to change direction?
10. Are there aspects of how you will be assessed for promotion that are unclear?
11. Do you have sufficient opportunities to obtain feedback on your research efforts?
12. What are your specific goals for the next year?
13. Is there anything specific that you would like me (us) to do to help you meet these goals?
14. Are there outside circumstances that you would like to discuss?