MENTORING IN THE UCI DUNLOP SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
Revised January 1, 2025

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; the name of this mentor should be included in the offer letter. This "on-boarding" 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). Mentoring committees may have a designated Chair who takes the lead on administrative or organizational issues. At least one mentor on each team should be a Full professor. The Chairs will provide the Associate Dean for Academic Personnel with the names of departmental mentors within 1 month after the faculty member's arrival on campus. The Associate Dean for Academic Personnel will work with the Equity Advisor to assign one extra-departmental mentor that will meet with Assistant Professors in the Spring to confirm that mentoring activities are occurring as expected, that departmental mentor pairings are appropriate, and to offer an additional perspective. 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. High-quality mentoring is critical for the success of our School. The significant service commitment associated with serving as a mentor will be recognized and valued at the School as well as department levels.

Who is mentored: All Assistant Professors will participate in the mentoring program. After tenure, Associate Professors retain their mentoring committees unless they opt out. Faculty hired at the Associate or Full Professor level may request mentoring committees to help navigate UC merit and promotion policies. 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. Department Chairs should remind mentors/mentees to schedule an annual meeting at the beginning of spring quarter each year. The Associate Dean for Academic Personnel will contact mentees in May of each year and assist in scheduling annual meetings with the departmental mentors if they have not already occurred. At this time, the Associate Dean will also remind extra-departmental mentors to set up a meeting with their mentees. In NBB, the standing departmental Mentoring Committee will schedule meetings with all Assistant Professors in Spring quarter.

At these formal meetings, the departmental 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/or AP-10 form and a short (no more than 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, being sure to offer complimentary as well as critical feedback. Meetings will be long enough to allow time for discussion and for mentees to ask questions; meetings are expected to require about 1 hour to ensure a comprehensive discussion. If useful, follow up meetings with the team or individual mentors may be scheduled. After the

meeting, mentors should provide a short, written summary of the discussion to the mentee. The summary should cover strengths as well as areas that require attention. Mentees may choose to share this summary with their Chair and/or schedule a follow-up meeting with the Chair to discuss the advice they received and their plans.

Outside of formal meetings, mentors and mentees should meet/communicate regularly with at least quarterly check-ins. 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 assign one mentor that will assist new hires as they plan their move and set up their lab. This mentor will be an Assistant professor or recently tenured faculty member as they will have recently faced and solved similar problems and can help integrate new faculty into peer mentoring networks. The Department Chairs will provide the Associate Dean for Academic Personnel and the Equity Advisor with contact information and expected arrival dates for new hires once they have accepted their offers. The Associate Dean for Academic Personnel will check in with the new hire and provide BioSci's New Faculty Handbook prior to their arrival on campus. The Equity Advisor will also 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 Academic Personnel, and/or the Equity Advisor if they are interested in these opportunities.

Advocacy. Beyond providing advice to mentees, good mentors act as advocates for new faculty. An advocate actively creates new opportunities for early career faculty to help them become recognized leaders in their field. Mentors can advocate for their mentees by:

- nominating them for awards (internal UCI awards, external society awards, etc.)
- nominating them for speaker invitations at conferences
- suggesting them to your research network for seminar invitations at other academic institutions
- inviting them to collaborate on a grant that includes financial support for the mentee's research group
- nominating them for leadership positions in scientific societies
- amplifying their research to colleagues at conferences, workshops, and other research colloquia
- nominating them to serve on grant review panels (ad hoc)

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, provide direct introductions where appropriate
- Become a grant reviewer (once this is appropriate)

Mentees may also receive help preparing extramural grant applications from the Associate Dean for Research and Innovation and the Research and Development Team (https://research.bio.uci.edu/). Participation in the NIH Bootcamp or an NSF grant writing workshop (https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/outreach.jsp) within the first 3 years is encouraged. Assistant professors are strongly encouraged to engage with the Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation (https://dtei.uci.edu/faculty-development/) before they begin teaching for support developing their courses.

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

- Discuss how to establish scientific independence from the postdoc mentor
- Help to identify appropriate journals for their work
- Discuss how to receive appropriate credit for their contribution
- Assist with questions around what merits authorship and the order author are listed in
- Critically read paper drafts and provide feedback prior to submission
- Provide guidance on the composition of the cover letter
- Help to interpret reviews, plan the response, and manage interactions with the editor

Teaching and mentoring. Mentoring teams will provide guidance on:

- How teaching will be evaluated and weighed
- Teaching assignments (is the load appropriate and the subject matter a good fit?)
- 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:
- How service is weighted during tenure review
- Appropriate selection and extent of service commitment
- How to receive appropriate credit for service

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 advise mentees about:

- 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
- Submitting IACUC, IBC, and IRB protocols

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 Associate Dean for Academic Personnel, Department Chair, extra-departmental mentor, and/or the Equity Advisor.

PROGRAM EVALUATION: The Associate Dean for Academic Personnel 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. Chairs will provide annual updates to the School's Administrative Cabinet regarding mentee progress.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Information discussed by mentors and mentees should 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. Mentees should be aware that departmental mentors will contribute to the discussion and preparation of their merit and promotion files. *To maintain confidentiality during formal departmental reviews, mentors should not reveal to the department any information that is not contained within the mentee's file.* Department chairs will be responsible for interrupting conversations that may introduce confidential information similar to how study section Chairs or administrators terminate inappropriate discussions of privileged information during grant review.

EXPECTATIONS FOR MENTORS

Mentors should:

- Reach out to the mentee at least once per quarter to check-in
- Respond in a timely manner to reasonable requests by mentees

- Help mentees integrate into the collaborative and supportive environment at UCI
- Make themselves aware of UC's family friendly policies and ensure that mentees feel comfortable exercising these rights
- Take advantage of professional development workshops to improve their mentoring skills
- Provide honest, constructive, and supportive feedback to mentees in writing as well as verbally
- Deliver critical feedback with courtesy and respect, recognizing the importance of also highlighting their mentee's accomplishments
- 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 that will establish them in their field
- 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

The School will host an annual faculty social for mentees and their mentors. At this event, the School will recognize and reward exceptional mentors.

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?