

Frequently Asked Questions about Formal Mentoring

Q: Can an associate professor be a formal mentor to an assistant professor?

A: Sure! Some departments have very few full professors and need to rely on associate professors as formal mentors. Other departments may have associate professors who would be great mentors, so it makes sense to give them the opportunity. There can be an advantage to having a mentor who has gone through P&T relatively recently.

Q: Should CT faculty have formal mentors? Do their formal mentors need to be CT faculty?

A: Yes, CT faculty should have formal mentors. While there may be advantages to pairing CT faculty together as mentor and mentee, many departments don't have senior CT faculty to serve as mentors. CT and tenure-track faculty workloads may be different, but CT faculty go through the same basic employment processes as tenure-track faculty (annual appraisals, 2- and 4-year reviews, promotion process to associate professor, etc.). The CT Caucus has some policy information on their [website](#) that may help CT faculty and their mentors (CT or T/TT).

Q: How will mentors keep up to date on policies?

A: ADVANCE has developed a website for resources to help mentors stay up to date on policies that impact faculty careers: <https://sites.udel.edu/advance/initiatives/faculty-mentoring/>

Q: How does a chair know if mentors are giving correct advice? Isn't there liability if a mentor tells a mentee something incorrect?

A: All faculty need a network of mentors. The formal mentor is just one of these. Faculty are responsible for their own career progression and should not rely on the advice of just one person. The formal mentor may be a starting point, but they are not expected to have all the answers. If a formal mentor does not know the answer to a question, they should try to help the mentee identify others to ask. Mentees should familiarize themselves with written policies in department/college bylaws and P&T documents, the Faculty Handbook, the CBA, etc. and consult with a diversity of mentors/advisors throughout their career.

Q: Can a formal mentor serve on their mentee's P&T committee?

A: Yes, unless you have some policy or practice in your department that would make it inappropriate or impossible. But many chairs do not see it as a problem.

Q: How can a chair assess the effectiveness of the mentoring program?

A: Department chairs should check in periodically with mentors and mentees and ask how it is going. Appraisal time is a good time for these conversations.

Q: How can a junior faculty member request a new mentor without risking offending their current mentor? What if a mentor doesn't want to continue working in a formal capacity with a mentee?

A: One suggestion is to write into your departmental policy that mentor-mentee pairings are subject to change at the end of each year pending chair review. This way a mentee can be assigned a new mentor by the chair without the mentor knowing that the mentee initiated the request. Likewise, it allows a mentor to be replaced if they are going on sabbatical or for other reasons.

