

Policy on Mentoring of Probationary Faculty

Department of Political Science

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The Department of Political Science at UNM hires highly talented junior scholars and does all it can to help probationary faculty succeed. Within financial guidelines and constraints prevailing at the time of hire, we provide start-up packages that can be used for research travel as well as for the purchase of computers, software, and data; we provide adequate office space and furnishings; we provide support for travel to conferences; we allocate the time of graduate assistants to support both the research and teaching elements of faculty members' workload; and we provide administrative support for external funding applications. To facilitate probationary faculty members' success in research and teaching, we minimize departmental service loads, minimize the number of different course preparations while meeting department instructional needs, and advise against burdensome service to the college/university or the profession during the probationary years.

At all stages of their careers, faculty members need collegial feedback, advice, and open discussion of professional issues. This is particularly important for probationary faculty who, by virtue of comparative inexperience may particularly need mentorship from successful senior colleagues. The culture of the Political Science department is and has been that senior faculty members engage actively in mentoring junior faculty. That is, the tenured faculty as a whole serves as a mentorship committee for junior faculty. The present policy is intended to modestly formalize our practices, and to ensure that probationary faculty members receive sufficient mentorship every year.

Elements:

- 1) The department chair provides new faculty with an orientation to department expectations, policies and practices. S/he discusses new faculty members' teaching interests and preferences, and helps to develop a plan for course offerings that meets department needs while minimizing preparations. S/he discusses the new faculty member's research plans and provides feedback on strategies for publication. The chair meets with probationary faculty at least once per semester, and is available for impromptu consultations on matters small and large, with the goal of removing obstacles, minimizing distractions, and assisting probationary faculty to succeed in both the classroom and in research. As part of these conversations, the chair will inquire about mentorship contacts between the junior faculty member and senior colleagues, and will take corrective action if it appears that insufficient or unsatisfactory mentorship is taking place.

- 2) Tenured members of the faculty review and collectively discuss the research, teaching, and service contributions of probationary faculty each spring (usually in April) as part of the annual review process called for in the Faculty Handbook (<http://handbook.unm.edu>,

part B 4.2). The chair summarizes any feedback and advice in an annual review letter, and meets with probationary faculty members individually to discuss the results of this annual review. Junior faculty should bear in mind that notwithstanding any advice or comment received in the course of mentorship, the annual review letter received from the chair is the definitive expression of the department's guidance and assessment of work performance.

3) Each year, tenured members of the department faculty conduct no fewer than two in-class observations of teaching. Faculty members who do the observation will write a confidential report to the department chair, and will provide the probationary faculty member with verbal feedback. The department chair will include a summary of the observation reports as part of the annual review letter.

4) Each semester, the department convenes informal symposia on best practices in teaching, as well as research works-in-progress seminars at which junior faculty members can present their work and receive feedback in an informal, collegial and supportive context.

5) Junior faculty members should feel free to approach senior faculty for advice, accept mentorship that is offered, and notify the chair if at any point department mentorship appears inadequate or in any way problematic.