



New Faculty Mentoring Process
Department of Sociology
October 2012

Background: Over the years, the Department has made only sporadic efforts to provide mentorship to newly hired faculty, depending on the inclinations of sitting Chairs, other administrative burdens faced in a given year, and other factors. As a result, many new faculty members have received informal mentoring at best, and sometimes very little mentoring at all.

Current effort: We recognize that not all new faculty members will desire much formal mentoring, and do not want to impose anything unnecessary and undesired. Yet we believe faculty research, writing, and teaching to be the most valuable assets within the University, and new faculty represent the most exciting “growing edge” of that work, a resource to be cultivated and developed. In recent years, we have hired five new tenure-track members of the Department, via a combination of new hires, replacement hires, and lecturer conversions; this year we expect to hire two more. We thus seek to provide a systematic mentoring structure to all new faculty, while making that structure flexible enough to be adapted differently by each of them.

Upon becoming department Chair in August 2012, Sharon Erickson Nepstad identified creating such a mentoring structure as one of her initial priorities, and asked the Associate Chair to take the lead in developing and initiating it. In that role, Rich Wood met with all the new faculty in August and October 2012 to launch the mentoring effort. The following represents how we are currently structuring the mentoring process in Sociology; we expect this model to evolve in dialogue with needs expressed by the new faculty members themselves and by their senior colleagues.

Emergent mentoring model in Sociology:

Our initial model has two prongs: 1) group meetings with the Associate Chair; and 2) individual meetings with a personal faculty mentor:

1. Associate Chair meets with all new faculty members (as a group) twice each semester. Chair attends when/if appropriate. Each meeting has an agenda built around specific theme or themes, but also includes time for new faculty to raise any current issues or concerns.

Themes that may provide focus for group meetings:

Settling into the semester rhythm and life in New Mexico

Prioritizing research and writing time while teaching responsibly
Identifying a personal faculty mentor: initial and ongoing
Plotting a publishing trajectory
Publishing venues and developing a coherent intellectual profile
Teaching challenges and joys
Curriculum and classroom for a diverse student body
Mentoring graduate students: structures/priorities/boundaries
Navigating the social world of the Department
University governance at UNM: Past, present, future
Work-life balance throughout the faculty life course: priorities and practices
Grants for research: when/where/how/why/when not
Linking teaching and research
Creating the climate for academic excellence and diversity
Other?

We have met twice so far and spent a little time on the first four themes; others to be explored in future, selected in dialogue with the new faculty.

2. Each new faculty member is matched to a personal faculty mentor from within the tenured faculty; this pair to meet regularly during new faculty member's first few years at UNM. Focus on specific publishing plans and execution, teaching challenges, professionalization and collegiality within Department. Although the Department assigns an initial mentor, we also assume that new faculty members may subsequently identify a different tenured colleague as a natural mentor. Thus, some turnover of mentors is to be expected, should not be seen as problematic.