

## **FACULTY MENTORING:**

### **Why faculty mentoring?**

Mentoring contributes to maximizing the potential of faculty.

Mentoring is particularly critical at times of transition – e.g. new faculty, advancement, taking on new responsibilities, work/life balance changes.

Mentoring programs also support a culture of transparency.

### **Research on mentoring:**

Research shows that there is no single best mentoring strategy, as the type of mentoring that works best depends on many factors: the setting, the individual, the timing, the topic. Research has demonstrated that when there are different mentoring opportunities available, there is better coverage overall. Additionally, not any one type of mentoring is ideal for everyone, research indicates that providing access to a range of mentoring resources seems to be generally effective.

When mentoring occurs only through informal networks and chance opportunities, women and underrepresented groups receive less mentoring on average than others. That is, in some cases the necessary networks don't form, and the (junior) faculty member then does not have the needed information and feedback. While this can happen with any faculty member, it happens more frequently with underrepresented groups.

### **Frequent comments from Faculties and faculty members:**

A number of UBC Faculties and departments have implemented different types of mentoring. Commonly identified gaps tend to be:

- lack of consistent oversight of the mentoring program
- lack of complementary formal and informal mentoring opportunities
- lack of follow-up to see if mentoring has been effective

While some junior faculty form mentoring relationships without any formal efforts, other junior faculty would have better access to mentors and feel more comfortable if the mentor or mentor group was appointed formally. Without the formal appointment, some junior faculty will hesitate to ask for advice which can result in uncertainty about a range of critical topics.

Feedback from someone closer to their research area or discipline would be a welcome complement to more general feedback given at an annual review. It is important to receive regular feedback in the context of the Faculty/department expectations and that of the relevant discipline(s).

Faculty members also note that it is not always clear how to proceed if the formal mentoring assignment doesn't work out or over time there is a need to change mentors. A clear message about access to mentoring within the unit would help to fill any gaps.

## Key Elements of a Successful Mentoring Program

A key element in any mentoring arrangement is that expectations on both sides are clear.

Different types of mentoring models have been shown to be effective: formal one-on-one mentoring, informal mentoring, group-to-group mentoring, networking events. A combination of mentoring activities is usually most effective.

**Recommended Framework for UBC Faculties:** combined formal/informal opportunities in Faculties and/or Departments

- Assign an initial/official formal mentor or mentors upon hiring to all faculty and to already hired junior faculty who are without a formal mentor (e.g. those at the Assistant, Associate and Instructor ranks). Since mentees may find other mentoring relationships, it should be made clear that mentoring relationships may evolve over time. It is important to realize that changes can and should be made without prejudice or fault.
- Make it clear that it is the responsibility of the mentee to be proactive in contacting their mentor(s). Mentors/senior faculty should be willing/expected to be available, e.g. make assignment official with well-defined guidelines.
- Complement formal mentoring assignments with informal mentoring opportunities. This could be in the form of general Q&A sessions or occasional gatherings on a specific topic and can be as simple as a divisional lunch or coffee., Specific subgroups of faculty such as junior faculty or women faculty, or sessions on specific activities could be offered (e.g. Peer Teaching Support, grant info sessions, etc.)
- Discuss access to mentoring at annual review of individual faculty, to make sure faculty have access to both informal and formal mentoring, and are comfortable accessing it. Departmental Merit committees should also flag any cases where mentoring is needed.
- Need a mentor outside the unit? Be aware of opportunities at UBC to which to point mentee (expect available for women faculty in Fall 2014)
- Develop a simple guide for mentees/mentors: It should cover what opportunities are available: formal, informal events; what should mentees expect/do; what should mentors expect/do; questions to ask; important items for attention
- Post the mentoring guide on the (internal) faculty info website, together with other department information about unit policies and procedures
- Indicate clear expectations around mentoring as a part of department service responsibilities
- Make arrangements for both pre- and post-tenure mentoring, also clearly defining the division of responsibilities of the head and mentors in both cases.

## **Resources/Examples:**

Basic principles for mentoring (Faculty guidelines for departmental mentoring programs):

E.g., UBC Science Principles on Mentoring

<http://science.ubc.ca/faculty/mentoring>

Questions/topics for mentors/mentees:

E.g., Mentoring Process and Topics (recommendations for Science faculty)

<http://science.ubc.ca/faculty/mentoring>

Tips and tools for successful mentoring:

Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology (WWEST) handout

<http://wwest.mech.ubc.ca/files/2014/05/Mentoring-Works.pdf>