UBC Faculty of Science Committee on Mentoring of New Faculty
(2003/04)

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A. Rationale

The University of British Columbia commits considerable time and expense to attract and hire high quality faculty. It is in the interest of the University to do as much as possible to ensure the success of newly hired faculty. Although collectively, existing faculty members have the knowledge and expertise to assist new faculty members with all aspects of startup, promotion and tenure the collective wisdom is not always efficiently transferred. This committee was struck to consider the mentoring requirements of newly hired faculty, the most effective approaches to mentoring and possible ways of improving current mentoring practices within the Faculty of Science at UBC.

B. Mentoring Requirements of New Faculty Members

The career of most faculty members passes through at least four critical stages where mentoring can be of great benefit consisting of the period:
i)   between receiving and accepting a job offer,
ii)   between accepting a job offer and arriving at UBC,
iii)   during the first two years of an appointment,
iv)   prior to submission of dossier for promotion and tenure.

i)   In order to make an informed decision, a candidate with a job offer needs information concerning a wide range of topics including:
       a) terms of the appointment.
       b) departmental structure.
       c) living conditions in Vancouver.
       d) average UBC salaries and startup funds.
       e) housing.

      By facilitating access to such information a department can leave a positive impression and avoid misunderstandings, thereby increasing the probability of attracting and retaining high-quality candidates.
ii)   New faculty need to be aware and take action on many important issues prior to their arrival including:

a) housing
b) immigration
c) health insurance
d) daycare/schools
e) moving expenses
f) grant applications
g) hiring of personnel (especially access to graduate students)
h) ordering equipment

Easy access to such information is needed to ensure a smooth and productive transition between jobs.

iii) The first few years of an appointment are extremely challenging for new faculty as they attempt to learn and meet the demands of teaching, research and administration. Information required within the first year concerns:
a) preparation of research and teaching dossiers
b) preparation of grant proposals
c) teaching strategies
d) UBC licensing (radioactivity, biohazards etc.)
e) university purchasing
f) graduate student funding
g) library cards
h) campus parking
i) access to keys
j) obtaining a social insurance number
k) E-mail
l) many other things

Indeed the list is so long that the problem is often not a lack of information but an informational overload that is hard to manage and easy to forget.

In addition to information the success of new faculty can be greatly enhanced by a reduced teaching and administrative load in the first few years to assist them in establishing their research programs.

iv) In the years leading up to their application for tenure and promotion most faculty would benefit from continuous collegial feedback on the quality of their teaching and research program and the appropriate documentation of their accomplishments.

C. Current Mentoring Practices

There are a number of resources available at UBC to mentor new faculty (e.g., Promotion and Tenure Information Seminar, sponsored by the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth, the Faculty Association and the Office of the Vice President Academic and Provost). However, given the diversity of research programs and courses in the Faculty of Science primary mentoring programs will be most effective if organized through the departments. Surprisingly, of the departments represented on our committee, few had clear, well-established, comprehensive guidelines for mentoring of new faculty that covered all needs.

D. Recommendations for the Mentoring Process

As discussed in the sections below we recommend that departments:

   1) Insure that a personal mentor is assigned to each new faculty member hired.
   2) Develop standard guidelines on limiting workload during the early years of the appointment.
   3) Prepare generic CV, teaching dossiers and grant proposals that provide guidelines/advice for their completion. Arrange for access to successful CV, teaching dossiers and grant proposals completed by others.
   4) Create guidelines for mentoring new faculty with their first teaching assignments.
   5) Establish websites that disseminate information critical to new faculty.
   6) Create checklists that outline important tasks or goals for each career stage.
   7) Institute yearly meetings between the Departmental Head and new faculty to assess and offer advice on progress.

1.   Personal Mentors. Mentors are required to counsel new faculty at all stages of their career. Since different members of a department have different expertise many individuals will ultimately serve as mentors in different situations and at different times. Consequently, new faculty can be assisted in seeking advice by providing a list of departmental personnel who have expertise in specific areas. However, mentoring is simplified and made more personal if one or more specific faculty members (personal mentor) are designated to assist an individual (the same mentor(s) need not be used for all career stages). Wherever possible the new faculty should play a role in choosing a mentor with whom he/she feels most comfortable. The most effective mentors are likely to be individuals whose field is closely related and who are relatively close in age and stage of career to that of the new faculty member.

2.   Workload. The new faculty member must settle into a new environment, organize a research group, obtain funding, hire personnel, establish a research program and organize lecture material. These tasks are demanding and time consuming, yet to ensure success new faculty members must complete them all within the first few years of their arrival. Any departments concerned with the success of newly appointed faculty

should ensure that their administrative and teaching workloads are minimized in the early years of their appointment. We would recommend that departments develop guidelines pertaining to minimum workload for new faculty members. No administration and at most a half teaching load (equivalent to two semesters free of teaching) in the first two years is desirable. New faculty should, whenever possible, be given a choice concerning which semesters of reduced teaching would most benefit them.

3. **Sample Grant proposals, CV's and Teaching Dossiers.** New faculty members need to begin assembling their CV and teaching dossiers from the time they arrive at UBC and may even need to write grant proposals prior to their arrival. These documents must clearly detail the significance of research or teaching contributions in a manner that can easily be understood by an audience with diverse scientific backgrounds (e.g., DACOPAT, NSERC grant panel). New faculty could benefit greatly from advice of a more experienced colleague concerning the structure of such documents.

Samples of successful grant proposals, CV's and teaching dossiers in a related field of study should be made available to new faculty. In addition, a generic CV and teaching dossier with explanations and tips concerning the kind of information to be included in each section could be prepared and circulated in each department. Examples of such tips include:

a) how to structure various sections to make them easier to read.
b) providing an explanation of the relative importance of journals in which a faculty member has published (including impact ratings).
c) indicating the number of citations for each manuscript published.
d) explaining the contribution made by the faculty member for each publication (e.g., the significance of the order of authorship varies from field to field and needs to be explained).
e) indicating the total at the beginning of each list made (total number of
f) manuscripts published in refereed journals = 23)**.**

Such documents will illustrate the type and extent of work that needs to be completed and recorded for a grant proposal or a tenure and promotion application to be successful. Faculty should also be directed to the TAG guide on the preparation of the teaching dossier (http://www.cstudies.ubc.ca/facdev/services/dossier.html) and tips for new faculty (http://www.cstudies.ubc.ca/facdev/services/faculty/newfactip.html#doc).

Departmental colleagues willing to provide constructive feedback on documents completed by new faculty should be identified.

4. **Teaching.** Developing a new set of lecture notes is difficult and time consuming even for an experienced teacher. Most new faculty have had little teaching experience and would benefit substantially from a mentoring program in this area. Departments should develop guidelines concerning how to assist new faculty with their first teaching assignments. Assistance could be given in a number of ways including the following.

a) Assign a mentor who has taught the course previously to provide advice and supply a set of lecture notes to be used by the new faculty member to teach the courses the first time. If possible the new faculty could attend

lectures of the mentor in the year/semester prior to their first teaching assignment.

b) Provide information concerning resources on campus to assist new instructors such as TAG (http://www.cstudies.ubc.ca/facdev/services/overview.html) and WebCT (~~http://www.itservices.ubc.ca/tools_for_teaching/index.shtml~~ http://www.it.ubc.ca/learningapps.html).

5. **Websites.** Much of the information required by faculty is factual. A simple way of organizing and disseminating factual information easily accessible worldwide is to establish a website. Since the required information can vary considerably from department to department, departmental specific websites are needed. A considerable amount of information concerning the Faculty of Science, UBC, Vancouver, BC, and Canada is already available via the internet and these could be incorporated into the departmental site as links. Indeed, most information that is not departmental specific should be located on Faculty of Science and Universities servers with links provided by departmental websites. The TAG (http://www.cstudies.ubc.ca/facdev/services/faculty/mentoring.html) and newly organized Research Mentoring Network (VP Research) programs will be of particular significance to new faculty. The Department of Zoology has already constructed a mentoring website that could be used as a platform for other departments to develop their own sites (~~http://www.zoology.ubc.ca/z/admin/poliproc/~~ http://www.zoology.ubc.ca/zoology/admin/index.html) (http://www.zoology.ubc.ca/~berger/Academic_Plan/Mentoring Guide/mentoring_guide1.htm).

6. **Checklists.** New faculty members are faced with a flood of information and demands on their time. Checklists outlining the essential duties and information needed for each stage of their appointment would help organize the information and focus the attention of the faculty on the most important issues. Such checklists would form an important component of the mentoring website.

7. **Role of Departmental Head.** All untenured faculty and all tenured faculty within two years of promotion should meet with the Head at least once a year to discuss progress in teaching, research and administration. During the meeting advice concerning improvements of career performance and CV preparation can be offered.