Mentoring Tenure-Track Faculty in Kinesiology

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Abstract

The scarcity of tenure-track lines in most kinesiology departments supports the need for the implementation of faculty mentoring programs. This article summarizes key elements of mentoring programs for tenure-track kinesiology faculty at three kinds of state universities. Mentoring at a bachelor's college/university might emphasize support to enhance a new faculty member's teaching effectiveness, student advising strategies, and assist new faculty with a positive integration into the campus community. A comprehensive university mentoring approach may place equal emphasis on both formal (e.g., orientation and mentoring committee) and informal (e.g., collegial and self-selected mentoring) interactions. Assisting the new faculty member with understanding their role as an important part of the departmental team and organizational mission is a consistent theme. Mentoring at a research-intensive university might emphasize clarifying scholarship, tenure and promotion expectations relative to support, guidance in portfolio presentation, retention, tenure and promotion (RTP) evaluation, and strong communication that promotes mutual professional development and improves/sustains faculty retention.

Keywords: collegiality, peer-mentoring, promotion, recruitment, retention, tenure

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Many faculty begin their first tenure-track appointment with a rough transition from a research-centric experience as a doctoral student or a postdoctoral researcher. The transition can be burdensome given the new course preparations, initiation of a research agenda or laboratory start-up, and learning about the service and department culture expectations. In the past, these conflicting pressures are exacerbated by a lack of guidance, unclear expectations, or maybe exploitation from some senior department faculty who expect new faulty to 'pay their dues and earn retention and promotion' like they had to. Feelings of loneliness and uncertainty in a new environment can be overwhelming, especially for new minority faculty (Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005; Reddick, 2015).

A solution to these problems of organizational socialization for new tenure-track faculty is to provide formal or informal mentoring by the department chair and senior faculty in research, teaching, and service (Barrett, Mazerolle, & Rizzo, 2019; Olmstead, 1993). Mentoring programs for new non-tenure line faculty may also be important however, this article focuses solely on new tenure-track faculty. Mentoring tenure-track faculty in kinesiology is particularly important because of the reductions in tenure-track lines (Boyce, 2008; Clark, 2003; Napper-Owen, 2012) and fostering a unified academic identity in a low-consensus field (Clarke, 2003). Mentoring new faculty in research is important also because scholarship expectations are increasing (Boyce, 2008) and it may help departments retain "difference maker" faculty (Krahenbuhl, 2003). In short, why spend considerable time and money recruiting the "best fit" faculty member possible for a scarce tenure-track position, only to not invest in their professional development and advancement for the betterment of the department and the field of kinesiology (Knudson, 2016)?

Faculty mentoring in teaching and service roles is also important (Knudson, 2016). This is particularly relevant in departments at universities that emphasize teaching and service missions. Mentoring is also important in subdisciplines like athletic training with unique expectations in accreditation, teaching and advising, clinical skills, and service (Barrett, Mazerolle, & Nottingham, 2017; Barrett et al., 2019; Mazerolle, Barrett, & Nottingham, 2016).

While there are books with general advice for new faculty (e.g., Boice, 2000), this cannot compare to the disciplinary and department-specific advice, support, and resources provided by a formal and informal mentoring program. This article describes three mentoring programs that have been successfully implemented at public teaching, comprehensive, and research-intensive colleges/universities. Investing in peer mentoring programs, particularly for new tenure-track faculty will help departments build stronger academic programs, support of student learning, faculty success in retention, tenure and promotion (RTP), and accelerate integration of the faculty into collegial and collaborative relationships in the department and university.

Mentoring at a Bachelor's College/University

New tenure-track faculty taking positions in kinesiology departments at a Bachelor's College/University face a transition of emphasis from research to teaching and service. Many of these departments are small, increasing the course preparations and diversity of responsibilities of new faculty. At Lewis-Clark State College, faculty mentoring happens formally within instructional divisions. Mentoring program goals include: 1) welcoming and helping new faculty integrate into the campus community, 2) providing an introduction to, and support for, new faculty understanding of division and college policies and processes, 3) enabling new faculty to contribute effectively to division and college work, and 4) enhance job satisfaction of faculty

mentors through opportunities to interact with new colleagues and to contribute to the college

through mentoring activities and leadership.

Division chairs at Lewis-Clark identify tenured faculty members who might be a good fit

to serve as mentors and inquire about their interest in serving in this capacity. After a possible

mentor-mentee match has been identified, faculty members meet with the chair to discuss

responsibilities and expectations for the mentor and mentee. Faculty mentors are asked to

provide support and guidance in multiple areas including classroom/teaching processes, student

advising strategies, service opportunities and expectations, and an introduction to campus

policies and procedures.

Teaching. Faculty at Lewis-Clark State teach a 4/4 load. It is expected that teaching is

the focus of a faculty member's job. Mentors are encouraged to provide support to mentees

through provision of syllabi examples, teaching materials, and constructive feedback after

conducting teaching observations of the mentee's classes, online and/or face-to-face.

Additionally, mentors are encouraged to introduce new faculty to professional development

opportunities that focus on teaching strategies provided by the campus Center for Teaching and

Learning (CTL). In addition to teaching, faculty members are responsible to advise students,

conduct scholarship, and engage in service to the division, college, and profession.

Student Advising. All Lewis-Clark faculty members are expected to engage in student

advising. New faculty members are usually not assigned advisees during their first academic

semester to ensure time to develop an appreciation and understanding of the curriculum and

course sequencing/scheduling. During a new faculty member's first semester, mentors invite new

faculty to observe individual and group advising sessions and attend relevant professional

development opportunities at the CTL. Additionally, new faculty are recommended to schedule

individual meetings with the division chair and discuss advising strategies, advising software, and curriculum design.

Service. Faculty members are expected to engage in service to the division, college, and the profession. At the beginning of the academic year, service assignments are made division-wide. New faculty are asked to serve on one campus committee and participate in several division service opportunities. Additionally, new faculty are invited to attend meetings of the faculty senate and/or other standing committees to gain an understanding of various committees. They accompany a tenured faculty member in these committee observations whether they are their mentor or not. This helps introduce new faculty to other faculty across campus across instructional divisions. Additionally, this practice also helps new faculty to consider future service assignments of their interest. Mentors are also encouraged to invite new faculty to various campus events to introduce them to other faculty and help them feel connected to the campus community. This type of faculty mentoring encourages an emphasis of stewardship and leadership to the university and field (Lawson, 2014).

Scholarship. Faculty have much autonomy over the types of scholarship activities in which they choose to engage. Some faculty choose the traditional route of engaging in research that is presented upon and later published. Others choose to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Action research projects specific to classroom activities are often shared with members of the campus community at the CTL. Limited professional development funding can hamper a faculty member's desire to engage in multiple professional conferences. In response, the CTL has increasingly become a supportive space for faculty to share their work across disciplinary lines with the greater campus community. Faculty mentors are encouraged to discuss the mentee's research interests and encourage scholarship engagement. While a mentor

and mentee do not necessarily have similar research interests and passions, the mentor is encouraged to provide support to the mentee in the form of discussion of possible scholarly projects and identification of internal and external grant resources to support their research interests.

Expectations and Support. Mentors are encouraged to introduce mentees to members of the faculty and staff who work in different disciplines throughout the college and to colleagues with similar disciplinary interests at other colleges/universities. Helping a new faculty member to grow and expand their professional network is further enhanced through additional support by the chair who is tasked with introducing new faculty to members of campus administration.

Evaluation for RTP. At Lewis-Clark State College, annual evaluation is based on successful completion of responsibilities identified on the job description. Each year, the chair and faculty member work together to design a job description. As a part of this process, the faculty member identifies expected activities related to teaching, advising, service, and scholarship for the upcoming evaluation cycle. The chair provides feedback to the faculty member's draft. Decisions for change are influenced by division and campus need, faculty interest, and keeping the faculty member on track for a successful outcome regarding tenure and promotion. Evaluation is conducted by the chair. However, evaluation decisions are influenced by peer reviewers' feedback on a faculty member's performance in all areas required for evaluation. Peer reviewers must complete a teaching observation and provide constructive feedback to encourage professional growth. Additionally, they are expected to review and provide feedback on a faculty member's body of work in the other areas required for evaluation. A faculty mentor may or may not be assigned as a peer reviewer for the mentee. In the event that they are not, a mentor is encouraged to also provide the mentee with constructive feedback on

their performance in all evaluation areas over the academic year. Additionally, the mentor is encouraged to provide the mentee with assistance in identifying and preparing RTP materials submitted to the chair for review.

Challenges and Pitfalls. Being cognizant of available time for a mentor to devote to providing effective mentorship is of great importance. Mentors are provided release from an additional committee assignment in exchange for agreeing to serve as a mentor. Additionally, being aware of "goodness of fit" between a mentor and mentee is critically important to ensure that positive and constructive relationships have the potential to be formed over time, benefiting both the mentor and mentee. The chair schedules several "check-in" meetings throughout the academic year, with the mentor and mentee (both together and separately), to gauge how the relationship evolves.

Mentoring at a Comprehensive University

New faculty at a comprehensive university perhaps have the most uncertainty about expectations around teaching, research, and service. At the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UW Oshkosh), the department chair facilitates a mentoring program with both formal and informal elements. Helping new hires establish themselves early as important and contributing members of the department and campus as a whole is a point of emphasis, and the process continues as they work toward tenure. This includes knowing what types of faculty member will be the best fit for a given department, choosing the right mentor for that new faculty member, and not losing sight of the human aspect of being a newly hired professor.

Right from the Start. As with many academic departments in our chosen field, welcoming new faculty members has been rare in recent years. There is certainly some pressure to "get it right" with our new colleagues when it comes to departmental fit. For example, despite

the many noted benefits of luring an R-1 level researcher to a comprehensive university to elevate the status of a department, this approach may also pose drawbacks. Not only would the new hire likely experience frustration with lack of resources, equipment, and on-campus collaborative opportunities, they may also struggle with an atmosphere that emphasizes teaching over research. As a result, we have had success with retention when hiring junior faculty who demonstrate teaching excellence first and foremost, along with a productive and sustainable research agenda. Thus, we place a premium on effective classroom demeanor and the ability of junior faculty to lead and guide undergraduate student research projects. Along with providing new faculty members with our departmental tenure and renewal guidelines, we encourage and foster these student-faculty collaborative efforts. The College of Letters & Science (COLS) dean's office provides support in the way of matching departmental travel funds for student presentations with faculty advisors, at state and regional conferences. UW Oshkosh also sponsors a highly active Office of Student Research and Creative Activity which provides grants to support student-faculty collaborative research.

Informal Mentoring. Past experience has also reinforced the importance of informal mentoring; arguably even more impactful than the formal mentoring. This can take on many different forms. Something as simple as having lunch or coffee with a new faculty member on a weekly basis can make a difference in the way a person perceives their level of acceptance in a new environment. Junior faculty members often report feeling more "connected" as a result of these interactions and the more a department can do to foster such activities the better. While it may seem obvious, chairs and mentors might want to consider just asking new faculty what they want and need from mentoring. It is safe to say that some will want more regularly scheduled meetings and discussion, while some might be more independent and prefer only sporadic check-

ins.   Finally, a department chair has a responsibility to limit interference and remove barriers to support new faculty members. This includes, but is not limited to, minimizing committee assignments as well as new teaching preps. When research or laboratory equipment is scarce, as is the case at many comprehensive universities, publication opportunity exists in SoTL (Boyer, 1990). These initiatives need to be identified and promoted among new faculty hires.

Creating the Right Atmosphere. Higher education is facing some challenging times. It is very easy for faculty to get caught up in the negativity and pessimism that can be pervasive. Therefore, we work hard to instill an overriding sense of optimism, which we believe is contagious and helps lead our daily activities. Assisting people with developing their professional expertise while encouraging them to pursue high performance standards is an underlying principle. It remains necessary to hold firm to expectations for teaching excellence, scholarship, and research. This involves first informing then reinforcing with new faculty the tenants for promotion. We further seek to guide the new faculty members and foster their perception that they are an important part of the departmental team with praise and recognition of their professional achievements. Adherence to an open-door policy by senior faculty where new hires know that they can come and discuss areas of their personal and professional lives and knowing that they will be heard, and the conversation held in confidence is vital. Concurrently, we work consistently to let the faculty member know the university requirements they need to meet to continue being renewed and/or promoted. It has been our strong belief and practice that family needs take precedence over most campus needs. The department works diligently to demonstrate that we will care and advocate for the new faculty members we work with. They are our new colleagues to be valued first as people and secondly as professionals.

Challenges and Pitfalls. A crucial and somewhat overlooked aspect of the mentoring

process is determining which faculty should and should not mentor. A department that is divided

with one group at odds with another presents a major challenge not only to the chair but to new

faculty members as well. Unfortunately, some mentors may see an opportunity to recruit a new

hire over to "their side" of the departmental squabbles with little regard for their optimal

professional development. One way to avoid this or at least minimize the negative impact is to

also assign a mentor from outside the department. This model has been effective at UW

Oshkosh with the Associate Dean of the COLS making the assignments. A faculty member from

outside a traditionally combative unit with no underlying agenda or "axe to grind" in a

department issue will most likely provide a neutral and steady hand to better guide and advise a

junior faculty member thus allowing him/her to remain "above the fray" or better yet, out of the

"line of fire!" Some fruitful collaborations have occurred over the years on the UW Oshkosh

campus due to the connections made via this mentoring model.

Mentoring at a Research-Intensive University

The Department of Health and Human Performance (HHP) at Texas State University

(Carnegie R2) is a large unit that has a long-standing peer mentoring program for new faculty.

Mentoring new tenure-track faculty is the joint responsibility of the department chair and the

personnel committee that consists of all tenured faculty members. The personnel committee and

the department chair take great care in selecting 2 to 3 tenured faculty members to serve on the

mentoring committee (MC) for a new tenure-track faculty member. Mentor selection considers

the tenured faculty members' subdisciplines, research interests, and personal characteristics. We

have found the mentoring program to be effective in supporting junior faculty, mutual

professional development for all faculty involved, and building collegiality and respect for peer's

scholarly areas of inquiry. This section provides an overview of the mentoring program and the principles on which it is based.

The MC serves to support, guide, and advocate for the tenure-track faculty member following a detailed department mentoring program policy. MC members meet regularly with their mentee, observe mentee's teaching, review research activities, provide guidance on service, and serve as big sisters and brothers in the department. The emphasis in their first year is the development of high-quality teaching (Silverman, 2003) and start-up of their research agenda. Tenure-track faculty are supported in these areas with reduced teaching load and lighter service expectations. For faculty reappointment evaluations each year, the MC prepares a formative review of the mentee's progress in teaching, research and service, and presents it to the personnel committee. During the second and third years, the MC continues to monitor and support the mentee in developing a research pipeline, connecting them with campus resources/collaborators, maintaining teaching excellence, and building a professional dossier for the summative 3rd year review. During years four and five, the MC continues to support the faculty member in maintaining excellence in teaching and scholarship, address updates on startup funds or external funding, assist the mentee with targeted department and professional service activities, but spends much of the time in remaining years with research and helping the mentee build a professional dossier for RTP evaluations.

Expectations and Support. To support the university's expanding research mission, the department of HHP has sought junior faculty with outstanding research potential. This recruitment and subsequent mentoring in research and grants are particularity important given the department seeks to start a new an interdisciplinary doctoral program at the university through the state higher education coordinating board. To this end, the department chair and MC

work together to clarify publication productivity and quality, tenure and promotion expectations, as well as encourage these faculty to apply for external grants and contracts to support their research agenda. We actively strive to connect mentees with department, college and university support for research. We also facilitate connections with potential collaborators in the department, university, and beyond if the faculty member's line of research is collaborative or interdisciplinary.

A key job of the MC is to clearly communicate the research productivity standards and tenure-promotion expectations of the department, clarify if other standards are relevant at higher levels, and let candidates know whether 'hallway talk' they hear about scholarship expectations is accurate. Evaluation of productivity can be complicated by collaborative research.

Collaborative research is often valued by funding agencies and personnel evaluations. Collaboration with other scholars is desirable when all co-authors on those teams contribute, so the work is clearly larger (e.g., more participants, longer time), better, or more sophisticated than could be done with fewer researchers. The MC works with faculty in documenting their contributions to publications with large research teams. This is important because there have been significant increases in number of co-authors in published research in kinesiology subdisciplines (Knudson, 2017; Vagenas, Palaiothodorou, & Knudson, 2018). This greater collaboration makes it difficult to evaluate an individual author's contributions (Hagen, 2008) unless all authors clearly outline their contributions to each publication.

Perhaps most important, the MC works with faculty to understand how the quality of their research will be evaluated. These subjective judgments of quality have always been difficult. In the past, some internal and external evaluators have used publication in the "top" disciplinary journals in the field as a surrogate measure of quality. It is illogical to judge the

quality of articles based on journal prestige or journal-level metrics like the impact factor that are biased and flawed (Adler, Ewing, & Taylor, 2009; Brumback, 2008; MacRoberts & MacRoberts, 1989; Rossner, Van Epps, & Hill, 2007; Seglen, 1997; Vanclay, 2009). Some studies have reported that many high-quality papers are rejected by top/luxury journals and only to be well cited when published in another journal (Starbuck, 2005). There is even compelling evidence of reliability of articles in prestigious journals are lower compared to mid to lower-tier journals (Brembs, 2019). The quality of candidate's publications should be qualitatively evaluated by disciplinary peers based on the merits of the research, with several citation metrics to the individual publications used only to confirm or screen for potential bias (Knudson, 2019).

At Texas State, we strive to use a more valid and holistic evaluation of the candidate's research consistent with evidence-based evaluation of research (Casadevall & Fang, 2015; Declaration on Research Assessment, 2015; Hicks et al. 2015). MCs do not discourage submission to prominent journals, but recommend junior faculty seek quality peer-reviewed journals with missions, readership, and indexing related to their research. Care should be taken by the MC to ensure this message is not misinterpreted by new faculty as encouragement to publish in predatory, deceptive, or low-quality journals (Eriksson & Helgesson, 2018). There are negative consequences to faculty authors and their university trying to create scholarly records through publication in these deceptive, essentially not peer-reviewed journals. If they are unsure about a new journal that seems aligned with their work, make sure by consulting university subject librarians. They can also check blacklists or whitelists like the directory of open access journals (doaj.org), Cabells (https://www2.cabells.com/) or the bibliometric scholars who took over Beall's List of potentially predatory publishers (https://predatoryjournals.com/).

The MCs at Texas State encourage junior faculty to focus on high-quality design, analysis, and reporting of their research. Peer and external reviews will recognize quality of work and scholarly advancement, especially if the candidate's narrative points out these quality indicators. Where relevant, junior faculty should be encouraged to report article/publication-specific citation metrics. There are considerable publication-specific citation metrics so both MCs and junior faculty should consult reviews on these metrics and their proper use (Knudson, 2019; Ruscio, Seaman, D'Oriano, Stremlo, & Mahalchik, 2012; Van Noorden, 2010).

MCs also encourage and support junior faculty in seeking internal and external grants and contracts when relevant to their research agenda. It is important to get new faculty connected with internal support staff and programs for seeking internal and external funding. Establishing a record of successful funding as a PI and CoPI are often critical for faculty at research intensive institutions. Perhaps the most important message is support and encouragement when reviewers for an agency turn down their proposal. Learning what can be taken from critical feedback to revise the proposal for a different funder is an important skill for faculty needing external funding.

Evaluation for RTP. Another area where mentoring is important is in the development of skills in presenting a strong case/portfolio retention, tenure and promotion evaluations. Many junior faculty are not aware that their department, college, and university level evaluators may not be familiar with the scholarship and publication outlets in their sub-discipline. Consequently, the candidate should be guided in development of a professional portfolio that clearly lays out their scholarship, instructional, and service achievements. The MC at Texas State help tenure-track faculty create clear narratives that summarize the quality, recognition, and application of their scholarship. Like most universities, Texas State seeks off-campus peer reviewers of

candidate portfolios, so developing a compelling portfolio over several years is important to both the internal and external evaluators of their work.

Productivity in peer-reviewed publications is rather easy to operationalize once candidates are taught to report contributions of multi-authored publications. Texas State expects sustained scholarship productivity since their tenure-track appointment and candidates are well informed that they need to serve as a leader or primary author on publications in their own line of research.

Candidates are also informed on how they should assist evaluators in noticing the quality of their research. Evaluators have access to the candidate's publications; however, the candidate should point out elements in design, analysis, or subsequent recognition (citations, awards, use in the field) that indicate their published research is considered high quality or influential in that sub-discipline.

Challenges and Pitfalls. Departments planning to implement mentoring programs should also try to avoid some potential challenges and pitfalls. MCs must use care in finding the right balance of support and challenge with new tenure-track faculty. The personalities of the MC and mentees should be complimentary, however there can be problems with communication styles and mentee fears in discussing problems with senior faculty who are part of their RTP evaluation. The Texas State program allows junior faculty and the MC to coordinate with the department chair when issues arise in relationships between mentors and mentees.

At Texas State, service obligations for new faculty are minimized and only gradually increased. This allows junior faculty more focused time to develop and improve their teaching and research. MCs initially emphasize targeted professional service, like serving as peer-reviewers for journals or scholarly conferences. Later in their appointment, gradual increases in

department, college, and university service will become part of their future role as a tenured

faculty member.

Summary

The increasing importance of retention and development of tenure-track faculty in the

current resource-scarce environment, as well as numerous demands on these new faculty indicate

that formal and informal mentoring by tenured kinesiology faculty is important. The elements of

a mentoring program are selected based on the kind of institution, department standards, and

culture. Faculty mentoring at bachelor's institutions may emphasize support to enhance a new

faculty member's teaching effectiveness, student advising strategies, and assist new faculty with

a positive integration into the campus community. A comprehensive university mentoring

approach may place equal emphasis on both formal and informal mentoring. Assisting the new

faculty member with an understanding of their role as an important part of the departmental team is a

consistent theme. Mentoring at a research university might emphasize clarifying scholarship,

tenure and promotion expectations, guidance in portfolio presentation and RTP evaluation, and

strong communication that promotes mutual professional development and improves/sustains

faculty retention. Common themes in these three programs and the faculty mentoring literature

are listed in Table 1. This article used mentoring program examples from state public

universities, however mentoring faculty at private universities likely would address similar issues

and themes.

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Table 1

Key Themes in Mentoring Programs for Tenure-Track Faculty.

Theme	Need
Formal	
Multiple orientation and training sessions	Clear expectations in RTP evaluations for teaching, research/scholarship, and service
Mentoring committee	Regular meetings/formal evaluations during the probationary period
Informal	
Meetings with chair and/or self-selected mentor(s)	Personal connection
Build connections within/beyond department/university	Collaboration/culture
Reinforce recruitment and department commitment	Mentee and program success
Attend to social and mentee needs/interests	Collegiality and support