

E.-Mentoring and Professional Development of Professors at the Associate Level

(Approved by the Faculty October 4, 2018)

i. Overview.

Strategic professional development opportunities will empower faculty members to engage in career planning, seek productive collaborations and build communities to accelerate and promote their work. Mentoring is a key component of faculty professional development. It is defined here as a process by which an experienced faculty member serves as a guide to an individual (usually with less experience) for the purposes of *socializing them to disciplinary norms, fostering their acquisition of institutional and scholarly knowledge, and providing professional opportunities and personal and/or professional support*. Hence, to foster continuing professional development and promotion in academic rank, all tenured associate professors and continuing (i.e., full-time) non-tenure track associate professors are encouraged to establish a Mentoring Team.

ii. Mentoring Team Makeup and Training.

The tenured associate professors or continuing (i.e., full time) non-tenure track associate professors seeking mentorship are encouraged to choose a Mentoring Team consisting of two faculty members. Individuals are encouraged to also include their respective department head as a third member of their Mentoring Team, when appropriate and to strengthen their relationship with their department head.

Mentoring Team members will be selected by individual faculty members based on their mentoring needs. It is anticipated that most Mentoring Team members will be at a higher rank (e.g., full professor); however, individual faculty members are encouraged to choose those members who they feel will best serve as mentors. Associate professors are encouraged to discuss their Mentoring Team member choice with trusted colleagues.

Each Mentoring Team member (including department heads) is encouraged to undergo training (as described in Section v. below). Faculty members are free to change their selected mentors as their professional interests, goals, and needs evolve.

iii. Mentoring Team Model and Frequency of Interaction.

Mentoring Teams will assist tenured associate professors and continuing (i.e., full-time) non-tenure track associate teaching and associate research professors in their professional development, help them reflect on their longer-term accomplishments and future goals, and provide feedback in a confidential and collegial setting.

Individual associate professors with a Mentoring Team are encouraged to meet with their Mentoring Team every two years. In addition, Mentoring Team members are expected to meet regularly (ranging from once per month to twice per year) with the faculty member on an individual basis where meetings may involve informal conversations about professional development, a discussion of the faculty member's Professional Development Plan (PDP)⁶, or a more formal assessment of the faculty member's readiness for promotion in rank.

It is expected that Mentoring Team members will advise on the criteria for promotion in academic rank and potentially serve as members of the Joint Promotion Committee. Meetings with the Mentoring Team are not to be considered performance reviews; they are not a substitute for annual meetings with department heads or for regular consultation with other mentors. Rather, Mentoring Team meetings held at regular intervals are intended to facilitate continued professional development and promotion. The results of Mentoring Team meetings are advisory and will be shared exclusively with the faculty member.

iv. Administration.

⁶ The template for Professional Development Plans is available through the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center.

The Associate Professor Mentoring Program will be administered through the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center. Periodic program assessment will be administered through the Center.

v. Mentorship Training.

Mentor training consists of three components: 1) understanding and proper interpretation of WPI's promotion criteria (for both TTT and NTT faculty members); 2) being an effective mentor including the use of Professional Development Plans; and 3) handling implicit bias⁷. Training is designed, customized, delivered and refined to meet program needs. Training is administered through the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center and offered biannually to a cohort of identified Mentoring Team members. This training is also required of the provost, deans, department heads and program directors.

vi. Mentoring Team Meeting and Reporting.

Mentoring Team meetings will focus on discussions of the professional development of the faculty member (using the Professional Development Plan, where appropriate) and serve as a group mentoring experience. If desired, the faculty member may draft a summary of the meeting and ask the Mentoring Team to verify that they agree with the contents of the drafted summary. This summary of the meeting is only for their personal communication and will not be shared with anyone else unless agreed to by all parties. The Mentoring Team meeting should take place before the end of the academic year.

All faculty members choosing to establish a Mentoring Team should address career goals, align those goals with the criteria for promotion, and set objectives or milestones that they intend to achieve (using the Professional Development Plan, where appropriate). Faculty should also maintain annual updates to two forms of vitae: 1) following the more detailed requirements of COAP (organization and categories available from Faculty Governance); and 2) one that is more appropriate for sharing with the faculty member's outside professional community.

The Morgan Teaching and Learning Center will maintain a record mentoring program participants. The content of the meetings will be confidential. Periodically, COAP and COG will request from department heads and the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center reports on actions taken to support mentoring and professional development.

⁷ Implicit biases are unconscious thoughts that are automatically activated without conscious awareness that can inadvertently influence thoughts, decisions, and behaviors. Implicit biases are pervasive, but they do not necessarily align with explicit beliefs, biases, or motivations.