

## **Faculty Mentoring Policy**

### **Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society, Oregon State University**

The Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society (FES) is strongly committed to the professional development and success of all its faculty and views mentoring as a critical element of this commitment. In this document, the term “faculty” includes professorial (tenure-track, tenured, and non-tenure-track) faculty, instructors, faculty research assistants, professors of practice, and research associates. The Department believes that mentoring benefits both the mentee and entire department by helping to ensure that all faculty members are performing at their highest potential. Mentoring is an essential component of a faculty member’s entire career trajectory and thus the mentoring policy should not be confined to mentoring only for, and through, the promotion process.

The Department recognizes that faculty within FES have diverse career stages, appointments, assignments, backgrounds, disciplines, mentoring needs, and professional goals. Therefore, this formal mentoring policy is intended to be flexible while offering sufficient structure to facilitate a formal process as appropriate and desired. It is expected that the makeup of mentoring committees will be reviewed annually by the department head and the mentee and will change regularly as the needs of the faculty mentee change. Nothing in this policy is intended to preclude individuals from seeking advice and mentoring from other sources. Nor is this formal mentoring policy meant to be a substitute for the other important forms of informal mentoring (e.g., peer mentoring) that benefit a faculty member.

A formal mentoring committee is required for all early-career, tenure-track faculty. All other faculty members may opt into the mentoring process by making a request to the department head. Early-career non-tenure-track faculty members, in particular, are encouraged to carefully consider whether they have sufficient mentoring support to help them meet their professional expectations and accomplish their career goals.

In adopting this policy, the Department makes a commitment to providing adequate mentoring training for members of the Department.

#### **Mentoring Committee Makeup: Tenure-Track**

Within the first six months of a tenure-track faculty appointment, the department head, in consultation with the faculty member, will create and assign a three-person mentoring committee appropriate for the faculty mentee. FES faculty mentoring committees will include at least one mid-career or senior faculty member from the FES Department. The department head will appoint the committee chair. The Department will strive to distribute responsibilities for mentorship as equitably as possible across faculty. Additional members of the mentoring committee may include junior FES tenure-track faculty who have been in the department at least 3 years, OSU faculty outside of FES, or even members outside the university (e.g., agency, industry mentors). All mentors must be senior in either rank or in experience to the mentee. Members of the same rank would only be chosen in situations where there is a particularly appropriate mentor who is more advanced than the mentee. In subsequent years, the mentoring committee makeup may be changed by the department head in consultation with the mentee. The

mentoring committee will operate independently of the mentee's dossier committee. The mentoring committee's responsibility ends once an individual is tenured.

### **Mentoring: Non-Tenure Track Faculty**

Any non-tenure track faculty member (instructor, faculty research assistant, research associate, professor of practice, or senior research assistant professor) may request a mentoring committee; new hires will be informed of the opportunity to have a mentoring committee within the first six months after being hired. The department head, in consultation with the non-tenure track faculty member, will select a mentor or mentoring committee appropriate for the faculty mentee. The mentor(s) will be at or above the rank of the mentee. The form and duration of mentoring non-tenure track faculty will be determined by each committee and mentee as appropriate to the mentee's needs.

### **The Role of the Mentor and Mentoring Committee**

Mentors are expected to understand the requirements of the mentee's position description. In general terms, the role of the mentoring committee is to actively offer the mentee professional support and advice on teaching, advising, research, engagement, and other faculty duties. Mentors and mentoring committees should always act in the best interest of the mentee and aid in the professional development of a mentee. It is important to note that the advice and opinion of the mentoring committee should not be construed by the mentee as suggesting definitively whether or not the mentee will be promoted or tenured; the committee's role is advisory only.

### **The Role of the Mentee**

It is important that the **mentee take the lead in expressing her or his needs to the mentoring committee**. This includes both topics for discussion and scheduling the annual meeting with the mentoring committee. It is the responsibility of the mentee to provide background materials (e.g. current CV) to the mentoring committee before meetings. While the mentors provide advice and perspective, the decisions are those of the mentee.

### **Meetings and Topics**

The normal expectation is that there will be a meeting with the mentoring committee once per year or more often if requested by the mentee. All members of the committee are expected to participate together (in person or virtually) in the annual meetings. For purposes of accountability, the chair of the mentoring committee will email the department head the date of the annual meeting. Additional one-on-one meetings with committee members may also be appropriate. To best serve the various professional needs of faculty members, mentoring discussions will inevitably vary. However, appropriate topics for mentoring discussions might include the trajectory of a mentee's research program, teaching, extension and outreach (or engagement) efforts, service inside and outside the university, mentoring of students, professional networking, professional development, work/life balance, time management strategies, career goals, progress toward promotion and/or tenure, research ethics, obtaining funding, contact with media, supervising others, and methods for advancing diversity.

### **Evaluation**

Of mentees: The role of the mentoring committee is to support and advise the mentee. While the committee may assess the mentee's accomplishments as part of advising, this input will not contribute to any formal evaluation by the mentee's supervisor.

Of mentors: The department will fully acknowledge the role of mentoring as an important component of a faculty member's FES service expectation. It is expected that service on a mentoring committee will typically entail less than 10 hours of service per year. Service as a mentor by non-tenure track faculty is completely voluntary.

### **Boundaries of Confidentiality**

It should be assumed that mentoring discussions are confidential unless otherwise explicitly stated or in cases of sexual harassment, illegal acts, or other actions that are required, by law, to be reported. The Department encourages mentors and mentees to have an explicit discussion about what confidentiality means, or about what is or is not confidential between mentees and mentors. The mentoring committee as an entity or committee members will not provide input to supervisors related to the mentee's performance. Members of mentoring committees are precluded from using any confidential information (or information not available to non-committee members) in their other roles, such as a member of the promotion and tenure committee. Whenever possible, for mentees on tenure-track, there will be an attempt to avoid overlap between the three person mentoring committee and the three person dossier committee.

**Policy Review** This policy will be revised as needed and reviewed by the Department every five years starting in 2021.

**Other resources:** OSU's Center for Learning & Organizational Development provides numerous opportunities for professional development (<http://hr.oregonstate.edu/training>). In addition, OSU is a member of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, and all OSU employees are encouraged to use this external mentoring opportunity. Individuals can sign up for free at [www.FacultyDiversity.org](http://www.FacultyDiversity.org)