

➤ Mentoring-SL

School of Law

The faculty adopted the following motion at its October 28, 1993 meeting:

The School of Law shall have a Faculty Mentoring Program to aid new teachers in becoming more effective in teaching, scholarship, and community service. This program shall be administered in accord with the intent of the Faculty as indicated in the Report of the Faculty Development Committee dated October 21, 1993.

The October 21, 1993 report of the Faculty Development Committee follows:

The Faculty Development Committee recommends that we establish a Faculty Mentoring Program which should be offered to new teachers to assist them in becoming more effective in teaching, scholarly work, and community service. The program is not meant to be in any way evaluative, and should be kept distinct and separate from the Promotion and Tenure process. Participation by both mentors and mentees should be entirely voluntary.

There is virtually no literature on faculty mentoring programs in legal education. Indeed, the literature on educational mentoring usually focuses on faculty-student mentoring relationships rather than faculty-faculty mentoring. An interesting exception is Sands, Parsons & Duane, Faculty Mentoring Faculty in a Public University, 62 J. Higher Ed. 174 (1991). The dearth of literature about faculty-faculty mentoring may arise from the fact that unlike the faculty-student mentoring relationship, most mentoring relationships between faculty members are highly unstructured and informal. It may also reflect the unwillingness of academia to acknowledge that inevitably hierarchal relationships exist between colleagues on faculties. The Sands piece is one attempt to describe the nature of such relationships and the chief functions they serve in faculty development in university settings.

According to the Sands article, our idea of mentoring usually leads us to visualize a senior person serving a protégé as teacher, sponsor, host, guide, exemplar and counselor. Id. at 176. In higher education, Sands found that junior teachers tend to describe their mentors as serving one or more of four functions:

1. Friend (e.g., source of emotional support, advisor re people in the institution, host and guide through social activities, etc.);
2. Career Guide (e.g., helper in professional networking, advisor regarding research topics, grantsmanship, etc., and collaborator in research);
3. Information source (e.g., provider of information regarding informal expectations in P&T process, power allocations among faculty committees, etc.); and
4. Intellectual Guide (e.g., provider of criticism and feedback regarding teaching, review of draft articles, etc.)

We conducted a brief survey of law schools to ascertain what kinds of faculty mentoring programs are operated today. We discovered two basic models. One, exemplified at the

University of Texas Law School, focuses on aiding junior professors in overcoming the tenure requirements for publication. The other, exemplified by what goes on the University of Tennessee Law School, is more broad based, attempting to deal with the full array of roles and services identified with mentoring in articles like that of Sands et al.

Our committee met with about eight teachers at a hearing held on October 11. Many of the rest of you supplied us with valuable input with written suggestions or oral communications before the meeting. The program we propose reflects the ideas and insights we gleaned from you.

Program Outline

First, we believe the law school should institutionalize a mentoring system which would enhance the ability of junior teachers to have senior mentors playing the roles described in the Sands' article. Everyone we talked with thought some sort of program was a good idea, and nobody we talked with wanted a program focused narrowly on only one function like publishing. Instead, they wanted it to be flexible enough to serve a variety of functions, varying in content depending on who the mentee is, where he or she is in career development, and the strengths a particular mentor could bring to a particular mentee.

Second, the process of matching mentor and mentee should be initiated, at every stage, by the school, not the mentee. The initial contact should be through the Associate Dean of the Faculty, who would contact new hires and people on board a short time and ask them whether they want to participate and what sort of mentor(s) they want, and then help the would-be mentee select one or two mentors from a list of tenured teachers who have volunteered to do the job. Once a mentor has been so "matched" to a mentee, that mentor's duty would be to approach the mentee with a welcome and an offer to assist at whatever level the two deem appropriate.

Third, only tenured faculty should be allowed to volunteer to be mentors in the system. Those who do not wish to serve as system mentors should be allowed without recrimination to refuse to participate, or to withdraw from the system. We do not doubt that many nontenured faculty have the talents to be good mentors -- indeed, sometimes greater talents than many more experienced teachers. But nontenured people should not be asked to undertake responsibility for their peers' professional development when their own professional development has not been secured. The mentoring role is expected to be a substantial professional responsibility of those teachers who assume it. When a mentor accepts appointment to work with a particular mentee, he or she should be given specific direction by the Associate Dean as to what his or her mentoring responsibilities to the mentee will be during the next year and should understand he or she is expected to meet these responsibilities.

Fourth, no one should be compelled to be a mentee. The relationship of mentor-to-mentee will likely be somewhat hierarchical, and nobody should be forced into a subordinate role. Furthermore, since mentees will be new untenured teachers, there are clear career risks to exposure to a senior mentor, and nobody should be forced to take those risks unless he or she is willing to do so. In addition, a few new teachers may decline to enter a formal mentor-mentee relationship but nevertheless pursue a less than formal relationship with tenured older teachers. For whatever reason, an eligible teacher should be free to refuse to participate in the program,

reject particular mentors, and withdraw from a mentoring relationship at any time. Indeed, it is our expectation that many junior teachers may elect to participate in the system for one or two years and then decide not to do so in the following year, either because they have established strong enough collegial relationships in the first year or so and do not wish to pursue others or because they are comfortable and self-confident and do not feel any need to continue to develop mentoring relationships at all.

Fifth, there should be a clear and unequivocal separation between the mentoring system and the system for evaluation for retention, promotion and tenure. The mentoring system's sole goal is to assist junior faculty in their career development; there is no place in it for grading or career evaluation. A mentor should not be on a candidate's P&T subcommittee during the year in which he or she is serving as the particular candidate's mentor. Willingness or unwillingness to accept mentoring should be held clearly irrelevant to consideration in the P&T process, and negative information gained by mentors about mentees through the mentoring relationship should be off-limits in P&T discussions.

Sixth, each mentee should understand that his or her decisions and actions in pursuit of a mentoring relationship will be held in confidence. The mentee's discussions with the Associate Dean regarding who might serve as the mentee's mentor(s) should be held in strictest confidence. Information a mentor gathers about a mentee's early efforts at teaching, writing, and service, as well as the impression the mentor gathers regarding the mentee's collegiality, to the extent gained during the mentoring relationship, should likewise be held generally confidential.

Seventh, each mentee should be assured of a wide variety of services from the system. Those a beginning teacher may want may well differ from those a person up for third year review may need. Senior teachers will vary tremendously in areas of strength. In order to assure a wide variety of services, a junior teacher should be allowed to select up to two mentors to serve in any one year. Those selected as a junior teacher's mentor should not repeat as system-appointed mentors for that person in ensuing years. This does not mean that whatever constructive relationship between mentor and mentee is created by the program would have to stop at the end of the mentoring year. We believe it is likely that many professional relationships initially fostered through the system will continue on an informal and increasingly collegial basis thereafter, and frankly hope that this will happen.

Eighth, the system should only be offered to full-time faculty appointees who are new hires or untenured persons through the year of their first scholarship review by the P&T committee. For most new appointees, this would mean the person would be eligible for mentoring through the third year of service here; for clinicians, mentoring would be available through fourth year review. There are several reasons for this limitation. First, there are limits to the capacity of the senior faculty to provide meaningful mentoring. Second, we doubt there will be much demand for mentoring help beyond the first scholarship review. By that time, most new teachers will have become acculturated to the life of the school, would resent participation in a formal mentoring relationship, and may in fact have become coequal colleagues for whom a mentor-protégé relationship is inappropriate.

Finally, we believe the program should be initiated immediately. The services of the program should be offered to eligible persons now. In the future, the services of the program should be offered to new hires before they come on board, so that their mentors could get together with them before classes begin in the fall. Each spring, the Associate Dean should appoint new mentors for eligible teachers for the next school year.