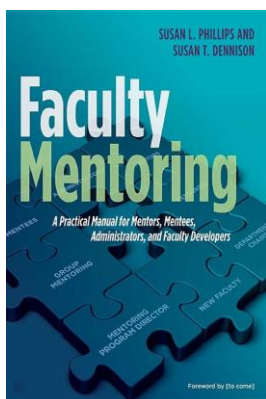




TILT Faculty Mentoring Program: How to Select a Faculty Mentor



The most important factor in a successful mentoring relationship is a good fit with your mentor. As your needs change over time, you may find new mentors to add to your mentoring map, you may come to realize that some mentoring relationships have fulfilled their purpose, and you may enjoy the opportunity to mentor others yourself.

Be sure to consider your personality and communication style: Would you prefer that all meetings with a mentor were formal and business-like? Would you rather have casual conversations? Maybe a bit of both? Here, a multiple-mentor process can help give you what you need when you need it; you may want one mentor to discuss research and teaching in a more formal, business-like manner, and a second mentor for social-emotional support with whom you can have more frequent, casual conversations about the stress of being a faculty member. Consider the benefits of a mentor who complements you vs one who is similar to you.

If you tend to let things slide, you may benefit from someone who will hold your feet to the fire. If you work until you drop, you may benefit from a mentor who reminds you to take care of yourself.

The single most important variable for a successful mentoring relationship is a clear, shared understanding of expectations.

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE YOUR DEPARTMENT/UNIT?

Mentors within your department/unit and college are more likely to understand your discipline and the teaching and research within your field. They can give you advice that is highly relevant. Also, it would be helpful to have people on your tenure committee who have had time to talk to you and understand your research, and to know the expectations of the various senior faculty in your department as you work on your tenure folder. However, you might also benefit from having a mentor outside of your department or college, to talk to about things you may not feel comfortable discussing with someone who could one day be on your tenure committee.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

In each case, it is helpful to take the opportunity to visit with a potential mentor to get a sense of whether they would be a good fit for you. Taking advantage of an opportunity like this can also help you avoid the experience of an artificial or forced relationship, a frequent complaint of mentees in strictly administrator-matched mentoring programs. Consider preparing a casual, brief elevator speech to share with potential mentors, so that they can get to know you, your goals, and your expectations: How often do you hope to meet with your mentor? How long will your meetings be? Will you have regular communication between meetings? Can you ask for advice for a spur-of-the-moment concern? Will you attend campus professional development events together and/or reflect on the mentor/mentee discussion questions designed to accompany these events? Taking some time to consider these variables in advance can help you secure an ideal mentor match.

