

EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences
Junior Faculty Mentoring Program

2024-2025

CLASS gratefully acknowledges Dr. Tom Otieno as the originator of this mentorship program and the primary author of the handbook.

Introduction

Because Eastern Kentucky University is invested in the success and flourishing of new faculty, the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences has established a formal mentoring program to support new faculty. This program is designed to provide robust resources for tenure-track faculty as they fulfill the various obligations of the professoriate.

Junior faculty are essential to the educational mission of the university, as they bring with them fresh perspectives on their disciplines and new energy to the professoriate. They not only represent a sizable investment of resources but also the future of the institution. It is thus important to equip them with the essential tools that will support their success.

The CLASS mentoring program addresses multiple facets of faculty work and life: teaching effectiveness, creative and scholarly productivity, service and collegiality, university citizenship and leadership, and departmental expectations. A thorough understanding of the requirements for tenure, as well as the campus culture in which that work is accomplished, will enable new faculty to navigate the first years on the tenure track.

Mentorship Goals

Mentoring involves the building of personal and professional relationships that can be mutually beneficial for both the mentor and mentee. Serving as mentors enables senior faculty to: 1) sustain their own professional growth, 2) share their wisdom, knowledge, and acquired expertise with their junior colleagues, and 3) ensure the health of their discipline and department within the University. Mentees can expect to avoid some of the pitfalls and mistakes commonly encountered during the early stages of an academic career, gain insight into the culture of higher education, realize more success in their teaching and research, be better colleagues, and enhance their probability of achieving tenure and promotion.

Although not an exhaustive list, some of the specific goals of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Science's mentoring plan include:

- Assisting faculty with their pedagogical skills and assessing their effectiveness in teaching and learning;
- Supporting scholarly and creative activities;
- Acclimating faculty to a culture of collegiality, participation, and citizenship.
- Helping faculty set realistic goals for their professional, scholarly, and creative development, and balancing their time and energy between teaching, research and service;
- Familiarizing faculty with department/college/university expectations, criteria, documents and processes regarding tenure and promotion;
- Informing faculty of campus-wide resources to support their efforts and to facilitate the development of their professional networks;
- Providing clear, honest, constructive, and diagnostic feedback on the progress of junior faculty toward tenure and promotion;

- Creating opportunities for faculty to feel welcome within the department, college, university, and Richmond community;
- Encouraging a collegial atmosphere where faculty feel comfortable engaging in debate on a variety of academic issues while respecting the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of being a member of the community of scholars;
- Creating mechanisms for the informal support of faculty ranging from social events to peer group discussions;
- Transferring experience, knowledge, history and leadership skills throughout the organization.

Achieving these objectives will advance the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences toward fulfilling its mission and realizing its vision:

Mission

The College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) provides the intellectual foundation, programs, and experiences to prepare graduates to be engaged, ethical leaders through its commitment to liberal education, academic excellence, and the advancement of knowledge.

Vision

The College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences (CLASS) will be recognized for academic quality through student engagement and innovative faculty, attaining success through creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. CLASS fosters a vibrant learning community for excellence at EKU, in the Commonwealth, and beyond.

Elements of the Junior Faculty Mentoring Program

Five complementary components implemented at the departmental and college levels will comprise the CLASS mentoring program. Participation in all of the components is voluntary, although junior faculty are strongly encouraged to have a departmental mentor. The program is designed to be flexible and convenient, and provide targeted assistance on an as-needed basis to junior faculty members as they navigate the first two years of their probationary period. The components outlined below should not be viewed in exclusive terms as the only means to mentor junior faculty. We realize that mentoring can and will take place in a variety of ways and encourage junior faculty to seek out individuals from across the EKU community who can assist them with their professional development.

1. Pre-arrival/Arrival at Eastern Kentucky University: The department should establish regular communication with the individual to help welcome them to EKU and make them feel part of the department. Pre-arrival materials that may be sent to the new faculty could include: A description of the CLASS mentoring program, complimentary textbooks for assigned courses, and campus maps. Information on the following could also be included: housing, parking, local utility providers, childcare facilities, new faculty orientation, fall convocation, office assignments and phone numbers, teaching schedules.

2. **Departmental Mentor:** Each department will arrange for a tenured member of the faculty to serve as a mentor for new arrivals at ECU. The chair will create a match, mutually agreed upon by both parties, which reflects similar teaching, professional, and research interests. The departmental mentor should serve as the primary, on-campus disciplinary resource for the new faculty member, as well as provide advice and guidance on policies and procedures in the unit. Both parties will be required to attend an orientation session focusing on 1) the objectives of the mentoring program, 2) best management practices for achieving those objectives, and 3) the expectations and responsibilities of each person in the match. The length of the agreement will be for two years, but during that period either party can end the match on a no-fault basis. If the mentee needs another departmental mentor, one will be arranged. The mentoring orientation session will be organized and conducted by the Dean and the Associate Dean.

3. **College Mentor:** A college mentor offers new faculty a point of contact outside their normal circles. Such cross-disciplinary relationships foster a sense of shared community and provide new perspectives on the faculty's work. It might also be the case that the new faculty member is hesitant to openly discuss some issues with departmental colleagues; thus, a second mentor from outside the mentee's home department might serve as a more objective, impartial and dispassionate listener. Therefore, each new faculty member, should they choose to have one, will also be matched with a tenured member of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences from a Department other than their own.

4. **Peer Mentoring:** In many cases, the best advice that new faculty members can get is from a peer who might be experiencing the same problems in either teaching a large class for the first time or in publishing their first refereed manuscript. All new faculty will be invited to attend a college orientation program where they will have an opportunity to meet each other, receive an overview of college policies and procedures, and be introduced to the administrative staff in the Office of the Dean. This cohort will serve as their peer-mentoring group, and be invited to attend activities which will provide opportunities for new faculty to share their experiences and interests.

5. **Roundtables and Workshop Series:** More detailed and in-depth roundtables and workshops will be arranged throughout the mentoring period. Topics may include, but are not limited to, legal issues for faculty, evaluating of teaching effectiveness, time management, assessing progress toward tenure, collegiality, and using library resources to support teaching and scholarship. Faculty will also be encouraged to participate in regular workshops conducted by the Teaching and Learning Center.

6. Program Evaluation

Evaluation of the Junior Faculty Mentoring Program will be conducted periodically to determine its overall effectiveness in facilitating the development, success, and retention of junior faculty in CLASS. Participating mentors and mentees will be asked to complete a survey on the program's structure and implementation and provide ideas and information for improvement.