Strong mentorship supports faculty colleagues at American University in a variety of important ways. Mentors can clarify the university’s expectations with respect to scholarship, teaching and service; can help faculty with the process of applying for fellowships and grants; and can provide sound advice on the setting of career goals and on effective time management. Mentorship works best when relatively junior faculty, tenure-line or term, are not construed as the passive ‘recipients’ of mentoring, but rather as active participants proactively driving their professional development. While successful mentorships sometimes develop organically, the College has a strong interest in creating and supporting a culture of mentorship to benefit all of our faculty, especially those new to our university.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, the College’s Dean’s Advisory Committee, led by Professor Philip Johnson, studied faculty mentorship programs across the nation, conducted a survey of College faculty that touched on mentorship, and held four faculty coffees where mentoring was discussed. The policies outlined below are the direct result of that committee’s good efforts (including a best practices survey by Professor Lauren Weis) and reflect extensive discussion with College chairs, deans and directors.

*Mentoring Pre-Tenure Faculty*

Effective immediately, **all pre-tenure faculty will be assigned a mentor** from among the College’s senior faculty. Normally, this mentor will belong to the junior faculty member’s home department. Although advanced Associate and Full Professors with tenure in the College are preferable, any research-active senior faculty colleague at American University (tenure-line or term) is eligible to serve as a mentor. Departments may develop any process they wish for the assignment of mentors to pre-tenure faculty, but the ultimate responsibility for making and reporting these assignments will rest with the department’s chair, in dialogue with the pre-tenure colleague. Department chairs and rank & tenure committee chairs both have a natural mentorship role in all faculty actions. Junior faculty can often obtain sound advice from senior colleagues outside the home department or school. All of these highly desirable forms of mentorship should, however, be considered as supplementing that of the designated mentor. Because the mentoring relationship is not one of advocacy but of good counsel, mentors remain eligible to vote on the faculty member’s case for reappointment, tenure and/or promotion.
Mentoring Term Faculty

All term faculty with fewer than three years of full-time service at AU will be assigned a mentor, typically a more senior term faculty colleague from the same (or a related) department. (Tenured faculty are also eligible.) Depending upon the term faculty member’s specific promotion track, mentoring may touch on strategies for effective teaching, the building of a promotion-worthy scholarly record, and/or managing the demands of department- and university-level service.

Here too, departments may choose whatever assignment process best suits them, without compromising the goals of this policy, with ultimate responsibility residing with the chair, in dialogue with the term faculty colleague. In departments whose by-laws allow for such voting, term faculty mentors remain eligible to vote on a term faculty candidate’s reappointment and promotion files.

General Considerations

Specific departmental processes for the assignment of mentors to both tenure-line and term faculty should be codified in the department’s by-laws.

Both pre-tenure and term faculty with under three years of service may request assignment of a different mentor at any time by contacting their department chair.

It is understood that the advice of faculty mentors is advisory only and does not bind the department, College or University to take any particular action—positive or negative—in the faculty member’s reappointment, tenure, or promotion.

Please note that the existence of formal mentoring relationships as outlined above in no way obviates the expectation that all senior faculty, especially those in positions of departmental leadership, will make themselves available to their junior colleagues for guidance and feedback, nor that junior colleagues will seek advice from others besides their mentor(s). Departments should likewise make every effort to assign a formal mentor to any faculty member who requests one.

External Research Mentoring

All faculty on an Assistant Professor/Associate Professor/Professor track (tenure-line and term) who work in fields not sufficiently represented at AU may at any time request of the Associate Dean for Research a $500 honorarium to be paid to a research and funding mentor external to AU.

Recognition of Effort in Mentoring

Effective mentoring demands a significant commitment of time. College departments, and the College as a whole, will recognize and reward a strong commitment to mentoring by both tenure-line and term faculty mentors in the annual merit review process.
Departments will work to ensure that no individual faculty member bears a disproportionately large part of the department’s (and College’s) overall mentoring burden.

The College will provide one University Club lunch voucher per semester for all mentor/mentee pairs seeking to continue their dialogue over a meal. Vouchers can be obtained by sending an email to casbudget@american.edu.