

NSP mentoring policy

Written by C.L. Jordan; approved by Faculty Advisory Committee, June, 2011

The Neuroscience Program (NSP) is an interdepartmental graduate training program. Currently, FTEs for the large majority of NSP faculty are in departments and not in the NSP and therefore faculty mentoring is the responsibility of the home department. However, the NSP has several faculty with either full or part-time appointments in the NSP and additional NSP faculty appointments may be available in the future. As such, a formal mentoring policy for junior faculty will be instituted. In accordance with University Mentoring Policy, junior faculty may choose to opt out of formal mentoring.

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NSP's mentoring practices for joint appointment faculty will be coordinated with the lead departments, recognizing that mentoring may look different for any given individual faculty, depending on the specific mentoring policy already in place in the lead department. For faculty having joint appointments in NSP and a department, NSP recommends that the mentoring team include at least one senior faculty who is a member of NSP but is outside the "home" department of the mentee. Because this mentor would not be among the voting faculty for decisions on promotion and tenure, s/he would avoid the conflict of interest between advocacy and evaluation of the mentee. Below are a set of guiding principles on mentoring that NSP endorses.

Guiding principles for mentors:

- Do no harm: The role of the mentor is to *facilitate* the career success of the mentee.
 - Mentoring is intended to provide intellectual, professional, and social support as new faculty develop their careers and professional identities.
 - Mentors may serve as role models, advisors, guides and/or advocates in a variety of contexts.
 - An active mentor can contribute significantly to a new faculty member's development and job satisfaction.
 - Mentors provide an opportunity for mentees to gain knowledge on formal and informal rules of advancement.
- Explicit statement about confidentiality: The mentor assures the mentee that issues raised by the mentee are kept confidential unless the mentee gives explicit permission to share a particular concern with another party.
- Decide on parameters of discussion with mentee: The mentor discusses explicitly at the first meeting what is appropriate to ask, how often to meet, length of meetings, etc., and any particular expectations for the mentor-mentee relationship.

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- Avoid conflicts of interest: The mentor should not be in a position to evaluate nor vote on the mentee's professional performance since this could impede the mentee's willingness to *openly* seek the advice that is needed.
- Acknowledgement that career advancement depends on a myriad of factors that fall in both professional and/or personal domains. As such, discussions that benefit the mentee may include advice not directly related to the "essential three" metrics (achievement in service, teaching, and research) on which career advancement hinges

Guiding principles for mentees:

- Mentees are responsible for their own success. While the mentor's role is to provide advice and support intended to facilitate the mentee's success, achieving success is the mentee's responsibility. It is up to the mentee to plan and use his/her time wisely.
- It is appropriate to ask questions. Time is a valuable commodity for both the mentee and the mentor. When the mentee meets with his/her mentor, it is recommended that the mentee have specific questions in mind.
- Know about campus resources and strategically take advantage of them: NSP realizes that it is sometimes difficult to sort through all the information that one is given at orientation. The natural inclination is to feel like there is *not* time to take advantage of university-wide or department resources. However, university resources are available to facilitate faculty success, both professionally and personally. For example, there are a large number of valuable professional resources through Faculty Office of Development (<http://fod.msu.edu/>), some specifically targeting topics relevant to early career faculty, including how to teach effectively, survive/thrive in academe, the top ten list "Top "10 Things Faculty Need to Know About MSU" (<http://fod.msu.edu/ResourcesForInstructors/TopTenFaculty.asp>). MSU also offers a multitude of technical training classes on how to use Angel, Photoshop, Camtasia for online course, etc. There are also valuable family- and community-related resources at the Family (<http://www.frc.msu.edu/>) and Women's (<http://wrc.msu.edu/>) resource centers. For example, there is a MSU parent listserve that regularly sends out information about local parenting workshops (e.g., on bullying, how to avoid arguments with your teens), summer camp opportunities and particularly valuable information if you have special-needs children.
- Take advantage of mentoring to help organize and develop a professional development plan. A mentee's plan should include short-term and long-term goals and the resources needed to meet these goals.