Guidelines for Mentors of Tenure-track Faculty

Expectations

1) The Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences (DAS) aims to select mentors for new faculty members shortly after new faculty have accepted their offer of appointment. We do this in consultation with the appropriate department chairs. If you have received these guidelines, it is because you have been asked by your department chair to mentor a newly-appointed faculty member, and you have agreed to do so. Brandeis has a tradition of building its faculty primarily by recruiting and fostering promising junior talent; therefore the role of nurturing young scholars and positioning them to succeed at Brandeis is a vitally important one. We are very grateful to you for agreeing to mentor a new faculty member.

2) After you have received these guidelines, a representative of DAS will be in touch with the new faculty member to let him/her know that you have agreed to act as his/her mentor, and to provide him/her with a copy of the mentoring guidelines for “mentees.” We strongly encourage you to contact your mentee before s/he arrives on campus.

3) At the most basic level, the ideal mentor will offer a new colleague an informal helping hand in navigating his/her way around a new scholarly community, teaching culture, and administrative/policy environment.

Ideal Mentor Profile

- Interested in mentoring a colleague
- Good listener
- Knows Brandeis well, including teaching environment and service opportunities
- Tenured and has served on an ad hoc committee
- Proactive in making connections with appropriate resources inside the University and outside of it
- Strong professional know-how; up-to-date with profession
- Research-active and, in the sciences, adequately funded
- Available for the first three years of mentee’s appointment, and open to the relationship continuing through tenure

4) We view the mentoring of new tenure-track faculty to be most critical in their first three years at Brandeis. In the first year, your mentee may be largely occupied with practical issues such as setting up office and/or laboratory, locating forms, mounting courses etc. During this phase, we
ask that you be available to him/her either to provide direct help or to explain where s/he can find appropriate support (from your department administrator for example). Beyond the first year, your mentee will hopefully be in a position to engage more closely with his/her scholarship, something that might generate a number of questions that s/he would welcome the opportunity to discuss. Again, we would ask that you volunteer your help, either alone or in conjunction with others who are well placed to help (your department chair for instance).

We recognize that, after his/her first three years, your mentee may have developed relationships with other faculty that act as effective substitutes for his/her relationship with you as mentor, or you may decide between you that you will continue to meet but on a more ad hoc basis. Our main goal in assigning a mentor is to help a junior faculty member to understand what is expected of him/her so that s/he can succeed at Brandeis – hence the emphasis on his/her first three years – after that, we understand that mentoring relationships will evolve in response to personal preference and needs.

The Role of a Mentor – In General Terms

1) To act as an informal social conduit to introduce your mentee to faculty, staff and students in his/her home department as well as in other departments and programs.
2) To act as a sounding board to discuss with your mentee any emerging issues or to answer any questions.
3) To act as a resource for your mentee about department and University policy.
4) To direct your mentee to resources to further his/her scholarship and teaching goals, and to introduce him/her to service opportunities in the department, University, and profession.

Specific Commitments of a Mentor

1) To make contact as soon as possible with your mentee after s/he has accepted the appointment.
2) To arrange regular meetings with your mentee during his/her first three years (at least two meetings a semester in the first year), and to maintain an “open-door” policy throughout the first three years.
3) To advise your mentee on keeping track of his/her activities, accomplishments, and honors (e.g., suggest s/he retain copies of each year’s activities reports).
4) To offer to meet your mentee mid-way through the spring semester of his/her first year to discuss his/her activities report prior to its submission.
5) To invite your mentee to accompany you to a University event such as the “Teaching at Brandeis” dinner, CST workshops, colloquia, “Meet the Author” events, exhibitions at the Rose, Lydian concerts, etc, or simply to invite him/her to lunch.

Scholarship

Tenure-track faculty will be prompted to assemble their reappointment materials in only the second year of their appointment, at which point their progress in scholarship and teaching will be assessed. It therefore makes good sense for you (and your department chair) to begin a discussion with your mentee early on about the department’s expectations of him/her in relation to these two reappointment criteria. (Typically, tenure-track faculty will be considered for tenure in their seventh
year on the Brandeis faculty, at which point their performance in relation to the three criteria of scholarship, teaching and service will be assessed.

1) Encourage your mentee to share works-in-progress with you and with others in the department.
2) Discuss and review external grant proposals with him/her. In the sciences, this is most effective in the first 1-3 years of a tenure-track appointment, when s/he will be applying for starter grants.
3) Offer your mentee advice on resources at Brandeis that support scholarship.
4) Discuss with your mentee which journals/publishers to target for his/her manuscripts.
5) For the sciences: Offer assistance with laboratory set-up and renovation issues.
6) In conjunction with your department chair, make the question of how to balance the relative importance and weight of scholarship, teaching and service a topic of ongoing discussion with your mentee.

Teaching

1) Share syllabi, course assignments, and exams with your mentee.
2) Offer him/her advice on developing syllabi, course assignments and exams, and offer to review syllabi, course assignments, and exams.
3) Discuss Brandeis teaching culture with your mentee.
4) Encourage him/her to participate in the peer observation program.
5) Invite your mentee to visit one or more of your classes (or that of a colleague whom you’ve consulted). Afterwards, discuss what was observed.
6) Offer to visit one of his/her classes. Afterwards, discuss what was observed.
7) Volunteer advice on:
   - Lecture style
   - Organization of class and flow of time
   - How to construct a series of lectures
   - How to lead and stimulate classroom discussions
   - How to respond to student interests and input
   - How to manage classroom dynamics.
8) Advise on grading and assessment.
9) Offer to review and discuss your mentee’s teaching evaluations.

Service

1) There is an expectation that tenure-track faculty will have developed a service record by the time they come up for tenure; however, there is no expectation that significant service responsibilities must be assumed in the early years. Discussing service opportunities with your mentee is a good idea, but protecting a junior faculty member from taking on too many service commitments is something both a mentor and a department chair should consider an important part of their roles.
2) Your department may have a view about the appropriate level of involvement in service for a tenure-track faculty member, or the types of service that really count in the run-up to tenure, whether they be service opportunities in the department, the University or in the profession. You should feel free to advise your mentee on issues like this.
3) Discuss undergraduate and graduate advising issues with your mentee.
Questions or Concerns

Naturally, all of the above depends on the development of a good relationship between your mentee and you. If you should have any questions or concerns, you should not hesitate to raise this with your department chair or Lorna Laurent (llaurent; 62108) or Stephen Hum (shum; 63440) in the Dean’s Office.

Contact:
Stephen Hum for appointments in
IBS
The Heller School
Departments in the Arts & Sciences School of Social Sciences;

Lorna Laurent for appointments the Arts & Sciences Schools of
Creative Arts
Humanities
Sciences.

Thank you again for agreeing to be a mentor.