

SURVIVE AND THRIVE: GUIDED MENTORING FOR UNTENURED FACULTY

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INTRODUCTION

One of the key issues facing junior faculty is obtaining adequate mentoring. Often there are colleagues willing to nurture and support new faculty, but senior faculty are unsure what guidance is needed and unable to provide the breadth of guidance required by each individual. Junior faculty members are also unclear as to the questions they should ask of their mentors. Unfortunately, institutional and disciplinary differences preclude an all-inclusive self-help manual for either the mentor or the mentee. Additionally, it is not possible to provide a single prescription for success in a faculty position.

Many factors make the difference between thriving and merely surviving in an academic position. To facilitate successful navigation of the untenured years, a guide titled "Survive and Thrive: A Self-Assessment Guide for Untenured Faculty" has been created for untenured faculty to facilitate a proactive approach to their professional development in teaching, research, service, and collegiality. A series of questions is presented to aid in the process of obtaining the mentoring required for success in a probationary academic appointment.

Although it is still under development, the guide has been distributed to new women faculty at the University of Wisconsin through the Women Faculty Mentoring Program. Initially the guide was developed from an engineering perspective, but it has been broadened to address issues faced by new faculty in a wide variety of disciplines. Because of the breadth of the topics covered by the guide, questions must be customized to the individual's particular discipline and personal goals; this is best accomplished with the assistance of mentors. Questions are presented which allow the new faculty member to seek out the mentoring that they require. The guide is also able to act as a resource for mentoring relationships, prompting discussion on a wide variety of topics.

THE GUIDE

The guide is divided into six sections. Key components of professional development are covered under the headings of: Tough Questions About Why You Are Here; Joining

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Your Department and Discipline; Establishing Expertise; Developing Networks, Relationships, and Mentoring Activities; Getting Support and Evaluating Your Personal Health; and Planning for the Future. Under each heading, questions are grouped by topic area. In many cases, questions are posed to prompt the reader to think about the issue and seek out additional advice if necessary. Some questions are explored in further detail with bulleted lists while other questions provide suggestions for possible actions or resources. A portion of the section on developing networks, relationships, and mentoring activities is presented in detail here as an example.

Developing Networks, Relationships, and Mentoring Activities

The academic profession is a "colleague system." Your relationships partly control and shape your place within your profession and your field. You can negotiate your way through such a system by establishing a variety of acquaintances and relationships on multiple levels.

Building Networks

1. You are probably participating in a variety of networks already. What groups might you join to expand your networks?
2. What are you looking for in your network connections? How can you introduce yourself to and build positive relationships with people in these networks? What do they have to offer you? What do you have to offer them for their assistance?
3. What steps are you taking to meet senior people in your field? How are you informing them of your research? Consider:
 - giving talks at meetings and conferences,
 - inviting a senior person to give a seminar in you department,
 - organizing the department seminar for a semester or year,
 - making sure that your desire to give seminars at other institutions is known,
 - meeting with all seminar speakers that visit your department so that you can discuss mutual research interests,
 - serving on review panels,
 - sending out reprints to people in your field when your papers are published.
4. Developing your network is the first step, but maintaining that network is also vital. How do you maintain your networks? Consider the importance of:
 - performing some type of follow-up contact after a first meeting,
 - attending the same conferences every year,
 - sending reprints of your published papers to people in your research network,

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- sending articles of interest or information about opportunities to people in your broader network.
5. Networking is an essential and time-consuming activity. Think carefully about how much time you need/want to devote to networking activities. How have you balanced the time you spend on networking with your other responsibilities?

Getting the Mentoring You Need

1. What do you expect of a mentor? Will this guide, advocate, and/or friend provide:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ positive and constructive feedback? ▪ assistance in developing networks? ▪ guidance in setting goals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understanding and empathy? ▪ encouragement and nurturing? ▪ socialization into your discipline?
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2. What types of issues do you want to discuss with your mentor? Possibilities include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ teaching/research/service, ▪ managing your time, ▪ preparing your tenure packet, ▪ dealing with department politics, ▪ knowing when and how to say "No," 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ balancing family and career, ▪ setting goals, ▪ handling conflict, ▪ understanding the culture of your discipline.
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3. It will not be desirable to get all of your mentoring and advice from one individual. How will you go about developing a set of mentoring relationships to meet your needs? Consider approaching:
 - colleagues in your department,
 - colleagues outside your department and at other institutions,
 - formal mentoring programs offered by your institution or professional society,
 - other junior faculty who can provide peer mentoring,
 - individuals in the community not associated with your university.

4. In building a set of mentoring relationships, you will want to consider the breadth of your needs and how each individual mentor might help you with different aspects of your life and career. There are several topics to consider within mentoring relationships:
 - Do you feel comfortable asking for advice and accepting criticism?
 - Can your mentor meet with you frequently enough for your needs?
 - How formal do you want the relationship to be?
 - Can you develop a productive and non-threatening relationship with your mentor?
 - Should you share everything with your mentors or be selective about what you discuss with each individual?
 - Is the individual familiar with your academic position and your institution?

Becoming a Colleague

1. Teaching, research and service are the traditional triumvirate in faculty evaluations, but you should be aware that often collegiality is used as fourth criterion in your evaluation. You are in the process of developing life-long relationships with your current colleagues. What relationships are you establishing with other faculty, student, and staff? Who can you assist? Who can assist you? How can you make these relationships develop positively?
2. How can you get to know people in your field locally, regionally, and internationally? Are you making connections and building relationships with faculty inside and outside your discipline? On and off campus?
3. Are you developing collaborations with other faculty who can help you advance professionally in other ways? How is collaboration valued or discounted within your department and institution?
4. Consider how much information about your personal life you want to share with your colleagues, mentors, and students, including details about your recreational activities, family life, partner/spouse, and sexual preference.

Analyzing Power Relationships

1. Describe the power structure in your department, college, and university. What is your place in this power structure?
2. Describe how you delegate when appropriate.
3. Identify whether your department is cooperative or competitive. How are you functioning within this environment? Where can you go for advice on working effectively within either model or a combination of these models?
4. What are the most effective ways to communicate with your senior colleagues?
5. Are there certain activities that you should avoid discussing with your colleagues? For instance, sometimes women faculty are labeled as “not-so-serious-researchers” if they express too much interest in teaching or outreach activities. Can you continue to do these activities at a level that is personally satisfying while maintaining the image that your colleagues expect?

Developing a Reputation-Make Yourself Visible!

1. Getting involved in conferences and meetings is important and will help you to mature in your discipline. Which people should you meet at these conferences? How do you initiate and maintain these relationships?

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2. What experience do you have in presenting and defending your ideas in friendly settings (a journal club or other less formal setting) and in more formal settings (departmental seminars, national conferences)? How can you use these experiences to further your goals?
3. Describe how you have presented and defended your work at poster sessions, conference talks, seminars, and other events at departmental, university, community, national, and international conferences. Have you asked others to critique your presentations and provide additional opportunities to develop your presentation skills?
4. In preparing to give conference and seminar presentations, it is important to keep a number of things in mind:
 - Keep your presentation focused on the key issues of your research.
 - Give credit to others - colleagues, collaborators, students.
 - Clearly identify your unique contributions.
 - Identify the motivation of your research.
 - Delineate the findings and implications of your research to your field.
 - Spend time refining your presentation material so that it is concise and easily viewed.
 - Have a contingency plan if you are relying on technology in your presentation.
 - Rehearse your talk.
 - Stay within the time limitations and leave time for questions.
 - Speak clearly and be sure that you project loud enough so that people sitting in the back of the room can hear you.
 - Involve your audience (pose rhetorical questions; build in interactive workshop exercises).
 - Ask your peers for constructive feedback after your presentation so that you can improve your delivery.
5. How often have you published your work in appropriate peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings?
6. How often do you write about your work and submit publications and grant applications? Are you satisfied with this rate of publication and grant consideration? How might you increase your publication and grant acceptance rates?
7. Have you considered how your actions and the manner in which you present yourself and your ideas will be reviewed? Do you present a positive and ethical image?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I started as an Assistant Professor in Engineering Physics at the University of Wisconsin, I decided that I needed to build a guide for myself that addressed issues faced by new faculty members. "Survive and Thrive: A Self-Assessment Guide for Untenured Faculty" has been in development since 1998. Happily I have received wonderful mentoring and advice from numerous people and through various workshops for new faculty. This guide is a compilation of that information with my own interpretations overlaid. Recently the project has been adopted by the University of Wisconsin's Women Faculty Mentoring Program. Special thanks go to Lindsey Stoddard Cameron and Laura McClure for their contributions to the guide, particularly for their assistance in broadening the guide to address issues faced by new faculty across the disciplines.

The "Survive and Thrive" guide is continuously edited and supplemented. Your comments and suggestions are welcome and should be addressed to Wendy Crone at Engineering Physics, University of Wisconsin, 1500 Engineering Drive, Madison, WI 53706 or crone@engr.wisc.edu.

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