

Faculty Mentoring in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs Policies, Practices, and Actions

The Maxwell School requires all departments to mentor tenure-track faculty toward promotion and tenure. In addition to annual reviews, tenure-track faculty and their mentors must have a mentoring plan to guide their research, teaching, and service. Departments must also have a process for providing optional mentors to tenured associate professors who are working toward promotion to full. Chairs should meet regularly (once per three-year term) with associate professors to discuss expectations and plans for promotion. Further, chairs are responsible for ensuring that mentoring responsibilities are equitably distributed among senior faculty.

The seven academic departments in the Maxwell School with tenure-track and tenured faculty (Anthropology, Economics, Geography and the Environment, History, Political Science, Public Administration and International Affairs, and Sociology) have robust processes for both mentoring and evaluating their tenure-track faculty. Though they differ in detail by department, they all offer the opportunity for tenure track faculty to receive feedback and guidance from multiple faculty members in the department in committees of two faculty or more. In some departments, the tenure-track faculty member will have the same mentoring committee through their progress to tenure and promotion. In these departments, there is often the opportunity for all tenured faculty to discuss the progress of untenured faculty members. For other departments, membership in evaluation committees varies from year to year, allowing tenure-track faculty to get to know a variety of senior faculty. Some departments provide separate mentors from the evaluation committee. The Maxwell School views consent as an important part of the relationship between faculty member and committee.

Within the school, mentoring and evaluation are often connected. Mentoring committees are generally responsible for producing the annual reviews (R&Rs) for faculty and are often involved in their third-year contract renewal and promotion and tenure review. As a result, some departments help untenured faculty members to find mentors outside the department or at other universities. All departments agree that knowledge of the discipline is essential to advising untenured faculty in their progress toward promotion and tenure.

One goal of mentoring in Maxwell is to create greater transparency in expectations for research, teaching, and service to equitably balance junior faculty workloads, as well as to more fully recognize, reward, and support the different kinds of work that faculty do. Over time, mentoring committees should reflect on the research, teaching, and service workloads of junior faculty so that departments can develop appropriate ranges of teaching and service responsibilities for junior faculty, so chairs may take an equity minded approach in balancing workloads among junior faculty, so departments can acknowledge the range of responsibilities that come under the categories of teaching and service, and so mentoring committees will provide better advice for junior faculty on managing teaching and service workloads so that this work does not crowd out time for research.

To improve transparency in research expectations, as well as teaching and service loads, the following topics should be discussed by tenure-track faculty and their mentoring committees. In doing so, mentors can communicate departmental expectations and mentees can report on the activities they engage in with the goal of promoting more equitable faculty workloads. In discussing the expectations for each category, we encourage committees to give tenure-track faculty members a sense of the parameters – what is too high or too low. If it is clear that the faculty member is doing too much or too little, then we encourage the committee to talk through strategies to address the discrepancy. If, for example, the faculty member is dedicating too much of their time to informal forms of service (excessive mentoring of students, recommendation letters, office hours, serving on outside committees), we ask that the committee talk through strategies for ameliorating the untenured faculty member’s service burden. This could include helping the faculty member manage expectations from students or faculty outside the department, monitor their time management, and advise them on how to decide between service demands (if necessary, giving them the support to say no). If a discrepancy is determined, we ask that the committee follow-up with the tenure-track faculty member in a reasonable timeframe.

Research:

Publications:

- Requirements and expectations
- Outlets (journals and/or publishers)
- Annual plan for publications (year two, year three, etc.)
- COVID-19 impact

Funding and Awards:

- Expectations
- Resources at the Maxwell School and Syracuse University
- External funding opportunities
- Awards

Conferences/Professional Organizations:

- Expectations
- Relevant and recommended conferences and organizations

Teaching:

Courses taught:

- Number of courses taught

- Graduate and undergraduate teaching
- Number of students
- Number of new preps
- Independent study courses

Advising:

- Number of formal undergraduate and graduate advisees
- Time spent on formal advising
- Time spent on informal student support and advising
- Expectations and boundaries for graduate mentoring
- Number of letters of recommendation

Office Hours:

- Norms/requirements for office hours
- How busy are they?
- Meetings with students outside of office hours

Support for Teaching:

- Teaching and Advising Awards
- Resources for teaching support at Syracuse University
- Resources for students outside of office hours or faculty advising

Service:

Departmental Service:

- Expectations
- Amount of time/work
- How much is too much?
- Recognition

College and University Service:

- Expectations
- Amount of time/work
- How much is too much?
- Recognition

Professional Service:

- Expectations
- Types of professional service and time/work involved
- Aid to professional development?
- How much is too much?

Community Engagement and Outreach:

- Expectations
- Types of professional service and time/work involved
- How much is too much?
- Recognition

Looking forward:

- What kinds of service do you find most interesting/rewarding?
- What kinds of service do you find least interesting/rewarding?
- What kinds of service would you like to invest your time and energy in moving forward?
- Would you like to be nominated for awards? Which ones?