

INFORMATION FOR MENTORS

K.J. Zahorski

Some Key Considerations

1. Help colleagues find a balance between their professional and personal lives.
2. Help colleagues get a balanced perspective on institutional health (e.g., budget constraints, morale, workload, etc.)
3. Help prevent “cocooning” syndrome (visibility is important).
4. Help part-time, visiting, one-year appointment colleagues feel the embrace of our academic community.
5. Stress the importance of peer visitation.
6. Help create an awareness/understanding of Discipline culture/”politics.”
7. Tell colleagues about the committee system (status, workload, etc.).
8. Help ease concern about SOOTs.
9. Ask about how classes are going (disruptive/uncivil behavior?).
10. Serve as an “encourager,” an “affirmer.”

Some concerns of beginning faculty

1. Getting to know their colleagues;
2. Trying to understand the institutional culture (especially disciplinary and divisional politics);
3. Constructing effective syllabi, learning exercises, and examinations;
4. Dealing with academic dishonesty (esp. plagiarism) and disruptive classroom behavior;
5. Determining the extent and limits of instructor authority;
6. Generating lively class discussion;
7. Submitting articles and books for publication;
- *8. Finding adequate intellectual stimulation through relationships with colleagues;
- *9. Trying to answer questions about teaching:
e.g., How formal/informal should I be in my relations with students?
How do I gauge students' level of understanding?
How can I spend less time preparing for my courses and still do a good job?
How do I avoid over preparation ("assistant professoritis")
- * 10. Receiving poor student evaluations of teaching;
- * 11. Carving out enough time to fulfill self-imposed objectives for scholarly productivity;
12. Preparing for tenure and promotion application (e.g., the teaching portfolio);
13. Finding a balance between scholarship and teaching, professional demands and personal needs; job related stress from workload;
14. High expectations regarding quality and quantity of collegial interaction.

* From Jim L. Turner and Robert Boice's "Starting at the Beginning: The Concerns and Needs of New Faculty." Based on a study conducted at California State University-Long Beach in 1985.

Some things mentors can do to help beginning faculty

1. Help your new colleagues find a place to live and help them move (into home and/or office);
2. Invite them to dinner, or go to a movie or play together;
3. Introduce them to disciplinary and divisional colleagues;
4. Take your new colleagues for a guided tour of the Green Bay area (or perhaps on a drive to Door County);
5. Tell them about the history and institutional culture of St. Norbert College;
6. Describe what it's like to teach at SNC;
7. Tell them about our students and explain what they can reasonably expect from them;
8. Tell them about office hour requirements;
9. Acquaint them with the services and resources of the College;
10. Look over their syllabi and reading lists (if invited to do so);
11. Keep an open door policy (invite them in to chat about professional matters);
12. Encourage your new colleagues to attend College workshops, discussion sessions, and cultural events (raise their visibility level);
13. Help them gain in-house recognition through participating in such events as colloquia, seminars, and "Teaching & Learning Workshop" sessions;
14. Invite them to join you at one of SNC's social functions (e.g., the "Celebrating Collegiality" event);
15. Invite them to sit in on your classes and offer to sit in on theirs;
16. Ease their anxieties about student evaluation of teaching results, about tenure and promotion criteria, and about grading procedures;
17. Help them balance the demands of teaching and scholarship (e.g., time management tips);
18. Tell them about duplicating, faxing, and secretarial services (e.g., show them where to get College letterhead and other supplies).

Some important reminders

1. Be proactive -- initiate the first meeting;
2. Be a good, active, and empathic, listener;
3. Work at being nonjudgmental, tolerant, and understanding;
4. Treat the relationship with strict confidentiality;
5. Be alert to the "cocooning syndrome"; make sure your new colleague spends some time on social networking;
6. Watch for signs of "overpreparing" lectures;
7. Don't be disappointed if your new colleague goes to others for counsel;
8. Each new colleague will have different needs (e.g., a single faculty member may feel left out of social activities attended predominantly by married couples; dual career family members may have special concerns);
9. Try to be an "encourager," an "affirmer";
10. Don't hesitate to call the Office of Faculty Development if you have questions or concerns.