

**Department of Sociology Faculty Mentoring Policy**  
**Revised May 14, 2025**

**I. Introduction & Principles**

Faculty are central to the identity and reputation of the department and are responsible for delivering high quality undergraduate and graduate instruction, training the next generation of sociologists, conducting research that improves the lives of Maryland residents and the broader society, and providing service to the institution and the discipline. While building a strong faculty begins with hiring promising scholars, a sustained investment of time and energy is necessary to enhance the department by improving faculty success in tenure and promotion; in teaching, research, and service; and to nurture a long-term commitment to the department and the university.

In accordance with the Department of Sociology Plan of Organization and the [UMD Policy and Procedures on Appointment, Promotion and Tenure of Faculty](#), this policy provides for the mentoring of the department's tenured and tenure-track (T/TT) and professional track (PTK) faculty across ranks, and is based on the following principles:

- The department is committed to creating and maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive faculty culture. This requires a collective effort to maintain a welcoming environment and a willingness to continually interrogate tacit assumptions.
- A formal plan with clear expectations and a measure of accountability ensures more robust, consistent, and equitable mentoring.
- Trust and candor are essential to creating and sustaining effective mentoring relationships, and the details of mentoring discussions must be kept confidential.
- The focus and nature of the mentoring relationship should be tailored to the individual mentee's career goals and research interests.
- Effective mentoring helps faculty integrate into (and navigate) the intellectual community and culture of the department, the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, and the university; prepares faculty members for successful promotion and tenure cases while respecting and supporting their individual career goals; helps faculty grow solid research programs with national reputations; and helps faculty become highly effective teachers and mentors to other faculty and students. Mentoring also improves retention, productivity, and morale.
- The need for meaningful mentoring does not end with the first promotion. Mentoring should be encouraged for faculty mid-career and beyond.
- In addition to helping establish a trajectory for the mentoring relationship, mentors are primarily responsible for supplying the momentum. While mentees are encouraged to

contact their mentors, the relationship should be mentor-driven.

- Mentoring is a valuable service to the department and will be recognized as such in merit and post-tenure review processes.

## **II. Applicability**

### **A. Assistant Professors**

Prior to their arrival on campus, new assistant professors will be assigned a mentor from among the associate and full professors. It is expected that assistant professors will continue to meet with mentors until they receive tenure.

### **B. Lecturers and Assistant Research Professors**

Prior to their arrival on campus, new full-time lecturers and assistant research professors will be assigned a mentor from among the T/TT faculty, or from other PTK faculty of higher ranks. If the mentor is a T/TT faculty member, the mentor will be selected based on understanding of the circumstances of PTK faculty or will receive guidance on how PTK positions differ from T/TT positions. For assistant research professors assigned to a particular project, the project's principal investigator will ordinarily serve as mentor. It is expected that lecturers and assistant research professors will continue to meet with mentors until they are promoted.

### **C. Associate Professors**

New associate professors will be assigned a mentor from among the full professors prior to their arrival on campus. It is expected that the nature of the mentoring will emphasize acculturation to the department and university, though the specific topics should be developed collaboratively. Current associate professors, as well as newly appointed associate professors following their initial year with the department, are encouraged to continue engaging with mentors, whether under the terms of this policy or more informally.

### **D. Senior Lecturers and Associate Research Professors**

New senior lecturers and associate research professors will be assigned a mentor from among the T/TT faculty, or from other PTK faculty of higher rank, prior to their arrival on campus. For associate research professors assigned to a particular project, the project's principal investigator will ordinarily serve as mentor. It is expected that the nature of the mentoring will emphasize acculturation to the department and university, though the specific topics should be developed collaboratively. Current senior lecturers and associate research professors, as well as newly appointed senior lecturers or associate research professors following their initial year with the department, are encouraged to continue engaging with mentors, whether under the terms of this policy

or more informally.

#### **E. Postdoctoral Associates**

New postdoctoral associates will be assigned a mentor from among the associate and full professors. Postdoctoral associates will continue to meet with mentors throughout the duration of their appointments.

### **III. Mentoring Model**

#### **A. Assignments and Terms**

1. Mentoring is significant service, and formally designated mentors will therefore generally be drawn from the ranks of the full professors.
2. All assistant professors, lecturers, assistant research professors, and postdoctoral associates will be formally assigned mentors. All associate professors, senior lecturers, and associate research professors will be offered the opportunity to have formally assigned mentors if they choose.
3. Mentoring assignments are made by the department chair and last one academic year.
4. Mentees will be assigned new mentors every year, unless both the mentor and mentee agree the assignment should be continued. Mentees are encouraged to continue meeting with previous mentors and develop an expanding mentoring network both inside and outside the department.
5. In addition to their assigned mentor, faculty will also be mentored by the department chair. Should a faculty member desire additional mentoring, the chair will assist in identifying additional mentors. Postdoctoral associates participating in the President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program (PPFP) may also be assigned a mentor through that program. To the degree feasible, the department-assigned mentor should engage with the program mentor to ensure guidance is consistent and complementary.
6. Should a mentee decide mid-year that they would like to discontinue working with their assigned mentor for any reason, they should notify the chair of the department, who will identify a replacement.
7. Assistant and associate research professors who would prefer to be mentored by someone other than their project's principal investigator should notify the chair of the department, who will identify an alternative mentor.

## **B. Meetings**

1. Mentors and mentees are expected to meet regularly (and even frequently), but at least twice per semester. Mentors of PFP participants should meet with their mentees with even greater frequency and in accordance to the mentoring plan proposed at the time of the PFP's application. At the end of the academic year, the mentor must submit to the chair a log of meetings and significant conversations. The log should include a brief list of general topics that were discussed, but should not convey any information that would jeopardize the confidentiality central to the mentoring relationship.
2. Mentees will meet with the chair at least once per year.

## **C. Annual Review for Assistant Professors, Lecturers, Assistant Research Professors, and Postdoctoral Associates**

1. Each assistant professor, lecturer, assistant research professor, and postdoctoral associate will receive an annual review conducted by the chair of the department. The review should involve written feedback developed in collaboration with the faculty member's mentor, and in consultation with the principal investigator of the project to which an assistant research professor is assigned, and should be discussed in a meeting between the chair of the department and the mentee.
2. The review will focus on recognizing successes and identifying specific actions to prioritize for the following year, all with an eye towards progress along the tenure track or towards the next promotion. Reviews for postdoctoral associates will include both developmental and evaluative feedback; PFP participants will also be provided candid assessments of their performance and the prospects for conversion to a T/TT faculty role at the end of the appointment.
3. The review should also identify any additional support a faculty member may need (e.g. consultation with the Teaching & Learning Transformation Center), and indicate a plan for obtaining it.
4. The review will be confidential and will not be used in any other review or promotion process.

## **IV. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **A. Department Chair**

1. The chair will make all mentoring assignments prior to the start of each academic year. Should mid-year replacements be necessary, the chair will work to identify new mentors.

2. Prior to each new faculty member's arrival, the chair will provide them the following:
  - i. An introduction to the faculty member's assigned mentor;
  - ii. A copy of this policy, the Plan of Organization, and any additional departmental documentation or resources related to appointment, promotion, and tenure (APT) and appointment, evaluation, and promotion (AEP);
  - iii. Resources to guide mentoring meetings, including checklists; and
  - iv. For PPFP participants, clear expectations associated with the program including benchmarks and criteria related to potential conversion to a T/TT position.
3. The chair of the department will contact each mentor and mentee separately at an appropriate point during the year to check in and obtain insights that will inform the annual review and other actions, as appropriate.
4. The chair of the department will meet with all faculty being mentored under the terms of this policy at least once per year.
5. The chair will work with the relevant mentor (and principal investigator, when appropriate) to conduct an annual review of each faculty member identified in III.C above. The chair will ensure that faculty receive any additional support a review suggests is needed.

## **B. Mentors**

1. Mentors will meet with their assigned mentee regularly (and even frequently), but at least twice per semester.
2. Mentors will proactively engage their mentees, which includes:
  - i. Scheduling meetings or conversations
  - ii. Anticipating support that may be needed and tailoring the mentoring to the needs and career goals of the particular mentee
  - iii. Assuming a degree of responsibility for the development and successful promotion of the mentee
3. Mentors will compile a log summarizing their engagement with their mentee,

and work with the chair on an annual review. Principal investigators serving as mentors of assistant and associate research professors do not need to complete a log.

4. Should a mentor be involved in a promotion case for a current or former mentee, they must disclose this to the chair and members of any review committees. They are welcome to champion a current or former mentee's case, consistent with the confidentiality required by this policy.

### **C. Mentees**

1. While respecting their assigned mentor's time, mentees should freely seek guidance on matters appropriate to the mentoring relationship.
2. Should a mentoring relationship become detrimental for any reason, the mentee should immediately share this with the department chair.
3. Mentees should use the resources they are provided, including checklists for planning mentoring meetings, to apprise their mentors of topics they would like to discuss.

### **V. Mentoring Components**

- A. Mentoring should above all be tailored to the individual faculty member's career goals and personal circumstances.
- B. In general, mentoring should address, as appropriate, the following short- and long-term goals:
  1. Short-term Goals
    - Familiarization with campus
    - Networking (department, college, campus)
    - Departmental acculturation, including how to navigate relationships with other faculty and staff
    - Introduction to relevant policies and procedures
    - Explanation of departmental responsibilities and how to approach them (second-year paper reader, serving on comps committee, etc.)
    - Learning to budget time; balancing research, teaching, and leadership/service

- Planning a trajectory towards a successful third-year review

## 2. Long-term Goals

- Building a leading research program
- Developing effective teaching skills, how to work with and mentor undergraduate and graduate students
- Building institutional and disciplinary leadership skills and contributions
- Achieving career advancement, trajectory to successful tenure case