

Sharing our Skillsets: An Interdepartmental Career Mentoring Forum for Basic Science Faculty

Participating Departments: Biomedical Sciences (Duluth); Genetics, Cell Biology, and Development; Integrative Biology and Physiology; Microbiology; Neuroscience; Pharmacology

Mentoring Coordinator: Stanley Thayer, PhD, Professor of Pharmacology

Program Start Date: August 2013

Approach: The purpose of this program is to establish a new forum for interaction among newly recruited assistant professors across Basic Science Departments. This program is intended as an overarching umbrella, to enhance existing mentoring programs currently in place at the departmental level without impinging on specific content suited to each department's mission. The value of the program, therefore, derives from the interdepartmental impact, the numbers of junior faculty involved, and the key element of providing an opportunity for junior faculty to interact within their wider cohort and meet senior colleagues outside their home department.

- *Program goals*
 - Promote interdepartmental interactions between junior faculty
 - Provide junior faculty access to counsel outside of their department
 - Develop forum for structured interactions focused on career development
- *Mentoring*
 - Junior faculty complete a brief questionnaire identifying their research interests, teaching duties, and any specific requests for career advice
 - The mentoring coordinator contacts senior faculty throughout the AHC, matching expertise to junior faculty needs
 - The mentor and junior faculty member are expected to meet at least once per semester
- *Group meetings for junior faculty*
 - Fall meeting on research included: a mock study section, review of research-related components of the tenure dossier, a brief "lessons learned" presentation from a professor who successfully navigated the promotion and tenure process, and an opportunity to meet other assistant professors in the Medical School.
 - Spring meeting on teaching included: a presentation on learner-centered learning (active learning and flipped classrooms), review of teaching-related components of the tenure dossier, and a brief "lessons learned" presentation from a professor who successfully navigated the promotion and tenure process.
- *Outcomes*
 - Mentoring program results, based on a survey completed by the junior faculty, were mixed: some pairs developed an outstanding rapport, while others failed to meet as expected.
 - The junior faculty rated the fall and spring meetings uniformly high.
 - Going forward, the research and teaching meetings might be held every third year as new cohorts of assistant professors join the faculty.

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Report Date: November 6, 2014