

BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH FACULTY MENTORING PROGRAM

Overview

The Boston University School of Public Health (SPH) is committed to ensuring that our faculty members are in the best possible position to succeed professionally. Early stage faculty members in particular require and deserve access to mentorship during this important period of their careers. The SPH Faculty Mentoring Program is a structured approach that provides guidelines for selecting mentors, formalizes the responsibilities and goals of the mentee and mentor, and includes participation, oversight and evaluation by the SPH Faculty Development Committee. This program capitalizes on the strengths of SPH and will better position all faculty, and especially early stage faculty, to navigate increasingly complex demands of their careers, to thrive professionally, and to be active members of the SPH community. Informal mentoring relationships continue to be highly valued as a complement to this program.

Mentoring Program

We recognize that each mentoring relationship is different. Mentoring needs and relationships often change over time according to evolving interests, needs, time commitments, and other factors. This Mentoring Program is required for the first three years of an early career faculty member's appointment at SPH and is also available to any faculty member who is interested in participating.

The program is coordinated by the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Advancement (Dean Michael McClean) and by the Director of Faculty Development (Professor Lisa Fredman). The overall goal of the program is to provide support in the following key areas: orientation to the institution, excelling at teaching and research, understanding the criteria for annual reviews, positioning the faculty member for promotion, developing professional networks, achieving career goals, and promoting work/life balance.

It is well-recognized that team-based approaches to mentoring are far more effective than approaches that rely on a single mentor. There is also extensive evidence that mentorships are more successful if the mentee plays a role in selecting his/her mentors. The goal is that within three months of arriving at SPH, all early career faculty members will have formed a mentoring team that includes: (1) a primary mentor, (2) the department representative to the Faculty Development Committee, and (3) the department chair or center director (as appropriate).

Forming a mentoring team. Dr. Fredman and the mentee's department representative to the Faculty Development Committee will meet with the mentee to provide guidance on identifying potential primary mentors that fit the mentee's professional interests and individual needs. The process will include: (1) clarification of the mentee's specific needs and preferences, (2) identification of potential mentors based on expertise and shared interests, and (3) preliminary meetings with potential mentors. In most cases, the primary mentor will be a mid-career or senior faculty member at SPH, but in some cases may also come from the BU School of Medicine. Faculty mentoring will be considered part of faculty's citizenship activities, part of our collective responsibility for promoting collaboration and strengthening our community. Guidance for forming a mentoring team will be available through the SPH Faculty Development Committee and posted on the website.

Roles and responsibilities. Once the mentorship team is formed, it is important that the mentee and mentors jointly delineate goals, timelines, meeting schedules, and mutual responsibilities. In particular, timely deliverables, prompt feedback, and open communication are critical to the success of a mentoring team. To that end, the

mentee and primary mentor will develop a mentorship agreement to formalize the relationship. Templates for such agreements will be available through the SPH Faculty Development Committee and posted on the website.

Program administration. It is expected that the mentee will meet with the primary mentor at least quarterly (or more often if desired) and with the department representative to the Faculty Development Committee every six months. In addition to providing guidance to the mentee, these semi-annual meetings with the department representative will help the Faculty Development Committee to monitor individual mentorships and the mentoring program overall. Each department chair or center director will meet with the faculty member at least annually as part of the Annual Faculty Review process, or more frequently throughout the year as requested or needed. The mentorship agreement will be reviewed annually by the mentee and mentors, at which point it will be continued, modified, or concluded. Accordingly, each mentoring relationship could be as short as one year or continue for as long as there is mutual interest. If the mentee is participating in the mentorship program as he/she prepares for promotion, the mentor would be involved in this process to the extent desired.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Institutional support and oversight are important to ensure that the mentoring team is working for the mentee and the mentoring team. To that end, every six months the Faculty Development Committee department representatives will meet with their department chair or center director to discuss the mentees in their department and follow up with primary mentor, as necessary. It is expected that the mentee and mentoring team will review and adapt the mentorship goals at least annually and more often if needed. In particular, prior to the mentee's Annual Faculty Review, it is recommended that the mentee and primary mentor meet to strategize about the coming year and adapt the mentorship arrangement to ensure that it is consistent with the mentee's evolving professional development needs.

The Mentoring Program will be discussed at monthly meetings of the SPH Faculty Development Committee, which will provide an opportunity for department representatives to share their experiences and concerns and to address issues as they arise. Additionally, Dean McClean and Professor Fredman will review the progress of each participating faculty member annually to ensure that their mentoring plans are in accord with their professional goals and achievement.

Information about the SPH Mentoring Program will be included in the offer letter to new early career faculty, as well as contact information for Professor Fredman and the faculty member's departmental representative to the Faculty Development Committee. We believe that providing this information at the outset will facilitate the formation of mentorship teams early in the faculty member's career and underscore the commitment to faculty mentoring at SPH.