

**MENTORSHIP GUIDELINES FOR DEPARTMENT, PROGRAM,  
AND INTERDISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE CHAIRS**  
**Providing Leadership in the Professional Development of All Faculty  
Members**  
**(May 3, 2011; revised May 3, 2021)**

**Overview:**

One of the most important charges for chairs of departments, programs, and interdisciplinary mentorship committees to “provide leadership and guidance in the professional development” of faculty colleagues “as teachers, scholars, advisors, and members of the campus community” (APM VI). The Faculty Status and Performance Committee (FS&P) has included in this document information that it believes will help chairs to guide their faculty members as they move through their tenure-track years, make progress toward full professor, and continue to lead successful professional lives in all four areas of development.

In the document titled “The Culture Document: The Review Process for Tenure-track Faculty at Beloit” (revised in March 2021), FS&P articulates what it understands to be the expectations for a faculty member deserving tenure and promotion. These expectations include excellence in teaching, a sustained pattern of scholarly/artistic productivity, a demonstrated commitment to contribute to the life of the College beyond one’s department/program, and a commitment to serving our students as an effective, knowledgeable, and understanding advisor. The guidelines that follow outline the corresponding responsibilities of chairs in mentoring and evaluating colleagues both as they move toward tenure and in the subsequent stages of their careers. Chairs are tasked with the regular developmental mentorship of colleagues as a crucial support for improving the advising and instruction of students, strengthening the academic programs of the College, building the foundation for faculty members’ fulfilling and successful careers as teacher-scholars, and fostering equity among faculty members with varied experiences and opportunities prior to Beloit. FS&P strongly encourages chairs to consult with committee members in determining how best to provide this guidance and mentoring.

Departments, programs, and interdisciplinary committees are required to establish a regular process that facilitates full and fair evaluation of faculty members subject to review. Such a process should include the chair's close reading of course evaluations each semester and regular class visitations by the tenured members of the department, program, or mentorship committee, followed by conversations with the faculty member approaching review and the sharing of written feedback where appropriate (subsequent to class visits, for example). Early and regular occasions for feedback from the chair and other experienced faculty members give tenure-track faculty members the opportunity to respond to feedback in productive and creative ways **before** they come up for reappointment and promotion.

### **A. Teaching**

Because excellence in teaching is expected of all Beloit College faculty members, FS&P considers a candidate's record of teaching to be the most important factor in determining its recommendation for tenure and promotion. It is the chair's responsibility to mentor pre-tenure faculty members, help create a supportive environment, and provide feedback on in-class visits and student course evaluations.

In mentoring their faculty members, chairs should keep in mind the criteria for successful teaching:

Successful teaching portfolios demonstrate:

- Attention to and success in helping our students become more effective communicators, productive collaborators, and creative problem solvers, and in developing students' intellectual and professional agility.
- A track record of engaging the intelligence, imagination, and curiosity of students of all backgrounds and identities and actively working to mitigate the effects of racism and other forms of structural inequality.
- The ability to inspire a passion for learning within and beyond the classroom.
- A commitment to constructing a learning environment grounded in diversity, inclusion, personal relationships, mutual respect, and

community, in which students feel free to raise perspectives that differ from the norm.

- Care in preparation, skill in implementation, and attention to providing valuable and timely feedback.
- Constructive engagement with teaching challenges as opportunities for self-reflection and improvement.
- Reflection on past and present successes and challenges in light of a future trajectory of ongoing pedagogical development.
- Thoughtful planning for the development and revision of future course offerings.<sup>1</sup>

FS&P recommends both formal and informal conversations to encourage an environment of support within a department/program. Formal conversations might include those that follow class visits (discussed below) or discussions scheduled for departmental/program/mentorship committee meetings. Conversations should not be limited to these contexts, however; chairs should find less formal ways to “check in” regularly with their colleagues, especially pre-tenure and non-tenure track faculty members.

### **1. Class visits: Pre-tenure faculty and non-tenure track faculty**

FS&P relies upon evidence of class visits, which are required of the senior members of the department, program, or mentorship committee.<sup>2</sup> FS&P recommends that chairs determine early in the academic year which senior members will visit pre-tenure faculty classes and by when. Chairs should share the schedule with all faculty members in the department, program, or committee. Upon visiting classes taught both within and outside of their respective departments or programs (e.g., courses that contribute to all-college programs like AMP or Channels), senior members then record their observations in the form of a letter or memo, discuss their observations with the candidate soon after the class visit, and make any adjustments to the letter or memo before giving a final copy to both the candidate and the chair. Since class visits are intended to be both developmental and evaluative,

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<sup>1</sup> See “The Culture Document: The Review Process for Tenure-track Faculty at Beloit.”

<sup>2</sup> APM VI reads: “All departments shall institute a regular procedure of class visitation of tenure-track candidates by all tenured departmental members. Written summaries of class visits shall be shared with the candidate and the chair.”

senior members should discuss both successes and challenges observed during class visits and offer constructive feedback to the pre-tenure faculty member. These conversations may also be an appropriate time to offer advice on course syllabi, classroom practices, and pedagogy.

Because “[t]he teaching of continuing full and part-time [non-tenure track] faculty shall be evaluated at least every three years in writing by the chair of the appropriate department or program,” FS&P recommends that adjuncts’ classes be visited on a regular schedule and that such visits be treated similarly to those of tenure-track faculty described above. Note that “[a]long with long-term priorities of the college, th[e] evaluation [of an adjunct] will inform the Provost’s decision about reappointment” (APM VI).

## **2. Student course evaluations**

Upon the completion of every semester, chairs read the student course evaluations for courses taught both in and outside the program/department and provide a summary of them to their faculty members in which they discuss how well the faculty member met the criteria for successful teaching. Chairs should then have a face-to-face discussion with the faculty member to articulate strategies and plans for addressing any concerns.

Since the review process is meant to be developmental, it is especially important that pre-tenure faculty members receive feedback on student course evaluations in a prompt and regular fashion. In the case of regularly repeated courses, it is especially helpful to share observations and other feedback *before* the faculty member under review teaches the course again. Faculty members need timely opportunities to address concerns and make adjustments.

In addition to meeting with their chairs at the end of the semester, pre-tenure faculty members struggling with aspects of their teaching should be advised to take advantage of other resources and opportunities, such as consulting with other mentors, attending sessions on pedagogy both on and off campus, discussing pedagogical issues with colleagues within and outside of their departments, visiting classes taught by senior members of the department,

and/or gathering feedback from students through informal course evaluations half way through the semester.

## **B. Professional development**

Scholarly/creative engagement sustains the professional and intellectual vitality of a faculty member and informs their teaching; ongoing professional development is therefore an important factor in the evaluation of a faculty member's performance. In mentoring and evaluating faculty members in this area, chairs should keep in mind that successful professional development portfolios demonstrate a sustained pattern of productive scholarly/creative engagement, as attested by:

- The ability to produce outcomes that pass peer review in a form recognized in your discipline. While appropriate evidence varies by discipline, clear signals that a faculty member is engaged in and contributing to their discipline include publication of traditional scholarship in a peer-reviewed journal, creative work that is peer-reviewed, publication of a well-received peer-reviewed textbook, publication of a scholarly monograph or book with a well-respected press, and peer-reviewed scholarship of teaching and learning.
- Public-facing forms of scholarship are valid as supporting components of the portfolio; in such cases, candidates should seek alternatives to traditional peer review such as external reviewers who can put this work in context.
- Active participation in scholarly/creative communities, professional associations, and conferences.
- The mutual enhancement of scholarly/creative and pedagogical goals, practices, and products.
- A detailed and vibrant plan for future research and publication/creative output.

Chairs should support untenured faculty members in fulfilling these aims by offering explicit and ongoing help in:

- Considering how their scholarly/creative engagement informs their teaching;
- Devising a multiple-year plan that will produce a sustained pattern of productive scholarly/creative activity that leads to peer review;
- Identifying desired outcomes, such as peer-reviewed publications, conference papers, workshops, exhibits, grant proposals, and so on.

- Encouraging active participation in regional, national, and/or international professional associations; and
- Developing strategies both for setting a scholarly agenda and for seeking and obtaining outside grants to support professional development goals.

Chairs should also guide untenured faculty members in responding to critical feedback as a routine and valuable component of the peer review process, and should offer untenured faculty members advice in how to proceed when work has been rejected by one set of peer reviewers, such as revising and resubmitting, or submitting the work to another journal or set of peer reviewers. If mentorship committee members cannot offer their colleagues suggestions as to where to submit work, they should encourage them to speak to others in their field, such as members of their dissertation committee or experts at other institutions.

Chairs should also encourage faculty members to keep a clear record of their professional development activities in a regularly updated CV, and to share accomplishments with the Provost's Office for recognition in the Major and Noteworthy Accomplishments booklet.

### **1. External Funding**

Before a faculty member may seek external funding for professional development purposes, they must seek the approval of the chair, who must certify that they are aware of the project's implications for their department/program and support the proposal to the degree, if any, stated in the proposal.

### **2. Sabbaticals**

All faculty members are expected to make appropriate use of sabbatical leaves in order "to sustain [their] intellectual vitality . . . and . . . to engage in projects that will enhance their effectiveness as teacher-scholars" (APM VI). Standard applications for sabbatical leaves are due no later than November 1 of the year preceding the proposed leave; pre-tenure sabbatical applications should be included in the fourth-year review. Note that beginning with faculty members entering in fall 2011, "tenure-track faculty who have completed three years of full-time teaching as members of the Beloit College

faculty are eligible for a semester-long sabbatical leave, ordinarily in their fourth year, if they have demonstrated significant progress toward tenure” (APM VI). Tenure-track faculty members are under no obligation to take an early sabbatical, however. Tenure-track faculty members may instead wait to take their first sabbatical following their sixth year of teaching at the College. The option to take an early sabbatical should be weighed in consultation with senior department/program colleagues, FS&P, and the Provost and Dean of the College in terms of how best to strengthen the overall development and tenure potential of pre-tenured tenure-track faculty members.

FS&P encourages faculty considering sabbaticals to discuss funding possibilities with the Associate Dean. Chairs are expected to review potential staffing changes with other members of their department or program. In their letter of support for the requested sabbatical, chairs and senior department/program/committee members must attest to the value of the proposed sabbatical project and discuss how it relates to the candidate's professional development and teaching (APM VI). If applicable, the letter should also address the outcomes of the candidate's preceding sabbatical.

### **3. Absences from Class for Professional Development**

Both tenure-track and tenured faculty members are encouraged to be actively involved in their professional organizations. If a faculty member is away from campus and unable to meet a scheduled class, he or she shall inform the department/program chair. “[D]uring a teaching term such absences should not total more than one week of classes per semester. Exceptions must be approved by the department chair. Absences by department[/program] chairs in excess of one week of classes must be approved by the Provost of the College” (APM VI).

### **C. College Service and Citizenship**

All faculty members are expected to contribute to the life of the College beyond their respective programs and departments. Chairs should convey to their colleagues that effective participation in governance and other forms of service to the College facilitate knowledge of and demonstrate commitment to the institution

and its mission, and enable faculty members to forge professional relationships outside of their program, department, and division. In mentoring candidates about college service, chairs should communicate to their colleagues that contributions may include service on committees, service within departments that benefits the College as a whole, program and curricular development, contributions to all-college events and programs (such as Career Channels and AMP), on-campus public presentations/performances, and service to the Offices of Admissions, Development and Alumni Relations, International Education, and the Career and Community Engagement Center.

Chairs should also note that faculty members may also want to contribute to the life of the College through advising efforts, such as serving as an advisor to campus organizations, fraternities and sororities, study abroad and/or off-campus domestic programs, or as faculty mentors to athletic teams. In short, faculty members should be advised to get involved in areas that contribute to the College as a whole, in areas in which they have a genuine interest, and in those areas that play off their strengths and/or where they can demonstrate leadership.

### **1. Mid-level governance**

Chairs should remind their colleagues that attendance at disciplinary groups and all-faculty meetings (both of which meet on Wednesday afternoons) is expected of every faculty member in residence. Any faculty member may propose a pertinent topic for discussion at these meetings.

### **2. Academic Senate**

Chairs should ensure that their colleagues understand that all faculty members are expected to participate in Academic Senate, because Academic Senate “carr[ies] major and direct responsibility for the educational program of the college” and “maintain[s] a close relationship to the admissions, business, public relations, and development functions of the [C]ollege” (APM VIII).

## **D. Advising**

Strong advising and mentoring relationships between faculty members and students contribute significantly to the quality and value of the liberal arts



experience at Beloit College, and help students to understand themselves in relation to the College's mission and curriculum. Chairs are expected to mentor tenure-track faculty members as intentional, responsible, consultative, and responsive advisors who help students explore, set, and realize their educational and professional goals. This mentorship should ensure that all faculty members with advising responsibilities have the opportunity to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and establish records of successful advising.

Chairs are also responsible for keeping their department/program colleagues apprised of curricular changes and learning opportunities within and beyond their departments/programs. These include opportunities to engage in all-campus programs such as Career Channels or AMP, as well as [other strategic priorities](#). We encourage department/program chairs to ensure that their websites include up-to-date advising information for majors/minors.

Chairs should ensure that tenure-track faculty members are made aware of institutional and department/program norms and expectations, such as the expected number of posted weekly office hours,<sup>3</sup> days per week on campus,<sup>4</sup> and how advisees are assigned to advisors. In addition, they should discuss with tenure-track faculty members how best to keep records of meetings with advisees, how to respond to correspondence from the Dean of Students Office and Learning Enrichment and Disability Services, when to use alert slips, and how best to prepare for the pre-registration advising period. Chairs should encourage their department/program colleagues to consult with them about any advising difficulties they encounter, so that chairs may provide appropriate assistance and/or referral.

So that all department/program colleagues share in the responsibilities and rewards that accompany advising and mentoring students, chairs should ensure that all department/program colleagues have a reasonable and equitable number of advisees. Our practice has been to refrain, whenever possible, from assigning advisees to first-year tenure-track faculty members. Moreover, “[a]djunct faculty are not normally expected to have advising or service duties; however, assignment

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<sup>3</sup> According to APM VI, “Every faculty member is expected to be reasonably available to students for out-of-class conferences and advising. Regular office hours should be posted.”

<sup>4</sup> In general, faculty members are expected to be on campus four days per week.

to such duties may be made after consultation among the faculty member, department chair, and the Provost” (APM VI).

Chairs and senior members should also acquaint newer faculty members with information on prizes, awards, scholarships, internships, research programs, study abroad opportunities, employment, and/or graduate schools available to their students. Since most of these opportunities will require students to obtain letters of recommendation, chairs should offer new faculty members examples or templates of such letters.

### **E. Review Letters**

The purpose of letters from the department, program, or mentorship committee is to provide FS&P with a recommendation and additional context for each stage of review. Like the review process itself, these letters should be both evaluative and developmental, reflecting on the candidate’s accomplishments and any areas of concern. While it is appropriate for these letters to highlight the evidence for a candidate’s excellence in the four areas of evaluation, they should also address any potential red flags. Ignoring or glossing over areas of concern will probably not serve the candidate’s best interests. A letter that not only expresses support, but also offers a balanced assessment of strengths and weaknesses, will be more valuable for the candidate’s ongoing development. *Areas for improvement should be clearly noted and framed developmentally, so as to guide and support the candidate in taking concrete steps to address any concerns. Note that a commitment to equity entails recognizing that different people come to Beloit with different kinds and levels of experience and different capacities.*

Departmental/program/mentorship committee letters should provide a general picture of a candidate’s teaching record, taking into account both the numerical data and comments contained in the student course evaluations (and, in the case of the tenure review, alumni surveys, as well). An explanatory narrative should accompany any highlighted data or comments, and typically the focus should be on patterns rather than outliers. These letters should also summarize senior members’ observations during class visits and conversations with the candidate about their pedagogy and course outcome goals. Ideally, 2nd- and 4th-year letters will give the

candidate feedback that will be valuable for them as they make adjustments to their courses and their pedagogical strategies.

With respect to professional development, departmental/program/mentorship committee letters should address the extent to which the candidate has established a pattern of productive scholarly and/or creative activity. This pattern may include not only publications, conference presentations, and/or public performances, but also works submitted for review. These letters can help put a candidate's publications and submissions in context by commenting on things like the reputation of the journal, press, or venue to which their work has been submitted. They can also provide FS&P with an understanding of conventions within the candidate's field regarding co-authored publications, conference proceedings, poster presentations, artistic shows or performances, and so forth. They should also discuss any matters that are unique to professional development in their field. Letters should acknowledge any awards, grants, or special recognition the candidate has received. They may also comment on the candidate's involvement in professional organizations, collaboration with colleagues and/or students, and other professional activities. Finally, these letters are an opportunity to offer advice regarding a candidate's research agenda, creative output, or overall professional trajectory.

As a candidate's advising responsibilities and service commitments increase, departmental/program/mentorship committee letters should provide context for FS&P as well as feedback for the candidate. Department/program letters are an opportunity for senior colleagues not only to offer praise for work in these areas, but also to help candidates develop good advising practices and think about how their various service roles contribute to the life of the college. One way that these letters can promote the candidate's development is to give them food for thought about advising challenges and successes. Another is to provide the candidate with a sense of any patterns that appear in the alumni surveys with respect to advising. They can also provide valuable feedback about whether and how the candidate's service reflects their individual skills, interests, and goals. Ideally, this kind of feedback will be given to candidates in person, and the department/program/mentorship committee letter will summarize some of the high

points of an ongoing conversation about their growth as an advisor and a member of the college community.

While it is the duty of the chair to write these letters, they should include input from all tenured members of the departmental/program/mentorship committee. Once again, these letters should not only evaluate the candidate's progress toward tenure, but they should be geared toward promoting the candidate's professional growth and development. While it may be tempting to try to present an exhaustive defense of the candidate's excellence in all four areas of evaluation, please limit letters to a maximum of 8 single-spaced pages at the tenure review stage, or less for 2nd- and 4th-year reviews.

At the time of tenure review, the department/program/mentorship committee letter should be shared with the candidate at least one week prior to the deadline for their materials. This will give the candidate an opportunity to respond in their self-evaluation to any areas of concern raised in their letter. Chairs should make their best effort to represent differences of opinion accurately and in a way that makes it possible for the candidate to address any concerns. If a member of the department/program/mentorship committee dissents with the consensus of the group, it is the chair's responsibility to reflect their viewpoint in the letter.

### **Conclusion**

These guidelines are designed to guide chairs in ensuring both that all Beloit College faculty members are prepared to contribute to a powerful learning experience for our students, and that the college is able to attract, retain, and develop the most impressive, concerned, and compassionate faculty members possible, in part by help those faculty members to build deeply fulfilling careers. We acknowledge that issues germane to your department or program may require you to add to or revise some of these guidelines. In such cases, we encourage you to consult with FS&P about your particular situation.