

# Mentoring at Mines

Most new faculty are looking for some sort of mentoring. Unfortunately, many university mentoring programs randomly match junior and senior faculty without much follow through or studies on efficacy. As noted by Rockquemore (2019) the word “mentoring” is vague enough that people have a variety of thoughts when they hear this term, and also that that word often is associated with matchmaking faculty rather than helping new faculty discover their needs. Here, we’re going to rephrase a “need for mentoring” by allowing you to think about two key questions:

- 1) What do I need?  
and
- 2) How can I get my needs met?

Here, we describe a number of possible needs, and how you might find them on campus. It’s impossible and potentially unhealthy to try to have all these needs met by one person. When you shift from a person-based to a needs-based framework, it frees you from the search for “a mentor” and focuses you instead on identifying your needs and getting them met. This shift acknowledges that it’s normal to have an evolving set of needs throughout your career and that those needs are most effectively, efficiently, and comprehensively met in the context of a broad network of information, community, support, accountability, and ongoing feedback.

## Professional Development

Many new faculty are looking for help learning how to manage time, resolve conflicts, administer projects, organize your office space, teach efficiently, supervise graduate students, and make strategic decisions about service commitments. At Mines, you might want to look for information on this topic for both you and your students here:

- Check out the Center for Professional Development Education: <https://www.mines.edu/cpe/>
- Check out the library’s Modern Researcher program: <https://libguides.mines.edu/researcher501>
- Get on the VPRTT’s research listserv and participate in Mines’-wide research events (contact Lisa Kinzel for information)
- Plug into the Trefny Center’s teaching workshops: <https://trefnycenter.mines.edu/>
- Explore Skillsoft, a web-based monthly series focused on learning new skills and professional development: <https://www.mines.edu/human->



[resources/?CMSPAGE=Office\\_of\\_Human\\_Resources](#) (then click on Systems and then on Skillsoft)

### Personal/Emotional Support

As a new faculty member, you are in the midst of a significant identity and role transition—from graduate student (or post-doc) to professor. As a result, you may need support in dealing with the common stress and pressures of transitioning to life on the tenure track. Suggestions:

- Reach out to colleagues/friends in your department and beyond with whom you connect
- Participate in Mindful Mondays, a meditation group that meets at the library
- Take advantage of the yoga and spin classes in the Rec Center, or go to lift weights or use the pool
- Join Roel Snieder's ([rsnieder@mines.edu](mailto:rsnieder@mines.edu)) running club
- Be the positive change you want to see: this week, say thanks to five people or ask five people how they are doing, and make a genuine effort to be interested in their response
- C-SEAP (State of Colorado's confidential Employee Assistance Provider) is available to address personal problems and workplace issues. CSEAP counseling, training, and organizational development services are free-of-charge and located on campus. To make an appointment with C-SEAP on the Mines Campus, call (303) 866-4314
- Faculty enrolled in Mines' Anthem plans are covered for most counseling services. The cost depends on your plan and whether you use an in-network or out-of-network provider. Employees can check their benefits at: [www.mybensite.com](http://www.mybensite.com)  
User: cheiba Password: csmines
- Through Anthem and Live Health Online, employees also have access to virtual psychology and/or psychiatry services, covered through our Anthem insurance plans. Download the Live Health Online app or visit the website: <https://livehealthonline.com/>
- Lastly, all employees have access to Colorado Crisis Services. They provide phone, text and walk-in assistance. Call 1-844-493-8255 or text "TALK" to 38255. To locate a walk-in site, see their website at <https://coloradocrisisservices.org/>



## **A Sense of Community**

Given that most new tenure-track faculty have uprooted their lives to move to a new area, you may find yourself seeking both an intellectual and/or social community where you feel a true sense of belonging.

Ways of building community include:

- Build your own community by challenging yourself to ask one colleague to lunch/coffee a month, perhaps someone that you rarely talk with
- Get a second coffee when you go to get one, and drop it at a colleague's office
- Go to a departmental seminar that is not your own
- Take time to help a student figure out their life path
- Make a conscious effort to say hi to colleagues and students in the hall
- Nominate a colleague for an award
- Become part of the Faculty Senate
- Attend campus events and ask a colleague to go with you

## **Accountability**

The structure of your job likely provides the least accountability for the activity that is most valued -- research, writing, and publication. To avoid getting caught up in the daily chaos, the vast majority of new faculty members need some form of accountability system for writing. Some options include:

- Start a writing group—consider reaching out to other new faculty around campus
- [www.stickK.com](http://www.stickK.com): a website created by behavioral economists at Yale, where you set a writing goal for yourself. If you fail to reach your writing goal, you can pay a sum to a charity, or as an even stronger motivator, an “anti-charity” – an organization you really don't want to have your money

## **Institutional Sponsorship**

You also need to cultivate relationships with people who are invested in your success at your institution. In part, these are senior faculty who are willing to use their power to advocate for your best interests behind closed doors. To build these relationships, consider:

- Reaching out to colleagues in your department and beyond with whom you connect
- Participating joyfully in departmental events, as much as you can
- Thank the staff for the things they do for you, as they can help you make your life easier



## Access to Networks

Because knowledge isn't produced in isolation, it's critical for you to connect with others to discuss potential research collaborations, navigate external funding, and access opportunity structures that might not be immediately apparent to you as a new faculty member. People and places to think about include:

- New colleagues from New Faculty Orientation
- Campus-wide events throughout the school year
- Regular meetings for Teaching Faculty
- Regular meetings for Women Teaching Faculty

## Project-Specific Feedback

You will also need to regularly communicate with people who can provide substantive comments on your proposals, manuscript drafts, and new ideas. Good options here may include:

- Colleagues in your department who seem interested in your work and wellbeing
- Colleagues beyond the walls of Mines who may serve as a mentor in this capacity

## Role Models

As a new faculty member, looking to other faculty members who are navigating the academy in a way that you aspire to will be critical for your development as both a faculty member and academic. Who makes a good role model? Well, that's up to you. But a few thoughts are:

- Senior colleagues in your department or beyond with whom you connect.
- Mentors from other institutions
- Think about serving as a good role model to students, too!
- If you are having trouble finding someone, reach out to Roel ([rsnieder@mines.edu](mailto:rsnieder@mines.edu)) or Kamini ([ksingha@mines.edu](mailto:ksingha@mines.edu)) so we can help try to find someone with you

## Safe Space

This applies at any career stage, but especially as a tenure-track faculty member. It's extremely important to have the space to discuss and process unique and individual experiences without being invalidated, questioned, devalued and/or disrespected. Some options include:

- Reach out to colleagues in your department and beyond with whom you connect



- If you're looking for an off-campus (non-Mines-affiliated) life coach, one local option is Katharine Lavenhagen, who focuses on life transitions: <http://coachingwithkatharine.com/>

### **The Weekly Challenge**

This week, we challenge you to:

- Pause every time you feel the urge to use the word "mentor" or "mentoring" and ask yourself: What do I need right now? What's holding me back? And what (specifically) would help me to be more productive and effective?
- Go through the previous list of (some!) typical faculty needs and specify what would be helpful to you in moving forward. Don't be afraid to name your need. If you don't know how to write a successful grant, get un-stuck in your writing, or are floundering in the classroom, it's okay. Name it so you can get the help you need to move forward.
- Ask yourself: How can I get \_\_\_\_\_ (insert current need not being met)? If you don't know, state the need to someone else, and ask them to help you brainstorm how to get your needs met.
- Once you know what you need and have identified possibilities for getting it met, ask for help widely without shame, insecurity, or the belief that such a request means you are incompetent.
- Release yourself from the limiting belief that all you need is to find a single guru-like figure who will care for you, protect you, and lovingly guide you through your academic career. Repeat after me -- There is no guru. Instead, see what opens up this week for you when you replace that limiting belief with the idea that you can get your needs met from a wide variety of people and then take action in that direction.
- Be sure that you are taking advantage of whatever "mentoring" programs your department, college, and/or university offers, as well as any that may be offered by your professional organizations. They may not meet all of your needs, but they will increase the size of the network of people you can call on to assist you when you need it.

Adapted from Kerry Ann Rockquemore, PhD  
 President, National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity  
 From the Tomorrow's Professor Listserve

