FACULTY DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Introduction
1) Goal: The purpose of this document is to make clear the importance of, responsibilities for, and process of faculty development in the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Public Health (SoPH).
2) Who is this for: This guidance document is intended for any and all faculty in the VCU SoPH. Except where explicitly stated as otherwise below, these guidelines do not intend distinction between rank (Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor), tenure status (term, tenure-eligible, tenured) or duration (Adjunct, part-time, full-time).
3) Other Documents: Please read this document in conjunction with the SoPH Evaluation Guidelines, the SoPH Promotion and Tenure Guidelines, as well as the commensurate University-level and Department-level documents. In situations where Department and School guidelines conflict, the School guidelines shall prevail.
4) Definitions
   a) Development: Development consists of activities designed to learn, improve or expand upon the skills, knowledge and/or capacities relevant to helping faculty contribute to the mission of the VCU SoPH.
   b) Professionalism: Professionalism is here defined as a faculty member's adherence to best practices in domains of research, teaching & mentoring, and service, viewed across quality, ethical and cultural points of view. Professionalism also includes the demonstration of good citizenship in the department and school, as evidenced by personal integrity and treating others with dignity and respect.
   c) Evaluation: Evaluation is the set of processes by which faculty performance is compared to standards, including those established in concert with their evaluator, as well as those established by their Departmental and School peers.

Faculty Development
1) Delineation of responsibilities between School, Department and Individual
   a) School: The School is responsible for establishing minimum requirements, resources and standards for faculty development, mentoring and evaluation, and also for providing or communicating a modicum of at-large training; note that the School is also responsible for establishing the process by which faculty evaluations are conducted. While some general announcements will be shared with SoPH faculty, most communications will be directed to Department Chairs.
   b) Departments and their faculty (as a whole) are responsible for (i) making specific procedures and processes (beyond those established by the School) for faculty development, mentoring and evaluation), and for (ii) ensuring that development, mentoring and evaluation plans are executed for each faculty member. The exact balance of responsibility between Department faculty and the Department Chair shall be determined at the Department level, though the Department Chair is responsible for ensuring that each faculty member is evaluated at least once per year, and that those faculty evaluations are reported in the manner required by the School.
   c) Individual Faculty are responsible for the creation of and adherence to their development, mentoring and evaluation plans.
2) New Faculty Orientation
   a) The orientation process for new faculty will consist of several trainings and information sessions provided by various units, including the University, the SOPH, and the Department.
   b) Note that some of these sessions are only offered at particular times per year, so the entire orientation process may take a few months.
3) Mentoring and Development Plan (MDP)
   a) Qualified Faculty: All new faculty and all junior faculty (those at the Assistant Professor level) are required to have a faculty Mentoring and Development Plan. For faculty at the Assistant Professor level, the MDP will be in place while they remain at that rank. For new faculty at the level of Associate or Full Professor, the MDP will be in place (i) throughout the tenure evaluation period for those on a tenure track, or (ii) for three years.

b) The MDP consists of a Mentoring Plan and an Individual Development Plan. Details for how the MDP should be created and what it should contain are left to individual Departments, provided they adhere to the following conventions.
  i) Mentoring Plan (MP)
    (1) The MP specifies the Department's commitment to the faculty member
    (2) The MP must specify at least one primary mentor; depending on Departmental policy and conventions, the MP must also include any mentor committee members. Mentors can be in the same Department, can be in another VCU SoPH Department, can be from another VCU School of College, or can be from outside VCU, though the primary mentor must be from the VCU SoPH.
    (3) The MP will refer to both the SoPH and the Departmental Faculty Development guidance documents to make clear mentor and mentee responsibilities, as well as timing for all mentoring responsibilities.
    (4) Mentee responsibilities include, at a minimum, scheduling formal meetings with Mentor or Mentor Team, providing written summaries or meeting minutes that include specific action plans, and adhering to and executing the Individual Development Plan (see below).
    (5) Mentor (primary or committee member) responsibilities include, at a minimum, exemplifying all Department, School and University conventions for professionalism; attending formal meetings with Mentee, providing guidance tailored to the mentee that aligns their development and best interests with Department, School and University expectations; holding the mentee accountable to their Individual Development Plan; and reporting the Individual Development Plan and an annual summary to the Department Chair, which are to be included in the mentee's annual evaluation.
  ii) Individual Development Plan (IDP)
    (1) The IDP includes specific mentee actions to aid in their development. While the actions listed in an IDP are meant to aid in faculty development, the completion or achievement of said actions does not guarantee any particular ranking or outcome in either the annual faculty evaluation process or the promotion process.
    (2) The IDP will be created in accordance with the Departmental Faculty Development guidance document, and will outline a suggested course of action for the faculty member / mentee.
    (3) The IDP should be jointly created by the mentee and mentor team. The suggested actions should (i) be commensurate with the faculty member's current position, (ii) have a joint baring toward the mentee's career goals and any subsequent evaluation milestones (ex. promotion), and (iii) align the faculty member's development and best interests with Department, School and University expectations.
    (4) For all qualified faculty, a new IDP will be drafted each year.
    (5) Mentee responsibilities include, at a minimum, stating clear professional goals, writing the first draft of the IDP, agreeing to the final draft of the IDP.
    (6) Mentor responsibilities include, at a minimum, providing suggested edits to the IDP, agreeing to the final draft of the IDP, and sharing the final draft of the IDP with the Department Chair.
c) The Department Chair has several responsibilities, including:
  i) Ensuring that each qualified faculty member has a Mentoring and Development Plan drafted in accordance with both SoPH and Department guidelines. The Chair will use the Mentoring and Development Plan as part of the annual faculty evaluation process (described below).
  ii) The long-term storage of all Mentoring and Development Plans for each faculty member, including each annual update.
  iii) Sharing all MDPs and their updates with the SOPH Office for Faculty Affairs.
  iv) To initiate the process for developing Department MDP guidelines and to submit those guidelines to the SoPH Office for Faculty Affairs for approval.
d) Resources for Development
  i) Financial Support
    (1) A baseline level of development support will be planned and budgeted by the Dean's Office, with support potentially provided for such activities as conference travel, continual education and learning, computer and technology procurement, and others. This baseline level of support will be consistently and equitably administered across the various Departments in the School of Public

Health, but is subject to change based on availability of funds and resources. Departments may decide to create and clear approach to supplement this support with funding and resources from their Departmental budget, provided that plan is approved by the Dean's Office.

(2) Faculty are expected to contribute to and support their development through other sources, such as through external funds and start-up accounts (please see the SOPH Start-Up Policy).

(3) With Department Chair permission, full time VCU faculty may take advantage in the tuition benefits plan, which covers the tuition and fees for a fixed number of undergraduate and graduate level course credits each semester.

ii) Research Support

(1) Faculty are encouraged to take advantage of the numerous research support groups across the VCU campus, including support services provided by the C. Kenneth and Diane Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research, the Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, and many other groups.

(2) Research support staff are expected to be funded through externally funded research. Faculty may negotiate with their Department Chair for assistance recruiting and supporting such support staff before funding is available.

iii) Teaching Support

(1) Decisions on providing teaching assistants are made at the Department level, with an exception for courses offered at the School level (PHLT), for which decisions are made by the SOPH Office of Academic Affairs.

(2) The prioritization for providing teaching assistants among the various courses will be determined at the Departmental level for department-specific courses, and will be determined at the School level for school-level courses. In both cases, prioritization will be based on course enrollment and availability of potential teaching assistants. In the absence of an explicit and written Department- or School-level prioritization policy, the decision will reside with the applicable Program Director.

(3) For online course development, we strongly encourage our faculty to collaborate with educators from VCU Online. Such partnership must be coordinated with the SOPH Office of Academic Affairs and the faculty member's Program Director or Department Chair.

Faculty Evaluation

1) Please consult the SOPH Faculty Evaluation Guideline document.

2) Annual Evaluation (minimum requirements from SoPH)

a) According to Section 3.4 of the SoPH Promotion and Tenure Guidelines, all faculty, regardless of rank or status, will be evaluated each year.

b) Each faculty member will provide a written summary of their performance in scholarship, teaching and mentoring, service, and overall contributions during the evaluation period. This summary should provide context and highlight aspects that may not be fully captured in traditional CVs. The faculty member will also rate their performance according to the criteria listed in the SoPH Evaluation Guidelines. Faculty that do not provide written summaries – in part or in whole – will have their evaluations returned for revision. Continued delays or failures to provide the required materials may result in ratings at the "needs improvement" or "satisfactory" levels, as determined by the Department Chair.

c) Department Chairs will review all faculty annual reports before making any evaluations. Department Chairs will also solicit assistance from other supervisors, as appropriate, before making any evaluations. Faculty evaluations will be made according to the criteria listed in the SoPH Evaluation Guidelines.

d) Department Chairs should meet with each faculty member before making final evaluations, where they provide their preliminary evaluations and allow faculty the opportunity to defend or contextualize their self-evaluations.

e) The process to appeal an evaluation is described in the Annual Assessment of Faculty Performance guidance document.

3) New Faculty

a) Evaluations for all new faculty will be accompanied with discussions of the acclimation process and the MDP, the results of which should be communicated with the faculty member's mentor team and incorporated into the faculty member's MDP.

    b) Evaluations for all new faculty on a tenure track should be accompanied with discussions of the faculty member's progress toward promotion and tenure.

4) Mid-Term or Mid-Career Reviews
    a) Faculty at the Assistant Professor level are entitled to a mid-term evaluation. For faculty on the tenure track, this review must commence and be completed within the fourth year; for faculty on the term track, this review can commence at any time following the completion of the third year.
    b) Faculty at the rank of Associate Professor and Professor are entitled to one mid-career review at that level. This review can commence at any time following the completion of the third year at the current rank.
    c) In preparation for the review, the faculty member will prepare a complete CV and write a detailed cover letter and self-evaluation contextualizing their activities and achievements <u>to date</u>. Faculty are strongly encouraged to provide additional supporting information, such as course/instructor evaluations and sample manuscripts. No internal or external letters of support are required.
    d) For all mid-term and mid-career reviews, the Department Chair will form an *ad hoc* review committee consisting of at least three faculty from within the department; faculty from other Departments within the School of Public Health may serve on the review committee in situations where the home Department cannot form the committee solely through its own faculty. This committee will provide a written evaluation letter, containing separate evaluations (and rankings) for the faculty member's scholarship, teaching and service, as well as their overall performance, based on the appropriate promotion and/or tenure criteria for the faculty member's rank. This letter will conclude with the committee's clear statement of the faculty member's prospects for promotion and/or (if applicable) tenure, as well as recommended next steps or remedial activities (if necessary).
    e) Upon completion of the *ad hoc* committee review, the Department Chair will share the written evaluation letter with the faculty member. They will also convene a meeting with the Department Chair, the faculty member and their Mentor to discuss the letter's contents and to plan appropriate actions, including potential alterations to the MDP and/or IDP.

Adoption, Amendment and Review
1) Adoption: These guidelines shall take effect when recommended to and approved by (i) the majority of the Faculty and (ii) the Dean.
2) Amendment: Consideration of amendments to this document may be initiated at the request of the Dean's Office or any faculty member with at least five (5) SOPH faculty members from at least two Departments.
3) Review: This document shall be reviewed no less often than once every five years after its initial approval.
4) Process for Consideration of Changes Resulting from Amendment and/or Review:
    a) The SOPH Department of Faculty Affairs will have oversight of this document.
    b) An ad hoc committee to consider the proposed changes and to make recommendations on these and any other changes will be appointed by the Dean's Office. Any changes require the approval of a majority of the voting faculty (see School of Public Health Bylaws).
    c) Any proposed changes must be distributed to SOPH faculty at least two weeks before the General Faculty Meeting at which it will be introduced and discussed.
    d) The amendment is approved by two-thirds majority of those responding to a ballot following the amendment's valid introduction.

Approved: March 14, 2025