

Our mentoring program fosters dialogue in a relationship where more experienced faculty members seek the opportunity to assist first- and second-year faculty in adjusting to the various roles of a college professor (teacher, adviser, department member, scholar), creating a professional development schedule, and successfully adapting to the Gustavus community.

NEW  
FACULTY  
ORIENTATION

Kendall Center



John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning

# NEW FACULTY MENTORING PARTNERS

Gustavus Adolphus College



## POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR MENTORING CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- **Teaching:** composing syllabi, troubleshooting assignments, discussing classroom dynamics, and course evaluations.
- **Pedagogy:** discussion of effective teaching approaches, visiting one another's classrooms.
- **Research, scholarship, and creativity:** balancing scholarly priorities with teaching and service, realistic planning, on-campus grant opportunities.
- **Faculty governance and other forms of leadership in the campus community:** committee responsibilities, saying “no” and saying “yes.”
- **Student advising:** best practices, drawing boundaries, working with challenging students.
- **Departmental citizenship:** chairs, colleagues, and commitments to interdisciplinary programs, finding additional mentors in your department.
- **Gustavus curriculum:** general education, including Liberal Arts Perspective requirements and Three Crowns; writing-intensive courses, FTS, January interim.
- **Reviews and evaluation:** strategies for understanding and approaching annual reviews, Third Year Review, and tenure and promotion.
- **Community participation:** Shop Talks, Teachers Talking, Writing Retreats, lectures, theatre and dance performances, and concerts.
- **Life/work balance:** individual and/or family adjustment to Gustavus, St. Peter, or Minnesota, finding time for family and/or social and recreational activities.

## CHANGING MENTORS

Although the Kendall Center does its best to pair faculty mentors and mentees, we realize that commitments may change and that not all mentoring relationships are mutually fulfilling. Should this be your experience, please contact the Faculty Associate for New Faculty Programming. No one need be at fault for a mentoring relationship to falter, and changes can and will be made.

## GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL MENTEES

As with any relationship, a successful mentor/mentee relationship requires hard work from all persons involved. A new faculty member cannot simply sit back and “be mentored,” but must be an active participant in the process. The new faculty member should raise questions or issues for conversation, and use the mentor’s perspectives to learn about the College and community. Mentees should keep their mentors informed of any problems or concerns as they arise.

- **Make time to meet regularly with your mentor:** You will be very busy the first semester, but it is important to make time to meet regularly with your mentor, even when you feel overwhelmed... or especially when you feel overwhelmed. Research shows that a good mentoring relationship leads to a “more rapid socialization to campus” as well as improved ratings of teaching. So look at mentoring as an important long-term investment of your time, not just another hassle in your short-term schedule.
- **Ask for help or feedback when you need it:** Ask questions when you have them; floundering around or fixing mistakes later will take too much of your valuable time. Don’t worry that you are bothering your mentor, or how asking for help might appear. You are new and need assistance; that is the precise reason we have a mentor program in place!
- **Be willing to listen and learn:** Part of your professional identity probably involves being self-reliant, but take the time to listen to the advice your mentor provides and look at this as an important learning opportunity. Sure, not all advice is useful or accurate in any situation, but be open to learning from your experienced colleagues.
- **Take advantage of the opportunities presented:** Again, consider various opportunities—Teachers Talking, classroom observations, Shop Talks, writing retreats, mini-grants, etc.—as investments in your long-term professional development. Find time for these opportunities, and consider asking your mentor for guidance on which uses of your time might be most beneficial.
- **Be open and honest:** Share your true feelings, thoughts, and concerns with your mentor; this honesty is vital to getting you the guidance and assistance you need. Because your mentor understands the need for confidentiality, you should feel safe in sharing these thoughts. Remember that confidentiality works both ways, and that your mentors will be best able to advise you if they know confidentiality will be respected by you as well.

One of the best ways to help new faculty members establish themselves at Gustavus and do their best work is to provide them with a connection to a tenured member of the faculty who has already made an important contribution to the College. The New Faculty Mentoring Program is designed to provide an institutional and personal commitment to new tenure-track or continuing-appointment faculty members as they transition to participation in the ongoing life of the College.

Mentoring is the process in which a more senior faculty member shares his or her experience, expertise and advice regarding research, teaching, and other professional development issues with less experienced colleagues. A mentor may serve as a guide to the institution and its culture, as a research adviser, as a teaching resource, and/or as a role model. In higher education, new faculty mentoring programs provide the opportunity to share pertinent and valuable information, including resources, assistance and support, and cross-disciplinary collaboration and discussion.

Whether it is academe itself that is new, or simply Gustavus, assistance from a mentor can be an invaluable supplement to the guidance from departmental colleagues. Our mentoring program fosters dialogue in a relationship where more experienced faculty members seek the opportunity to assist first- and second-year faculty in adjusting to the various roles of a college professor (teacher, adviser, department member, scholar), creating a professional development schedule, and successfully adapting to the Gustavus community.

Mentors and mentees are paired by the Faculty Associate for New Faculty Programming, in consultation with the Provost’s Office. New faculty are always paired with mentors outside of their department.

## BENEFITS OF NEW FACULTY MENTORING

### For the new faculty member

- individual recognition and encouragement
- constructive criticism and informal feedback
- advice on balancing teaching, research, committee work, and other responsibilities
- inside information on the workings and culture of the College
- knowledge of the informal and formal rules for advancement
- knowledge of the procedures of the university
- advice on scholarship/teaching
- reduction of stress (psychosocial support)

### For the mentor

- satisfaction in assisting in the development of a colleague
- satisfaction of contributing to overall climate change
- ideas for and feedback and collaboration about the mentor's own teaching/scholarship/service
- retention of excellent faculty colleagues
- network of colleagues who have passed through the program

### For the institution

- increased commitment, productivity, and satisfaction of new faculty
- retention—prevention of attrition of new faculty
- encouragement of cooperation and cohesiveness for those involved in the program
- overall improvement of climate of support for faculty

## GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL MENTORS

The most important responsibility of a good mentor is to help the new faculty member acclimate to Gustavus. Although the role of mentor is an informal one, it is challenging and it requires dedication and time. A good relationship with a supportive, active mentor has been shown to contribute significantly to a new faculty member's career development and satisfaction.

The mentor should make the initial contact with the new faculty member and then meet with the new faculty member on a regular basis. The mentor should

provide informal advice on aspects of teaching, scholarly work, internal funding sources, campus politics, and committee work and should be able to direct the new faculty member to the appropriate individuals or offices. Often the greatest assistance a mentor can provide is simply the identification of which staff, program, or office one should approach for specific questions or concerns. There is no evaluation or assessment of the new faculty member by the mentor, only supportive guidance and constructive feedback.

- **Meet regularly:** It is important to meet regularly, even when one of you feels too busy. Set agendas for each meeting so you are certain to cover important topics.
- **Leave time for unstructured conversations:** While agendas are good for orientation purposes, be sure to leave time to discuss issues that have arisen for your mentee, like a problem in the classroom, a question about submitting an article, or a concern about department dynamics. While these are not therapy sessions, be willing to listen to your mentee's thoughts, concerns, and feelings—and be certain you hold those conversations in strictest confidence in order to maintain the trust that is important to your mentoring relationship.
- **Help establish a social and professional network:** Introduce your mentee to colleagues across campus—both as a social act and as a way to help build professional connections. Consider attending university events together, like lectures, receptions, faculty meetings, etc. Introduce your mentee to the crucial staff people in offices across campus.
- **Be proactive:** Your mentee will not always know the right questions to ask, or may not always feel comfortable admitting to a teaching problem or lack of knowledge. Be proactive and ask specific questions that will generate conversation.
- **Understand your mentee's needs:** It seems to go without saying, but it is important to get to know your mentee's background, goals, interests, and needs to understand the person you are mentoring. New hires at Gustavus range widely in their previous experiences and expertise, so learning about your mentee early on can make your mentoring efforts more focused and productive.