

Department of History
University of Kentucky
May 2008
(Revised October 2008)

Mentoring Program for Probationary Faculty

The History Department has had a mentoring program functioning for a number of years. The Department's Executive Committee in conjunction with the Chair appoints a mentor for each incoming assistant professor. The objective of this program is to help probationary faculty acclimate to their new environment and to adjust to the culture of the History Department. The mentor affords necessary information and guidance in addition to that provided by the chair. The chair has at least one meeting with just assistant professors each semester in order to monitor their progress and respond to questions.

The mentor is expected to meet on a regular basis with the probationary faculty member in order to orient them with respect to teaching, research, and service in the university. The mentor should maintain an ongoing dialogue with the assistant professor with respect to teaching. In that capacity, the mentor should attend at least one class per semester taught by the mentee in order to provide constructive feedback and advice. The mentor should establish a comfortable relationship with the mentee so that he/she will be able to broach problems (for example, how to deal with problem students in the classroom) and ask difficult questions about professional life in academics.

The department strives to appoint mentors whose research is in some way related to that of the mentee. In this way, the mentor can function as an effective guide as to which conferences to attend and where to publish articles and manuscripts. It is incumbent upon the mentor (as well as upon the chair) to ensure that the probationary faculty understands the department's expectations of him/her and is conversant with the department's guidelines for promotion and tenure.

The mentor should also monitor the service commitments of the mentee. It is History Department policy to protect assistant professors from excessive service so that they can be ready to go up for promotion. The Department assignments are very light for assistant professors. However, the mentor should oversee and advise on any other commitments the probationary faculty might take on outside the department.

The mentor also attends the Spring Semester meeting where the chair discusses the FMER rating and future plans with the assistant professor. Mentors should also alert the chair if there are any problems.