

RESEARCH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR NEW(ER) FACULTY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Established, July 2012

VISION:

We want new researchers to create new knowledge, disseminate and publish/patent their findings widely for the greatest impact and, as importantly, inspire and train other research personnel to create new knowledge.

The University of Saskatchewan wants to promote the vision statement to enhance the research success and productivity of new faculty by providing, as one step, the establishment of a **Research Mentorship Program** for all new tenure track faculty hired in July, 2012 and beyond. This program will be a collaborative undertaking between Colleges, Schools, Departments or Research Units and the Offices of the Vice-President Research and the Office of the Vice-Provost.

The research mentorship program will promote the research success of new faculty by:

- Providing expert support, through a mentorship team, in developing and implementing a 5-year research vision and plan at the time of hire;
- Providing networking opportunities and assistance in identifying potential collaborators within and external to researcher's discipline;
- Assisting in identifying programs and other support services related to research mentorship development.

The U of S research mentorship program will consist of:

- (1) Individual, customized research mentorship teams for new faculty – of 3 to 4 members including established researcher(s) in the area of study, College Associate Dean Research (non-departmentalized Colleges), or Department Head (Departmentalized Colleges)
- (2) Semi-annual research mentorship workshops for new faculty to provide forums for sharing information, exploring best practices and networking;
- (3) Workshops for mentors to explore and share best-practices in research mentorship; and
- (4) Strategies and mechanisms for encouraging, promoting and supporting excellent research mentorship.
- (5) Annual evaluation of the overall Research mentorship program and the efficacy of the personalized research mentorship team for each new hire

BEST PRACTICES, DEMAND, AND CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES:

Mentorship has been identified as an important influence on advancement and research productivity of new faculty (2, 3, 4, 6, 7). Ideally such relationships are highly personal and are formed “on their own” by individuals with common interests and styles of interaction (1). However, when these relationships

do not occur, or are not sustained, there is arguably a role for institutions to facilitate mentorship connections to promote the research success of new faculty (3, 6).

Current Research Mentorship opportunities at the U of S

Current U of S research mentorship opportunities include:

- Some departments (e.g. History) with a rich background of promoting and mentoring new faculty to become productive researchers; and
- Recent College-based efforts - the College of Medicine is introducing a Mentoring program for their undergraduate medical students, medical residents and faculty; College of Arts and Science since 2005 has noted in their letter of hire that College -based mentoring programs are available, the School of Physiotherapy has adopted a mentorship program for its new faculty.

Overall, however, the availability of faculty research mentoring is uneven across campus. Research mentorship for newer faculty is fragmented and certainly not sustained. There are no formalized research mentorship programs on campus – where an individual meets with a group (team) regularly over a sustained period of time, focuses on research, with the process being monitored and evaluated over time.

In 2008-10 the *Research Success and Collaboration Commitment Group* surveyed both individuals and groups (e.g. graduates, new faculty members, CRCs, Centers forum, RSAW, senior administrators, others) to determine what made researchers successful and/or the University respected for its research endeavors. Factors noted repeatedly included: time, resources, infrastructure, critical mass and **mentorship**. The *Research Success and Collaboration Commitment Group* subsequently recommended development of a formalized (at the institution level), sustained research mentorship program for newer faculty (e.g. faculty within their first 5 years of hire). This recommendation has been endorsed by the Offices of the Vice President Research and Provost. Those offices have requested the development of a Research Mentorship Program, that can be implemented as part of the University's 3rd integrated plan.

The idea of a more formalized research mentorship program for new and newer hires has been shared with and endorsed by the Associate Deans Research (November 2011), Research Facilitators (October 2011), and Deans Council (November 2011)

External Research Mentorship Programs – Best practices

A few Canadian universities – e.g. Universities of Calgary and Alberta – have indicated that they are working to develop a formalized institutional research mentorship program for new faculty. However, environmental scans of top 10 universities indicated that mentorship responsibilities:

- typically reside in the department and/or college; and
- include instructional development and research assistance from local University offices of Research Services as part of their orientation program.

The degree of formality associated with college/department-based programs varies. For example, University of British Columbia's Faculty of Science has clearly articulated principles, policy and resources

associated with its department-based mentoring (please see:
<http://science.ubc.ca/faculty/mentoring#men>)

PROPOSED UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWEN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM:

The U of S research mentorship program is based on the following principles:

- Research mentorship program for new faculty must be based on best practices and include the training of willing, productive, constructive researchers to be or become effective research mentors for new protégés;
- It is a shared responsibility, both conceptually and fiscally, between the home Colleges/Schools/Department/Research Units and the Offices of the Provost and Vice-President Research;
- Most importantly, the University wide program must be sustained over the long term (minimum of 5-7 years, or until tenure is reached) , so it can be properly monitored and evaluated, such that the practice of mentoring new faculty's research program becomes expected, valued and ultimately, the norm.

Program Details

The proposed Research Mentorship Program takes effect for all new faculty at the University of Saskatchewan, starting July 1st, 2012. It has 4 key components. If existing, newer faculty within their first 5 years of hire wish to participate in this research mentorship program, they are most welcomed but the decision of forming personalized research mentorship teams for each of these newer hires is determined by the individual College/ School/Department or Research Unit.

(1) Personalized research mentorship committee (team) for each new tenure track faculty member (see second updated 2014 document of suggested roles of the all members of the personalized research mentorship team)

Established at the time of hire, these personalized committees (teams) for each new hire is an essential core objective of the overall University Research Mentorship Program.

Each mentorship committee (team) will discuss the research vision of the new faculty member for the next 5 years and how they will achieve that vision with the help of the team, in conjunction with knowing the research expectations and culture of the home Department/College and University. Please see Appendix 1 of suggested questions that the team could use in helping the new protégé in developing their 5 year research vision. The personalized research mentorship team will be established by the College ADR/Department Head/ School Research Director or Unit leader. The Provost's Office or the OVPR are available to provide additional advice in mentor selection, if required.

The Mentorship Committees (teams) typically will consist of 3 to 4 members including:

- Established researcher(s)with research expertise related to the research program of the new faculty – it is suggested that **one** member of the team be an established research mentor

outside the candidate's own Department/College or external to the University); also suggested that the external research mentor not be the candidate's former graduate supervisor to develop independence. The goal of the research mentorship team is to find the "best" research mentors on and /off campus to assist the new hire in reaching their five year plan.

- The College Associate Dean Research (for non-Departmentalized Colleges) or Department Head (for Departmentalized Colleges) or Research Director for University Schools/Units is to be part of the research mentorship team to relate Departmental /College expectations and culture. The DH and/or ADR also assists in the establishment of the personalized research mentorship team , overseeing that the committee meets at least twice a year and assists in the development the research plan /vision of the new hire
- Other members within and/or outside the Department/College as required for research, teaching help.
- It is expected that new faculty, in time, will form other research ties to other researchers on and/or off campus. The DH and ADR, through discussions with the protégé could determine if those researchers could/should be included to the personalized research team. Alternatively, if a research mentor is found with time not to be a good fit for any individual research team due to absenteeism, style of engagement, or other, then the ADR/DH should meet with the new protégé to discuss alternative research mentors.
- The personalized research teams are to be supportive and provide sound advice for developing the research vision and plan. The team and the developed research plan are not to be used in any punitive way for the candidate.
- The Dean/Director of each College/School/Unit I is asked to assist in the promotion of the RMP of their College and ensure that the teams are formed for all new faculty hires

The Mentorship team will provide critical research advice and potential research links for the first 5 years of the new researcher's appointment at the U of S. It should meet a **minimum of 2 times per year**, with more meetings suggested in the first year for the development of the research plan/vision, or as needed by the new candidate. The Committee will work with the new candidate to:

- Develop, within 6 months of hire, an evolving five year research plan/vision;
- Provide research advice and guidance throughout the implementation period; and
- Assist the new researcher in developing mutually-beneficial research network of collaborators across and beyond the campus, as required
- It may also assist the new candidate with other critical questions regarding University culture, Departmental expectations, instructional development, etc.
- Discuss the importance of work/life balance

(2) Semi-annual research mentorship workshops

Semi-annual research workshops on research topics of choice will provide new faculty with better skill sets, knowledge and networks to foster their research plan/vision/endeavors. These workshops will include informative, interactive workshops/discussion centers of research topics that are both (a)

common topics relevant to all new faculty and (b) more specific topics related to the research discipline of the new hires.

The first research mentorship workshops was held in Convocation Hall on Nov 4th, 2011 (>140 attendees) with the next workshop regarding graduate student supervision scheduled for April 13th, 2012(8). These workshops will be jointly sponsored by the Provost's and VPR Offices.

(3) Training of Established, Productive Researchers as Effective Research Mentors for New faculty

Training in the best practices of effective research mentorship will better ensure that mentorship of new faculty has positive, productive outcomes over the long term. How to be supportive, constructive, yet challenging to the new hire's research program, knowing when to assist and when to take a step back on issues are all important qualities for research mentors to know. Training workshops of "training the trainer (mentor)" will be developed and sponsored by the Offices of the Provost and VPR, with assistance as required from the Gwenna Moss Teaching and Learning Centre. Training workshops will be held twice per year and thought to be half day in length. The **first "training the trainer (mentor) workshop will be held on Tuesday, September 4th/2012 at a University venue to be determined.** More information will follow on the training workshop to come in the months following. Current research mentors identified by the College/Department/School/Research Unit or individually will have the opportunity to learn of some identified "best practices " from the literature of becoming an effective research mentor at these training workshops and share their "best practice "experiences they have gained over their own career.

(4) Supporting a Culture of Research Mentorship

Administrators at all levels (Provost and OVPR Offices, Deans, ADRs, Department Heads, Research Cluster Leaders) need to promote the importance of mentorship for new faculty members. Part of the promotion is to encourage established productive faculty to think positively about becoming part of a mentorship team for new faculty starting within or outside their own Department/College/School/Research Unit. Departments/Colleges/Central Administration all need to think of ways of supporting and training faculty to perform this important academic function well.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:

Roles and Responsibilities

The offices of the **Provost and VPR, via the Special Advisor (Health) along with the Vice-Provost** will provide the following support:

- (1) Develop an inventory of established research mentors from across campus, by research theme or discipline. In 2012, there will be a list of potential research mentors (and their research domain) collected and distributed across campus that could assist new faculty of the future as being part of their personalized mentorship team. This list will require the help of each College/School/Unit in

identifying known established researchers that are currently fulfilling this role in their respective units.

- (2) Work closely with the college leadership (Deans, ADRS, Department heads) to clearly articulate and promote the important, essential role that College/School/Research Unit leadership plays in the establishment of research mentorship teams. Also, they will work with the Colleges and Departments to ensure that the research mentorship teams remain active, functional and contribute to the 5 year research plan/vision/ progress of the new candidate. Further discussions with Colleges and Departments could include consideration of how research cluster leaders and research facilitators may also participate in the personalized research mentorship teams for new faculty.
- (3) Work collaboratively with College/Department leadership (see separate survey accompanying this e-mail) to gather current, updated information of existing research mentorship programs across campus that senior leadership is not aware , that may be shared by other units on campus
- (4) Provide training workshops around best mentoring practices for established research mentors to facilitate their work with new faculty as members of any personalized research membership team.
- (5) Provide semi-annual research mentorship workshops for new and established faculty.
- (6) Undertake an annual review that will include an evaluation of the level of satisfaction by the protégé and research mentors of each team of the efficacy of the personalized research team and ideas for improvement as well as assessing the overall University Research Mentorship Program (workshops, training the mentor)(Please see *Assessment* below.)

College, Schools, Departments, Research Units are asked to:

- (1) Establish personalized mentorship committees (teams) for all new faculty at the time of hire and that the Department Head, ADR or Research Director of the College/School/Department or Research Unit is part of that mentorship team. This may be done in consultation with the Vice-Provost and OVPR.
- (2) Ensure that mentorship committees (teams) meet regularly and not less than 2 times per year (more often in the first year) to provide guidance in the development and maintenance of the 5 year research plan /vision of new faculty. It is strongly suggested that at least one of the research mentors of that team come from outside the specific Department/College/School of hire, from within or outside the University.
- (3) Promote research mentorship as an important facet of college/School, unit culture and the importance of establishing research mentorship teams for new faculty.
- (4) Provide feedback to the survey questionnaire (to be circulated) asking updated information of current research mentorship programs in your College, School, Department or Unit that we may be unaware of , including how they are maintained and assessed.

(5) A list of current established research mentors that currently fulfill this function in your Department/College/School/Research Unit. This would be shared across the University and current, established research mentors would have the opportunity to attend the “research mentor training workshops”, the first to be held Tuesday, September 4th/2012

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAM:

The Offices of the Vice-President Research and Provost will undergo an annual review of the whole Research Mentorship Program: This will consist of assessing:

(1) The personalized mentorship teams established for each new faculty member.

Annually, the Provost and OVPR will ask each College/School/Department/Research Unit for a list of team members for each research mentorship team (both the protégé and each (research) mentor. An annual evaluation form will be sent to each new hire and respective team members to determine: if the teams met on a regular basis, what topics were discussed, their level of satisfaction with the personalized research mentorship team process and ways of ways of improving the process.

(2) Research Mentorship Workshops:

The twice a year mentorship workshops will assess , via surveys given to those attending, a) the relevance and importance to them of each research topic discussed at the workshop and b) the quality of the keynote speakers and their message

(3) “Training the Research Mentor” Workshops:

The “training the trainer (research mentor)” workshops will be assessed by a survey given to those attending seeking their comments of the quality of the information provided in assisting them with “best practices” in being an effective research mentor

(4) In addition, the two offices will develop qualitative and quantitative assessment metrics to determine the effectiveness of the Research Mentorship Program for newer faculty in developing a successful research program. Suggested research metrics of research success could include:

1. Increased number of Tri-agency grants, both first time and renewals
2. Increased number of non Tri-agency, external -funded grants (outside Province), first time and renewals
3. Increased number of research contracts
4. Increased number of graduates and completed graduate programs
5. Increased number of publications, increased number in higher impact journals
6. Increased number of national research awards.
7. Other?

REFERENCES:

1. Strauss SE, Chature F, Taylor M. 2009 Issues in the Mentor-Mentee Relationship in Academic Medicine: A Qualitative Study, *Academic Medicine* 84: 135-139. It is acknowledged that this topic is controversial. Alternative views include: belief that you cannot/should not force a mentoring process unto the candidate but rather have it form “on its own” by individuals with common interests and styles of interaction; and the stance that no research mentoring is required as they received none when they were first hired (i.e. sink or swim on your own).
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3. Sutherland, K. and Petersen, L. 2009 The success and Impact of early Career Academics in Two new Zealand tertiary Institutions ,AKO National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence
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APPENDIX 1

(A) DRAFT TEMPLATE OF QUESTIONS FOR ASSISTING THE PERSONALIZED RESEARCH MENTORSHIP TEAM IN DEVELOPING THE 5 YEAR RESEARCH PLAN FOR NEW FACULTY IN YEAR 1

1. What is your research vision for the next 5 years?
2. What is your research program to reach your research vision?
3. What research projects are components to your research program?
4. Current research network that you interact with in assisting with your research program?

5. How can the University assist you in realizing your research vision?

(B) DRAFT TEMPLATE OF QUESTIONS FOR THE PERSONALIZED RESEARCH MENTORSHIP TEAM WHEN MEETING WITH NEW FACULTY IN YEARS 2-5

1. Has your research vision changed?

2. What research projects are going well? Which projects do you need assistance with?

3. What additional research links do you assistance with?

4. What research outcomes have been achieved since the last meeting?

A Grants received/Internal/external?

B Graduate students, PDFs, technicians hired?

C Peer reviewed publications?

D Conferences attended?

E Research partnerships made?

F Impact of your work/findings? To whom?