

# **Yale Divinity School Faculty Mentoring Program**

## **1. Overview**

1.1 Expert guidance in professional development is essential for the flourishing of ladder-track faculty at Yale Divinity School. Effective mentoring may be especially important for the following:

- faculty whose training or recent teaching was in an educational system outside of the United States;
- faculty coming to this Research I divinity school from a college, university, or seminary context;
- female or genderqueer faculty in disciplines in which female and genderqueer faculty have traditionally been underrepresented, in our institutional history or in the guild;
- faculty of color in disciplines in which faculty of color have traditionally been underrepresented, in our institutional history or in the guild;
- faculty involved in interdisciplinary research;
- faculty whose area of research is emergent in the guild or new to this institution.

1.2 Effective mentoring is beneficial not just for the mentee but for the entire faculty and the school as a whole, for at least three reasons. First, effective mentoring can strengthen the bonds of collegiality between scholars, within a teaching group, and across teaching groups. Second, mentoring that supports the research and teaching of a faculty member contributes to the academic reputation of the school and the excellence of pedagogy at YDS. Third, effective mentoring can enhance a faculty's shared sense of mission.

## **2. Assignment and Training of Mentors**

2.1 Every ladder-track faculty member is assigned a mentor by the Dean. For new hires, the mentor will be assigned by July 1, so that the incoming faculty member will have a point of contact for the questions that arise before the first year at YDS.

2.2 In the first semester of a ladder-track faculty member's appointment at YDS, the Dean will provide to both mentor and mentee a written statement of policies concerning promotion and tenure. Subjects covered in this statement will include:

- the steps involved in assembling a promotion or tenure portfolio;
- the expected timeline for reviews and related sabbatical leaves;
- expectations and practices concerning submission of names of outside evaluators by the candidate under review;
- the process involved in the review;
- the date when a new contract begins after a successful review.

2.3 Changes in mentors should be made cheerfully and without prejudice or fault. Sometimes two scholarly temperaments simply aren't a good match. To change mentors, the ladder-track faculty member should speak to the Dean.

### **3. Responsibilities of Mentors and Mentees**

3.1 The mentor will offer regular counsel on matters of research, writing, teaching, institutional service, and participation in the academic guild. The mentor will accompany the mentee through the various stages of professional development that lead to the tenure review.

3.2 It is expected that a mentor/mentee pair will meet at least once each semester. The responsibility for initiating mentoring conversations lies with the mentee. The mentor should respond in a prompt and encouraging way to the mentee's requests for meetings.

3.3 Because professional guidance remains crucial even when mentors are on leave, and because others cannot easily step into the mentoring role on a temporary basis, the schedule of meetings should continue, if possible, even when the mentor is on leave. If the mentor is on leave, the mentee should be willing to meet at a location that may be more convenient for the mentor than New Haven.

3.4 The mentor will assist the mentee in setting short- and long-term research goals and in developing and refining a timetable for achieving those goals. Normally, short-term goals will include getting the dissertation published and working productively on the second book. It is essential for our Research I context that ladder-track faculty members meet those goals. Each mentee is encouraged to commit her or his goals to writing and share the document with the mentor. Mentees are welcome to share such documents with the Academic Dean or Dean, if desired.

3.5 Mentors and mentees may wish to discuss the mentee's hopes for professional relationship-building and plans for skill development. An appendix to this document, "Visualizing Your Professional Identity," lays out an exercise that may be helpful for goal-setting and tactical strategizing.

3.6 The mentor will assist the mentee in establishing a disciplined schedule for writing. Such assistance may include:

- sharing strategies for guarding writing time, prioritizing tasks, and managing interruptions;
- discussing ways to balance the demands of teaching and research;
- helping to identify counterproductive habits and to develop tactics to reduce their impact on professional development;
- inquiring regularly as to the progress of the mentee's writing.

3.7 If the mentee wishes, the mentor may read and comment on the mentee's written work. Mentors will strive to respond to written work within one month of receiving it, if not sooner. Mentors will seek to frame critique in a constructive way.

3.8 The mentor may assist the mentee in maintaining an informal "promotion and tenure file" that tracks the mentee's accomplishments in research, teaching, and service. This is not a formal document but simply a resource for reflection on the mentee's professional development. To give the fullest picture of the mentee's commitments, this informal file should contain notes on all leadership and service contributions, including those not recorded on the curriculum vitae (for example, consultations and presentations in non-scholarly settings).

3.9 Mentors should provide counsel about which venues may be best for publishing, including which kinds of presses enjoy more prestige than others. Placing articles in peer-reviewed journals is considered essential in many disciplines; essays in edited volumes are considered less weighty in most promotion and review processes. Ladder-track faculty should consider declining invitations for encyclopedia articles and editorship of volumes of essays; such opportunities may be more wisely embraced post-tenure. Mentors should encourage mentees to balance the importance of networking against the danger of spending too much time on conference papers.

3.10 Each ladder-track faculty member should maintain an up-to-date curriculum vitae and personal web page (if applicable), linked via the YDS web site. A poorly maintained c.v. can give the impression that the scholar has been unproductive in recent times. The mentor should provide feedback on the design and content of the mentee's c.v. A well-designed c.v. will include clearly defined categories (for example, works-in-progress are not listed in the same section as completed works) and will list publications in each section in descending chronological order, with the most recent on top. Mentors who are unclear about standards for the professional formatting of the c.v. should consult the Dean.

3.11 The mentee should consider belonging to a professional academic networking site such as Academia.edu. Because those younger in their careers may have more sophisticated social-media skills than their mentors, the role of the mentor regarding social media may consist more in learning and active listening than guiding. Nevertheless, the mentor should seek to be helpful in this increasingly important dimension of professional development.

3.12 The mentor should assist the mentee in developing a network of advisers within Yale and outside, as may be desired. A mentee can benefit from having different mentors for various professional needs or different career stages. For any mentee who would like a mentor from a downtown Yale department in addition to the YDS mentor: the initiative in identifying and approaching likely candidates lies with the mentee, but the YDS mentor will facilitate that connection, if possible.

3.13 The mentor will seek to put in a good word for the mentee wherever appropriate. For example, a mentor might encourage publishers or event organizers to extend an invitation to the mentee, or a mentor might redirect an invitation for a writing assignment to the mentee.

3.14 The mentor will stand ready to assist with the mentee's course planning, development of syllabi, and honing of pedagogical skills. Effective course development, efficient organization of pedagogical materials, and skilled teaching can benefit the mentee in significant ways, including sustaining current intellectual projects, catalyzing new research, and helping to safeguard time for other professional obligations.

3.15 The mentor will help the mentee to understand the institutional culture at YDS. Discussions should cover policies, pragmatic operations, and cultural norms and values both explicit and implicit. Topics of interest may include the role of faculty adviser, service on committees, classroom dynamics, the culture of faculty meetings, expectations within the teaching group or curricular area, and related issues.

3.16 Conversations between mentors and mentees will be held in confidence unless discussion concerns a legal matter or an issue of professional malfeasance. It is important that the mentee feel free to discuss not only successes and hopes but also frustrations, obstacles, and anxieties, so that the mentor and mentee can strategize together about ways to negotiate those challenges effectively.

#### **4. Institutional Support for Mentoring**

4.1 The Academic Affairs assistant will keep pre-paid cards available for coffee at New Haven coffeehouses. These cards are funded by the Dean and procured by the Academic Dean. Mentors and mentees can "sign out" a coffee card to use downtown for coffee and mentoring conversation. There is no limit on how often a mentor/mentee pair may do this.

4.2 The Academic Dean will maintain a web page of resources for mentors and mentees. The web page will include: this guide to YDS faculty mentoring; links to Yale resources such as the *Yale Faculty Handbook* and the *Divinity Bulletin*; links to outside sources of grant support for faculty such as the Wabash Center for Teaching & Learning in Theology and Religion; and, a bibliography of books and articles related to pedagogy and academic development.

4.3 Annually at a Governing Board meeting and at a general faculty meeting, the Dean and Academic Dean will host a discussion of effective mentoring practices. Additional training of mentors will be developed as needed under the supervision of the Academic Dean.

4.4 The Academic Affairs office maintains resources concerning grant sources within theological education, which include the Lilly Foundation, the Louisville Institute, and the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. The Academic Dean and mentors will stand ready to help ladder-track faculty apply for grants. Initiative in seeking out appropriate grants lies with the mentee.

4.5 If a ladder-track faculty member wishes to have her or his teaching observed, the mentor and Academic Dean stand ready to observe and provide constructive feedback. At the ladder-track faculty's request, videotaping of a class may be provided for the faculty member's consultation. Because classroom observation can provoke anxiety in the teacher and may not be desired by

every faculty member, it is not necessarily expected that a ladder-track faculty member will request this. No prejudice will accrue to the promotion or tenure case of a faculty member who has not asked for teaching observation.

4.6 Each faculty member will have an annual conversation one-on-one with the Dean concerning their professional development. The Dean will write a formal mentoring letter for all ladder-track faculty annually.

4.7 Faculty colleagues who have suggestions for improvement of the YDS Faculty Mentoring Program are warmly welcomed to offer feedback to the Academic Dean. The mentoring program will be reviewed by the Dean and Academic Dean every two to three years.

3/20/13

## APPENDIX

### Visualizing your professional identity

What kind of scholar and teacher do you want to become?

Think about *qualities* and *skills* in your ideal version of yourself. This exercise will help you identify your goals so that you can work toward them.

**As a scholar and teacher, I want to be:**

<i>Examples:</i>	<i>an original thinker</i> <i>creative</i> <i>able to deal with criticism</i> <i>an expert on Calvin</i> <i>known in the Church</i> <i>compassionate</i> <i>a prolific writer</i>	<i>well connected in the guild</i> <i>good at reciting passages from memory</i> <i>well versed in medieval liturgics</i> <i>conversant with Levinas's work</i> <i>fluent in German and Spanish</i> <i>a well-respected book reviewer</i> <i>hospitable to dissenting ideas</i>
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What concrete steps can you take to work toward those goals? List them here. The smaller and more specific your goals are, the better.

Date your list and save it in a professional development file. You may also want to display it in your work space for motivational purposes.

*Examples: write 500 words every day, no matter what*

*read 1 chapter of Barth every weekday and womanist ethics on weekends*

*make a list of scholars I'd like to know, and e-mail one each semester with a substantive appreciative comment about their work*

*develop that new course in the area of research I need for my third project*

*submit two paper proposals to the Academy of Homiletics every year until tenure*

Share this document with your mentor. Ask for feedback regarding the feasibility of your goals; discuss how they should be prioritized to maximize your professional development according to Yale criteria.