

Agricultural Education and Training Good Practices

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Mentoring New Faculty

New faculty members face many choices in the first years of their careers. Whether those choices are good or bad can shape the identity of the department and university where they work. Fortunately, colleagues can encourage good choices and set examples for teaching practices, interaction with colleagues, and working with students. Mentoring a new faculty member can help transition them into their new position and provide them a person who can help them get acclimated to their new environment.

Why is mentoring a good practice?

Mentoring builds positive relationships between new and existing faculty, and fosters professional integrity which adds value to the workplace and the field. Mentoring new faculty also cultivates professional ethics and teaching excellence that can be passed down from colleague to colleague increasing the quality of the department and the university.

Mentoring activities:

- Guide by example so new faculty members can see how to behave in a variety of settings.
- Invite the new faculty to observe you teaching, working in the lab, and include them in networking functions.
- Set aside time to debrief and answer questions they may have.
- Make a point to invite them to participate in professional development.
- Encourage networking with other faculty and learning about the institution.



Source: YPARD

Mentoring women in agriculture

Michelle Jambui feels strongly that having a mentor was key to her successful education. Michelle was an undergraduate studying tropical agriculture at a university in Papua New Guinea, when she met the Dean who would serve as her mentor. He met with her regularly to get to know her, guided her in coursework and shared networking opportunities she would not have found on her own. “Women in agriculture need to be mentored by professionals that not only provide training,” Michelle said, “but are also able to give women confidence.” The Dean helped her secure an internship and supported her in pursuing graduate school. “I would not have done what I did without the help of my mentor. I believe empowering women through having a mentor will help women progress in agriculture.” Michelle Jambui is now a Fulbright scholar and graduate student in the animal science department at Virginia Tech. [Read more of her story here.](#)

Mentoring helps minimize some of the confusion that is often experienced by a new faculty member and help solidify their place in the university. A mentor who is part of the campus and university community will be able to provide access to information, resources, and social support that a new faculty member will often need. Mentoring can also serve various functions to socialize new faculty members and help them learn their way around campus. Four ways that a mentor can help a new faculty member include:

Discuss teaching norms

Invite the new faculty member to observe a course you teach. Discuss the university time line, course sign up times, and other issues related to getting a course they may want to teach submitted for approval. Model appropriate teaching practices and suggest places where the new faculty can go for more resources if they're interested.



Source: InnovATE

Discuss research expectations

Welcome the new faculty to the lab or field where you collect data. Discussing research practices, sharing information on human subjects approval (if applicable), and hearing what the new faculty wants to do for research can help you guide them. The new faculty may be looking for how you interact with your students and how your lab is laid out.

Networking opportunities

Encouraging the new faculty member to network can help guide them toward resources when they're ready to assume more responsibility. Modeling professional behavior can be an asset to exhibit how a new faculty can communicate requests, learn where other groups who might want to collaborate exist, and navigate unhealthy situations.

Modeling

Guiding by example is one way that a successful mentoring partnership can be fostered between the new faculty and their new colleagues. Mentors can model teaching style, presentation style, and lab or field work so the new faculty can observe how they interact with each other, use appropriate language, and learn the culture of the new environment.

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