



Faculty Development and Mentoring at Yale

Introduction

This memorandum is based on a discussion convened by the Yale Women Faculty Forum (WFF) Council on February 15, 2005, at which members of the Council were joined by Jon Butler, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, and Peter Salovey, Dean of Yale College, to consider questions of mentoring and faculty development at Yale. That meeting, in turn, grew out of initiatives of the WFF and of the administration, both concerned about the issue of mentoring. Below is a brief summary of the principal concerns raised and suggestions made.

In order to facilitate an exchange of ideas, the WFF prepared several documents in advance of the meeting. These memoranda include an outline of elements to consider for a faculty development program; a suggested set of practices for an FAS junior faculty mentoring program; a compilation of data on successful junior faculty mentoring programs at other universities; and a selected annotative bibliography of mentoring literature. These are available on the WFF website at www.yale.edu/wff.

The WFF also created a Task Force on the Retention and Promotion of Junior Faculty in the spring of 2004. The aim of this group is to understand reasons for the departure of some junior faculty, as well as to learn more about the reasons that enable or prompt some to remain. In April 2004, the Task Force conducted a preliminary pilot study in which departing junior faculty completed questionnaires and were interviewed by Task Force members. A prototype of this questionnaire is also available on the WFF website.

Although Yale has been a leading institution generative of many scholars and research agendas, Yale has not had a formal institutional commitment to the ideas of "mentoring" and "faculty development." However, as the administration and faculty become committed to building a diverse faculty, welcoming of women and men of all colors and with a range of interests and methodological commitments, it – like other institutions – needs to develop programs and plans to ensure that Yale welcomes and fosters all of its junior and senior faculty equally. Mentoring represents an institution's commitment to enabling its junior faculty to thrive, just as faculty development is a reflection of generative interaction and of institutional support that spans all generations of a faculty. In short, mentoring and faculty development programs benefit both individuals and the institution itself.

Yale needs to articulate what "mentoring" and "faculty development" mean at this institution.

From our discussions, we learned that "mentoring" has many meanings, and no one shared understanding exists about its forms and purposes. Mentoring – in the context of faculty at Yale – ought not to be understood as a system to provide feedback or review from senior to junior colleagues, but rather as a process for providing information about

the explicit and tacit aspects of surviving and thriving as a scholar at a particular institution. Senior colleagues mentor by providing input and guidance about how to negotiate the process of developing as a scholar and colleague. When done well, mentoring should help junior faculty to make the most of their time spent at Yale by participating fully in the intellectual life of the university and growing intellectually. The "best practice" for all departments will be evident when junior faculty are successful, whether they receive tenure at Yale or move to positions elsewhere. Healthy departments, by definition, have good mentoring.

Further, mentoring is only one aspect of developing and retaining a diverse faculty. While mentoring can usefully assist in enhancing the numbers of women of all colors and men of color at Yale, deans, chairs, and tenured faculty need to embrace an integrated approach that focuses on the relationship between recruitment, mentoring, retention and other issues of faculty development at all levels of the faculty ranks.

A generative mentoring program cannot be predicated upon an abstract "junior faculty" person, devoid of department and research specialty, of demographic characteristics such as gender, race and ethnicity, or of obligations to themselves and others. Further, issues of mentoring can be particularly acute for scholars who work in emerging fields and are doing interdisciplinary work, as was discussed in the Committee on Yale College Education's report. Therefore, mentoring programs need to address the specificity of the context in which junior members join this institution.

Commitments to equality and to diversity must be kept in mind when designing mentoring and other faculty development programs, in order to avoid reinforcing past inequities. Mentoring is not a process of replicating oneself, but rather one enabling a range of talented individuals to thrive, and concepts of mentoring must therefore be self-conscious about the diversity of the faculty population. Because visible and invisible networks have long existed to push certain individuals forward, and because some of these networks have been implicitly or expressly exclusive in the past, the institution needs to address and to ameliorate, if not rectify, the unequal opportunities of the past.

Data on retention and promotion rates at Yale have raised concerns that the processes of incorporation, of mentoring, and of faculty development have not been equally distributed to all. In some departments, talented juniors and some senior women have chosen not to remain. While the reasons in any individual case are many, the net result is that, to continue increasing the diversity of Yale's faculty, department chairs and senior faculty need to make renewed efforts to insure that all junior faculty members get the attention that they want and need. If junior faculty of all colors are engaged in the academic life of their departments, the university and the departments will both benefit from an increased ability to hire strong junior faculty in the future. Similarly, Yale will be better able to hire and retain outstanding senior women if they feel supported and engaged in the academic environment. Chairs should consider how best to integrate faculty from all backgrounds and whether departmental processes and procedures need alteration to enable that integration. For example, institutional leaders need to be sensitive to the fact that, when a person is the "only" or one of a few of a particular demographic group, the demands on that individual may be especially acute.

Various kinds and methods of mentoring are needed in departments.

Many methods of mentoring are currently used at Yale. These variations reflect disciplinary differences, the sizes of departments, and other factors. A one-size-fits-all model will not work at Yale. Further, the existence of a formal mentoring program does not necessarily mean that a department succeeds in providing good mentoring to its junior faculty.

Mentoring programs should include two dimensions: how to be a good scholar (e.g., how to deepen one's understanding of a topic, participate in scholarly dialogues, get a grant, obtain publication of articles or research) and how to negotiate the Yale system (e.g., how to be a good colleague, how to agree or decline to take on obligations such as committee assignments).

A good program acknowledges that mentoring can take many forms. It can take place between people who are in the same department or discipline, or between senior and junior faculty who come from different disciplines or departments. In situations where dyadic mentoring may simply reinforce personal networks and continue past problems of unequal mentoring, group mentoring may be more effective. The key dimension is the provision of counsel and guidance to facilitate success as a scholar and as a member of a department and discipline.

Members of the Yale community should appreciate the many kinds of mentoring that exist and the roles they can play in making mentoring generative.

Junior faculty need to become aware of the various types of mentoring that can be helpful, and how to get mentored. When people hear the word mentoring, they may not appreciate the full list of possibilities for what it can include. When people reject the idea of mentoring, it may be because their understanding of mentoring is dated or misguided. The separate nature of mentoring and tenure processes must be clarified so that even if either junior or senior faculty do not anticipate that a particular person is likely to be tenured, mentoring can nonetheless be helpful. Further, when successfully done, junior faculty do not associate mentoring with anxiety-ridden interactions with senior faculty, but see it instead as a useful exchange among colleagues at different levels of development.

In some departments, senior faculty do not embrace the idea that mentoring their junior colleagues is an important and beneficial activity. Therefore, the administration needs to help chairs and senior faculty reshape their understandings of mentoring roles and activities, the logic and benefits of engaging junior faculty, and how to be good mentors. Framing the issue as one of supporting one's field through the development of future colleagues and building networks with those colleagues may increase interest in mentoring among chairs and senior faculty. Mentoring is not simply an obligation, but a strategic move toward bettering one's own situation by improving that of junior faculty, thus ensuring that Yale continues as the best possible intellectual and academic

environment. Ideally, such behavior becomes a tenet of departmental culture, since mentoring is more likely to take place when junior faculty are engaged in the conversations and work of the department.

Given the scarce resources of junior positions and the degree to which Yale relies on junior faculty, the institution should encourage the selection of junior faculty who will be considered, as they develop, for tenure. When conducting searches for junior faculty, departments sometimes view hiring simply as necessary to fill teaching needs. That approach generally misses opportunities and may consume resources unnecessarily. Preferably, those hired should be considered as likely candidates for tenure. When mentoring and faculty development are working well, a reasonable percentage of junior members in a department are likely to get tenure, because their seniors were adept at spotting and developing their talents.

The administration must play a vital role to ensure changes in the culture related to mentoring and faculty development.

The exchange of memoranda and discussions throughout the university, initiated by the Administration, has shown that the climates of many departments need to change. Detailed work – from deans and division heads in conjunction with chairs and faculty members – is needed to help shape visions for how departments can change. Collaboration should focus on issues that have implications for junior faculty: divisions between junior and senior faculty, junior searches, inclusion of junior faculty in the life of the department, and opening up departmental culture more generally.

Proposals for Change

Rationale:

In order to ensure that junior faculty are fully engaged in the academic community at Yale, we recommend dual levels of implementation – through departments and the senior administration – for the following proposals. While it is important that change takes place at the departmental level, departments need leadership from the administration in order to effect the greatest positive change.

Proposals:

FAS Deans should make a statement about the importance of junior faculty mentoring and faculty development. While their collaboration sets a positive tone for cultural change on the departmental level, a written statement endorsing mentoring is needed.

As has been evident in the leadership of Deans Butler and Salovey, one model is to have FAS Deans lead the institution's efforts around mentoring and faculty development. Given the many demands on the deans, that form of collaboration should be enhanced by the designation of a person at the provostial level to concentrate on these issues.

Development of a website about "navigating Yale" will help junior faculty in need of Yale-specific mentoring. This site should include information about how to apply for a grant or fellowship, how to get invitations to speak at conferences or meetings, policies relevant to junior faculty, etc.

FAS Deans, or a point person for faculty development, should develop programming that will meet the mentoring needs of junior faculty and promote "mentoring up," where senior individuals gain insight into the kinds of new challenges facing their younger counterparts. A junior faculty orientation in the fall – including all new junior faculty members and their department chairs and addressing issues specific to being junior at Yale – could be followed by mentoring workshops and other meetings throughout the year. These sessions would give juniors a chance to meet early and support one another throughout their time at Yale. Further, a university officer should host a series of dinners each year with small groups of junior faculty. Such a network would enable the administration to gain first hand knowledge of the experiences of a diverse group of junior faculty and, in turn, enable the formation of a social network among junior faculty. Mentoring up could also be accomplished through a series of concurrent panel discussions, with senior faculty on one panel discussing how they balance department obligations, committee work and publishing their work, and with junior faculty on a second panel responding with the kinds of similar challenges they have. This would affect greater understanding on junior and senior levels about demands facing different faculty members and how they can best be handled.

The administration should also explore the creation of programming that focuses on mentoring special groups of junior faculty – for example, faculty of color, or women faculty in the sciences – to build networks among those groups and to better support their full involvement in the academic life of the university. Scholars who work in emerging fields and are doing interdisciplinary work may feel particularly isolated. In order to encourage interdisciplinarity and the development of new fields of study, special efforts should be made to encourage and mentor such scholars. Further, the administration should support the kind of interdisciplinary teaching that might normally be dismissed because of its cost or peripheral relation to a department's core scholarship.

Grave concerns exist about disparities among the departments, and the decentralized way in which departments can choose to designate some junior faculty as "stars" to bring forth early and to neglect others. This problem requires attention and revision of certain departments' practices. The administration should, for example, examine departments that have never tenured a junior faculty woman of any color or a junior faculty member of color to better understand how the processes of faculty development and mentoring work in those situations and to make useful interventions.

Success can be learned, in part, by looking for changes over the years. To do so, detailed reviews of the numbers of individuals recruited, promoted and retained is needed, with attention paid to their intellectual and demographic diversities.

Inquiries should be made every two to three years to assess the quality of mentoring in each department. Departments should be asked to report to the FAS deans and faculty

development point person regarding the mentoring provided to their junior faculty. Further, junior faculty should be asked to assess the mentoring they receive in anonymous surveys every two to three years. Remedies such as special benefits for successful departments should be considered to establish threshold expectations and norms.

In order to spread the responsibility for mentoring more widely among the faculty, information on the activities of individual faculty – such as items included in the Report to the Provost – should be disseminated to the entire faculty of each department annually. This would be the information on teaching responsibilities, committee assignments (departmental, Yale, and outside), space, size and composition of group, thesis and qualifying committee membership, and editorial or review work. Comparative data on the entire department faculty will reveal whether tasks and resources are being equitably distributed. If certain junior faculty are shouldering more than their fair share of the burden, they could be advised to refuse additional responsibilities, request more space, etc. In this way, the entire faculty can contribute to ensuring that all faculty are fairly treated, thereby enhancing the sense of community within the department.

Finally, the Administration needs a mechanism to learn systematically from those who leave Yale. Many other institutions have structured efforts to gain information from individuals who depart from their faculties, as the WFF learned when it did research on this issue. The WFF has conducted its own pilot survey asking question of some junior faculty leaving Yale to teach elsewhere. That prototype, appropriately modified, should be used institution-wide to help the administration collect information through exit interviews with junior faculty. The institution should see those who have taught here as a kind of Yale alum and reach out to them to continue forms of productive and generative relationships, rather than ending with the decision on promotion or a choice to teach elsewhere.

Final Note

In closing, we would like to note that this document does not directly address the needs of all sectors of the Yale faculty. We have concentrated on the needs of ladder-track junior faculty here, but recognize that attention must also be paid to the situation and challenges of other untenured faculty, either those who are not on the tenure track, or those who are considered “senior faculty” while in the position of associate professor without tenure.