Department of Philosophy: Faculty Mentoring Policy

1. ## Preamble

   In compliance with university and CAL policies, this document articulates the written policy on mentoring for the Department of Philosophy. Our department is committed to the value of formal mentoring for career success. Mentoring, formal or informal, is a responsibility that more experienced faculty members have to their less experienced colleagues. Strong and effective mentoring can contribute to our mission of inclusion and help us maintain a culture of collegiality and camaraderie. Although this policy can be extended to any member of the instructional and research staff in the department, the primary goal is to support the professional development of non-tenured, tenure-system professors as they progress toward tenure and promotion decisions.

2. ## Guiding Principles

   The following are a set of general principles aimed at establishing a sustainable culture of mentoring in the department, divided into those that apply to mentors and those that apply to mentees.

   - **Training and Support.** Mentors should receive appropriate orientation, training, guidelines, and resources to use in providing advice and support to their mentees. This includes training in the range of resources and processes that should be coordinated in a successful mentoring program, e.g., teaching resources, grant opportunities.

   - **Recognition.** Effective mentoring requires time, energy, and skill. All faculty members who contribute to the mentoring program should be recognized for their efforts, and mentoring excellence will be noted in the annual review of faculty.

   - **Needs Assessment and Resources.** An effective mentoring program should establish appropriate mechanisms for assessing individual needs and for devising an appropriate mentor plan to address those needs. This process should consider as diverse a range of resources as necessary, e.g., faculty in other units and even at other institutions, MSU's Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives.

   - **Inclusion**. The potentially different challenges faced by diverse faculty including women, persons of color, LGBTQ, and other marginalized groups should be addressed when devising the mentoring plan.

   - **Mentoring Approach.** An effective mentoring program must enable the development of a mentoring approach that addresses the needs of the mentee. If the mentee is jointly appointed, there should be one mentoring plan for the faculty member, coordinated among the units, with leadership from the faculty member's lead unit.

   - **Guidance.** The mentoring program is designed to provide mentees with career and professional guidance. Mentors shall offer their considered judgment on professional matters and the mentee must assess and rely on this advice as she or he thinks best. The mentoring program is not an evaluation program, and should be kept distinct from departmental evaluation processes. Effort should be made to minimize the extent that mentors participate in the formal evaluation of mentees for annual merit review or tenure and promotion.

- **Flexibility.** Participation in the faculty mentoring program is voluntary. No stigma will be attached to opting out of the plan or making ongoing adjustments, such as switching mentors.

- **Confidentiality.** Confidentiality must be protected, and all faculty members must be provided an environment in which they can address concerns without fear of retribution. This implies that when a mentor serves on PTRC, they must limit their remarks to the materials in the mentee's review or promotion/tenure file and the relevant philosophical context of the mentee's work – they must not disclose confidential information about the mentee.

- **Availability.** The mentoring needs of faculty members can vary greatly, from individual to individual and at different career stages. Although focused primarily on non-tenured tenure-stream professors, the mentoring program should be available to all instructional and research staff in the department.

- **Transparency.** The mentoring policy should be clearly communicated to all faculty members, and efforts must be made to ensure that there is clarity of both expectations and roles for all parties involved in formal mentoring relationships.

- **Culture of Mentoring.** Our department is committed to cultivating and maintaining a culture of mentoring that includes but is not limited to formal mentoring. Informal mentoring is an important mutual responsibility that we share as a community, and faculty members are expected to assist their colleagues in providing informal mentoring when this is requested.

3. **Priority Mentoring Areas**

Although the specific needs of mentees will differ, mentors should provide them with information, advice, and support as they progress in their career. The following priority mentoring areas collect examples of mentoring topics that may be useful for mentees:

- **Getting to Know the Institution.** Mentors may assist mentees in learning about the academic culture of departments, schools/colleges, and the institution; identifying resources to support research and teaching; and creating a trusted network of junior and senior colleagues. If needed, a mentor may serve as a liaison to administrators

- **Excelling at Teaching and Research.** Mentor support for teaching can include supporting the development of new courses, pedagogical methods, technologies, and interdisciplinary curricula; offering suggestions on course preparation, classroom delivery, examinations, TAs, and grading; and supplying feedback on instruction based on classroom visits. Mentor support for research can include supporting the development of a research/writing plan that includes strategies for disseminating research, identifying sources of internal and external funding, supplying feedback on manuscripts and grant proposals, and advising on the development of new research collaborations.

- **Understanding Tenure and Evaluation.** Mentors may clarify department and college expectations for promotion and tenure, support the development of a tenure dossier, and discuss strategies for success in evaluation processes.

- **Creating Work-Life Balance.** Mentor assistance in this area can include advising on how to set priorities and developing a professional development plan; assisting with identification of short-term and long-term goals; advising on optimal time allocation across research,

teaching, and service responsibilities; identifying strategies for managing available time, avoiding pitfalls, overcoming difficulties, and saying "no" when appropriate; and attending to quality of life issues such as dual careers, childcare, and affordable housing.

- **Developing Professional Networks.** Mentees should strive to establish substantive, career-enhancing relationships with faculty who share similar interests in research and/or teaching. In addition to supporting development of these relationships, mentors may assist in identifying appropriate opportunities for engagement and leadership within the department, college, and university.

4. <u>The Mentoring Process</u>

As indicated above, this document focuses on the mentoring program available to non-tenured tenure-stream faculty members even though formal mentoring is available to any member of the instructional staff that makes a request to the chair. Because a formal mentoring program cannot meet the full range of mentoring needs, faculty members are encouraged to avail themselves of informal, peer, and external mentors as needed. This policy assumes that more experienced faculty will be ready to offer their insights when requested by their colleagues.

- **Selection.** If a non-tenured tenure-stream faculty member agrees to work within the formal mentoring program, they will meet with the Department Chair early in the first semester of their employment to aid in identifying two faculty mentors, at least one of whom should be tenured. By providing two mentors, this process relies on the value of different perspectives in mentoring. If the mentee is jointly appointed, the Chair should consult with the chair of the mentee's other unit and seek to appoint a mentor from that unit.

- **Recognition.** The Chair shall take into account the new faculty's preferences and appoint two mentors, making a formal note of this service contribution by these two faculty members.

- **Duration of Responsibilities.** If agreeable to the faculty involved, these appointments may last until the end of the pre-tenure period, so long as the mentors are available. Mentors or mentees may at any time approach the Chair and request a change in the assigned mentor.

- **Duties.** The mentee and mentors will work to determine the level and form of interaction, with the mentee playing an active role. An initial needs assessment will result in identification of the number and type of interactions throughout the year, although it is expected that the mentee meet at least once a semester with their mentors, either individually or as a group. Topics to be considered in the needs assessment should include those listed in the priority mentoring areas mentioned above.

- **Recording of Relationship.** Each year in the spring, both mentors and mentee shall report to the Chair whether the mentoring process proceeded in a way they judged to be mutually satisfactory. (This report may be included in the annual faculty review discussions with the Chair.) The details of the mentoring interactions need not be reported. If the mentee reports that the process has been unsatisfactory, the Chair shall explore the reasons for this and propose appropriate remedies.