

To: Provost's Office and Members of the Academic Senate

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From: Members of the Joint Office's Committee on Faculty Mentoring: Norah Ashe-McNalley (co-chair), Omar El Sawy (co-chair), Victor Adamchik, Ann Closs-Farley, Yajaira Curiel, Debra Don, Andrew Hung, Jane James, Courtney Malloy, Carlos Sanchez, Mischelle Van Brackle, Linda Yaron Weston, Ginger Clark (ex-officio)

Re: Faculty Mentoring Across the University

The members of the 2022-2023 Joint Mentoring Committee were tasked this year with identifying "how to improve the current state of faculty-to-faculty mentoring" in accordance with the 2021-2022 FEEC Report, which identified mentoring as critical component in faculty success and career advancement, and to "develop recommendations for strengthening formal and informal mentoring structures in relation to Merit Review, promotion and tenure processes." However, our study of the current state of faculty mentoring across the university indicated such a wide variance in access to mentoring support, that the lack of consistency needs to be addressed before meaningful recommendations can be implemented. Thus, we are writing to bring the issue to the attention of the Academic Senate. We have discerned the following areas of concern:

- 1. The lack of consistency both within and across colleges.** It is important to draw a distinction here between differences in mentoring practices where such differences derive from specific disciplinary practices and research methods, and differential access to meaningful mentoring support for interested faculty. To be sure, there are schools at our university that provide strong models of faculty mentoring for tenure-track and RTPC faculty. They have well defined guidance on faculty mentoring, both formal and informal; faculty review is built into the process; and guidelines for promotion and tenure are readily available. Where schools rely primarily on informal mentoring, the effectiveness of mentoring was strongly correlated with departmental culture. The issue with consistency arises in schools without formal mentoring, and where there is neither a strong culture of mentoring, nor a system of incentives for faculty to provide mentoring support to their colleagues.
- 2. Lack of effective mentoring has discernable impacts on career advancement as well as faculty performance.** This is an area of great concern, particularly because the size of our university and the siloing of practices within individual departments make it difficult to identify where lack of mentoring is most pressing.
- 3. Inadequate mentoring impacts faculty morale and retention; furthermore, those impacts appear to be intersectional, making it an issue for equity, access, and inclusion.** These impacts seem to be most strongly by faculty of color and those in RTPC positions. Hence, lack of

effective mentoring impedes the university's commitment to building a more diverse and inclusive academic community.

We urge the members of the Academic Senate to take definitive action to address the issue in a meaningful fashion. **Ultimately, the goal is for all colleges to develop guidelines for best practices, to ensure that faculty are provided with meaningful opportunities to advance their careers, and that faculty mentoring is recognized and incentivized throughout the university.**

We recommend that next year's committee gather information on the specific mentoring needs of tenure-track and RTPC faculty at each rank through faculty focus groups or other methods. That information can then be collated and curated by the committee into a set of resources that colleges can use and adapt for their particular disciplinary practices. Helpful tools like example schedules, activities, and processes would be provided. The model could be refined and expanded by the committee in subsequent years with additions like processes for part-time and adjunct faculty, and scripts that faculty might draw from to have challenging discussions or provide supportive or critical feedback.