

USC's 10 Best Practices for Establishing a Successful Mentoring Culture (Draft):

Below are a few best-practices currently in use by some of the Schools at USC and other peer universities:

1. Establishing written mentoring policies to ensure that appropriate and effective mentoring practices are part of the academic culture of your unit. (Each school is unique. Particular levels of excellence and performance must be identified and translated as consistently as possible from the Dean's office down to the junior probationary candidate.)
2. Assigning an initial mentor to all tenure track and full time non-tenure track faculty at the time of hiring (perhaps writing who a certain faculty's own initial mentor will be in their first contract letter, as other peer universities do).
3. Establishing distinct mentoring guidelines for each type of faculty population (For instance, making a clearer distinction between tenure track procedures versus full time non-tenure track procedures, recognizing that percentages of teaching, research and service vary between these two populations).
4. Holding an event or series of events such as brownbag lunches, seminars, or small conferences dedicated to faculty development for junior and full time non-tenure track faculty. (It is best to conceive of mentoring as a NETWORKING effort rather than a single individual's service requirement. Providing a mix of *formal* as well as *informal* events create the most diverse and productive mentoring culture to meet the range of faculty types)
5. Adding mentoring as a reportable activity on every school's Annual Review Form. (As well as then publicly rewarding the intellectual contribution and time commitment given by good mentors—perhaps creating inventive ways to recognize exceptional mentors in your department such as providing parking privileges, an additional grad research assistant, etc...Administrators must work to find a way to overcome the typical obstacles towards mentoring: it is done on overtime and lacks any rewards.)
6. Periodically reviewing each junior faculty's current mentoring needs. (Mentoring needs change over the time period of any tenure clock. Junior faculty are often reluctant to ask for guidance, or acknowledge that their previously assigned mentor is not providing enough context.)
7. Focusing of all mentoring efforts on becoming the best academic one can be, and not just on gaining tenure. (Often faculty will generally need a combination of mentors both within and outside any one department. The administration should be pro-active on establishing these paths of communication.)
8. Adopting of all new UCAPT requirements for mentoring such as:
 - a. submitting a summary of the mentoring received by the probationary candidate at 3rd year review
 - b. submitting a summary of the candidate's potential to become a mentor at the time of promotion
 - c. addressing faculty's activity as a mentor during the review for promotion from associate to full
9. Recognizing that all mentoring efforts should also include 'the nuts and bolts' of academic work and promotional. (Some junior faculty need more in-depth or practical advice about research, others on teaching effectiveness, and other about establishing productive professional peer relationships. The 'one size fits all' approach is rarely successful or worthwhile.)
10. Extending mentoring support for other types of faculty beyond just tenure track faculty. (Creating a web approach to mentoring--rather than top down or bottom up approach-- could more easily be extended to assist all faculty members such as post-docs, long term associate professors, and soon-to-be-emeriti.)

Importantly, each of these markers fosters a general attitude of excellence. Several schools have established a specific committee or director of faculty development. Creating a sustainable mentoring culture should not be the burden of a few faculty willing 'to go beyond the call of duty.' For advanced societies, it is a mark of progress to establish a culture of philanthropy—and for a great school at USC, it is to establish a sustainable and prosperous culture of mentoring.