Faculty Mentoring Plan for the Department of Zoology

Goal and Rationale:
The Department of Zoology is committed to the effective mentoring of faculty members throughout their careers. Mentoring is especially important for early-career faculty working toward tenure, but it is also important for post-tenure professional development of tenure-system faculty, and for the professional advancement of non-tenure-system faculty. Mentoring not only helps faculty members achieve their professional goals relative to research and teaching, but it also can help them find ways of balancing professional and personal goals.

Who receives mentoring
This policy is for tenure-system Assistant and Associate Professors. Mentoring for Assistant Professors is intended to help them develop the track record they need for a successful application for promotion and tenure. Mentoring for Associate Professors is intended to support their promotion to Full Professor. Elements of this plan are readily adapted to tenured Full Professors who want or need to rejuvenate their careers or to non-tenure-system faculty. In keeping with MSU policy, participation in this mentoring plan is purely optional; individual faculty members can opt out by communicating this to the Chairperson in writing.

Specifics of the Zoology Mentoring Plan:
In Zoology, the formal mechanism for mentoring will be provided by a Mentoring Committee established for each faculty member covered by the plan. The input provided by the mentoring committee will complement informal mentoring that faculty members are expected to seek from a variety of sources, including their Ph.D. and Post-doctoral advisors, as well senior colleagues at MSU and other universities. Having a formal mechanism ensures that each faculty member can benefit from a basic framework of mentoring that reflects the particular challenges that he or she faces at MSU.

Expectations of Senior Faculty: Given the importance of mentoring for the success of faculty members, we consider mentoring to be a responsibility of all senior faculty members in the department. Of course, service on the mentoring committee of a junior faculty member will be acknowledged as an important, high-impact act of service/outreach.

Membership of Mentoring Committee: The mentoring committee will be established by the Chairperson in consultation with the mentee and, if appropriate, the Chairperson(s) of any other department(s) in which the mentee is jointly appointed. Regardless of whether the mentee is jointly appointed, the mentoring committee will consist of three more senior faculty members, one of which may be an appropriate faculty member from a unit other than Zoology. The purpose of including an outside member is to ensure that the mentee benefits from perspectives from a broader MSU community. Overall, the members of the committee will be composed of individuals whose experience and interests are aligned with the particular expectations of the mentee relative to research, teaching, outreach/service.
Meetings of the Mentoring Committee: The mentoring committee is expected to meet with the faculty member at least once each year. At this meeting the mentee will discuss his or her progress relative to general categories on which faculty members are routinely evaluated (research, teaching, and outreach/service). Specifically, the mentoring committee will review the mentee’s CV and documents pertaining to activities during the year, such as the manuscripts, grant proposals (and reviews of these), and elements of the teaching portfolio. The committee will also review the mentee’s goals and concerns regarding the coming year. Importantly, the mentee will be encouraged to air any concerns he or she may have regarding impediments to his or her progress toward promotion.

Documentation of Mentoring Committee Meeting: Following each meeting, the Mentoring Committee will submit a written overview of the progress of the meeting to the Department Chair by April 1. This overview will not consist of an evaluation of the mentee’s progress, but the report should include any concerns that the mentee and Committee agree should be conveyed to the Department Chair and or the Zoology Advisory Committee. Among the specific issues that could be included are questions raised by the mentors about the decisions made by the mentee, or concerns expressed by the mentee about impediments to his or her progress. An overarching concern is that all discussions between the faculty member and the mentoring committee will be held in strict confidence unless the mentee specifically indicates that it can be shared. Therefore, whatever is in the report, and hence is shared with the Department Chair, is included only on the approval of the mentee.

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