



Questions you might ask a mentor, senior colleague, or department chair

Getting started

How is the department organized? How are decisions made? Are there interpersonal or departmental dynamics that would be helpful to know about?

What resources are available in my department (e.g., travel funds, typing and duplicating, phone, computer equipment, supplies)? Is there support staff? What should be expected from support staff?

How does the department fit into the College in terms of culture and personnel standards? Do I need to take two sets of standards into account when planning my professional development?

Research issues

Do I need to get grants? Is help available for writing proposals? How much time should I spend in fundraising?

What kind of publication record is considered excellent in my department and college? How many refereed articles do I need? Do I need a book?

How are journal articles or chapters in edited collections viewed? May material published in one place (conference, workshop) be submitted to another journal? How much work is necessary to make it a "new publication"?

How is collaborative work viewed within the department/ school? Do co-authored articles count in my discipline? Is being first co-author considered important? Should I put my graduate students' names on my papers? How is alphabetical listing of authors viewed?

Do conference and workshop papers/ presentations count as research in my discipline?

Should I give talks within my department? How are colloquia organized in my department? How do I publicize my work within the department?

What conferences should I go to? Is it better to go to national conferences or smaller ones? How much travel is allowed/expected/demanded? What support is available for travel expenses? From where? How else can I gain the type of exposure I need for good tenure letters?

Would it be advisable to develop my dissertation or branch out into a new area of research?

Teaching and advising concerns

What is the normal teaching profile for junior faculty in my department/ college?

How many independent studies should I agree to?

How do I find out what the content of a course should be? Does the department share syllabi, assignments, etc?

If I teach undergraduate courses, are resources available for grading, section leadership, etc.? Does the department/college take the nature of the course into consideration when analyzing student evaluations of teaching?

Does the department use any other methods beyond student ratings to assess teaching effectiveness?

How much time should I spend in advising undergraduates? How many graduate student advisees should I have? How much time and effort should I invest in working with graduate students? How do I identify "good" graduate students? How aggressive should I be in recruiting them? Do I need to find resources for them? What should I expect from them? How do I promote my graduate students to rest of the community?

What is considered an appropriate response to a student who is struggling with course work or is clearly troubled in some way? What resources are available for students? What can/ should I suggest?

What kinds of files should I keep on my students?

What am I expected to teach? Should I ask to teach service courses? Should I teach the same course, stay within a single area, or teach around? Should I develop a new course? An undergraduate course? A specialized course in my research area?

How do I establish an excellent teaching record? What resources are available at the department/ college/ university level to help me do so?

Are there department guidelines for grading? What is the usual frequency of midterms, exams, or graded assignments?

What documentation should I retain for my personnel file?

Service and outreach issues

What kind of service to the department, college, and university is expected of me?

What kind of outreach is expected of me?

When should I begin service and outreach? How much should I take on?

Are there committees I should turn down if I am asked to serve?

How much service work outside the university is acceptable/ expected?

How do I develop and document an excellent record of service and outreach?

Personal and other professional concerns

Where do I get help with

- Childcare?
- Dispute resolution?
- Parking, phone, and computer problems?
- Personal problems?

What sort of support is available to me through the campus and surrounding communities?

Who is the ombudsperson and what matters does she/he deal with?

How should I record any controversial matters?

How important is the AFR in merit, reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions? What sort of documentation of my achievements will help me succeed in these decisions?

Do I need to “read between the lines” in the DPC’s and Department Head’s recommendations on my AFRs?

Other questions

How much time do I need to spend in my office being visible in the department? Is it considered acceptable/ appropriate to work from home?

Are there department or university events that I should be sure to attend?

What are the resources for meeting and socializing with other new faculty?

What is the approximate balance between research, teaching, and service I should aim for?

Do you have lives? That is, what advice can you give on balancing a professional life (e.g., teaching, research, service) with a personal life (e.g., time for significant others, children, leisure, civic responsibilities)?