

Professional Development and Mentoring at Williams

Faculty arrive at Williams with different kinds of expertise and varied aspirations and needs for their professional development which may well shift over the course of their trajectory at the college. At Williams, we are committed to furthering the professional development of faculty members as teachers, scholars/artists, and contributors to college governance. We seek to provide support for continuing growth in these areas. Every faculty member has access to a range of college resources for professional development. Information about these resources can be found on the [NetWorks for Faculty Development](#) website.

Mentoring is a key aspect of professional development at all stages of a faculty career and can be defined as the formal or informal practices used to advise, train, and/or support each other; practices that aim to develop and improve skills; practices that provide additional tools; and/or practices that expand knowledge. But inherent to effective mentoring are the development of trust and the cultivation of a relationship that is mutually beneficial to all parties involved.

What follows are some prompts we hope will be useful for faculty members at all phases in their careers as a framework for conversations with one's mentors (and, in early career, also one's chair). These questions are intended as tools to map out strategies for pursuing goals, identifying needs, and assessing progress. While a mentor may not have all the answers, they can facilitate forming contacts with other faculty and individuals toward college resources.

We recommend that faculty meet regularly with mentors to discuss their interests and needs, with the topics below as a starting point for reflection prior to the meeting and/or as possible prompts in conversation itself:

Identifying Goals

What are your goals for the coming year? Here are a number of categories to get you thinking:

1) Scholarship and Creative Work:

Goals might include: to pursue specific research and creative projects, to improve writing and creative habits, to gain experience/skills in placing your materials in appropriate venues (including publications, conferences, exhibits, public performances, recordings and screenings), to revise some portion of your dissertation, to generate an article from a dissertation, to submit an article to a peer-reviewed journal, to present at one or more conferences, to complete a book

project, to establish a lab and research program with students, to apply for major grants, fellowships, commissions, and artistic residencies;

2) Teaching:

Goals might include: to develop or revise syllabi, to work on kinds of pedagogy, to observe a range of teaching, to employ different kinds of pedagogy such as classroom design, lecturing or leading small discussions, to update knowledge and skills in instructional technology, to learn more about inclusive pedagogy;

3) Other Professional Skills:

Goals might include: to identify aspects of the college to which one would like to contribute, to discover sources for future grant/fellowship funding, to write a book prospectus, to learn how to write an op-ed, to acclimate to life as a Williams professor, to become an active member of one's department/program, to build professional networks in one's subfield, to learn how to be an effective department, program, or committee chair, etc.

Identifying your needs and acting on your goals

Take a few minutes to assess your current skills and strengths, as well as areas in which you would like to improve. **In which areas would you especially appreciate help strategizing to find the best approaches and resources or support from a mentor?**

- 1) Scholarship (might include work habits, experience/skills in placing your materials in appropriate venues such as publications, conferences, performances, exhibits, recordings and screenings);
- 2) Teaching (might include lecturing, leading small discussions, setting up your lab, constructing syllabi, evaluating student work, critiquing, mentoring, finding inclusive teaching strategies, determining how many summer and thesis students to advise);
- 3) Other professional skills (might include budgeting, managing start-up or grant funding and accounting, managing projects, improving confidence level in public speaking, chairing, acquiring leadership skills for professional organizations, editing);
- 4) Being human (might include negotiating competing demands from colleagues and students; carving time out for scholarship, creative work, and life; development strategies for stress reduction and wellness; managing isolation; creating and maintaining support networks locally and afar).

Think about how you might go about acting on your goals and with whom you might collaborate or consult to pursue them. You should always feel free to contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, your department, program or evaluation committee chair, or peers. This useful [article](#) discusses how to create a mentoring network.

Periodic Self-Assessment

How might you evaluate your progress in achieving and redefining your goals at the end of each academic year? You might also discuss how to track progress in achieving or redefining your goals so as to connect to longer-term goals. You could minimally ask yourself the following questions, adapted from Kerry Ann Rockquemore's "Monday Motivator" (NCFDD, 2/25/19)

1. Am I on track?
Look at your goals and honestly assess your productivity without excessive self-criticism, judgment, or shame
2. What's holding me back?
What skills or techniques are you missing?
External constraints (factors beyond your control)
Psychological blocks (perfectionism, fear of downtime, unclear goals)
3. How can I make a positive change?
Pick the greatest problem area and create a solution to try out