

# **NTTF Faculty Success: Onboarding and Mentorship Report**

**A Report**

**Submitted to Faculty Council at Colorado State University**

**by**

**The Committee of Non-Tenure Track Faculty (CoNTTF)**

**April 16, 2024**

## **Background**

Faculty success is paramount for the retention of faculty at Colorado State University and includes topics such as onboarding, mentorship and promotion. Recently, this area of focus was conveyed to Provost Underwood as an important initiative for CoNTTF during Spring 2024. Numerous emails and requests have come to CoNTTF asking for details surrounding onboarding and mentorship which are inherently tied together. The onboarding subcommittee consisted of Anna Ferri (Chair), Karen Thorsett-Hill, Cassandra Puletapuai, Jennifer Reinke, and Chris Becker. The mentorship subcommittee consisted of Sean Bryan (Chair), Thomas Conway, Ann Hess, Mary Van Buren, and Olivia Arnold.

*Objective: Improve best practices and consistency regarding onboarding of new NTT faculty and provide recommendations of best approaches to mentorship of NTT faculty in an effort to set faculty up for success and promotion.*

## **Supporting Information**

This report was informed by discussions with the Executive Director of TILT (and support staff), the Vice President for Faculty Affairs, and the Chair of Faculty Council. In March 2024, an email was sent to department heads/chairs requesting information about onboarding and mentoring practices in their units. The full list of questions is included in the appendix. We received responses from 18 departments, representing the College of Liberal Arts (5), College of Health and Human Sciences (4), College of Business (3), Warner College of Natural Resources (2), Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering (1), College of Agricultural Sciences (1), College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (1) and the Libraries (1). Below, we summarize the responses to this survey and make recommendations for program improvement and institutional alignment. We recognize the support of onboarding and mentoring as multi-level processes involving critical roles from the University, colleges, and departments, and we encourage all these audiences to consider and engage with our recommendations.

*Note: NTTF and CCAF may be used interchangeably throughout this document.*

## **Section I: Onboarding**

### **Introduction**

This section of the report seeks to summarize the onboarding practices across the campus and make recommendations towards enhancing campus-wide practices.

### **Current Practices and Results**

#### **A. Survey Responses**

The majority of responding departments (12) reported having a formal onboarding process, though several reported that the process was conducted in coordination with or primarily at the college rather than departmental level. A significant number of departments (5) reported no formal onboarding practices. Most (10) departments reported no current difference in onboarding practices between TTF and CCAF. Several responses (4) were unclear or the department reported hiring exclusively TTF or CCAF in the past several years. The most common difference reported (3) was additional onboarding support on research for TTF.

The onboarding activity reported most frequently (10) was one or more meetings conducted in a structured manner by a department head, other departmental or college administrator, or the college Human Resources. Reported topics for these meetings included administrative procedures, IT orientation, support for teaching responsibilities, and orientation to people and spaces relevant to the performance of the new hire's role. Several departments reported or provided onboarding packets or checklists. In general, this content matched reports of the common support needs for new faculty. However, there were multiple reports that new faculty needed support in recognizing and balancing the variety of responsibilities for general time management, towards tenure and promotion, and in sustaining work-life balance. Mentoring was mentioned in relation to onboarding multiple times (7), including the selection process for mentor(s) as well as mentors serving as part of the onboarding process.

Multiple departments reported a culture of "care" and "generosity" with many people engaging in onboarding a new faculty member and building a "sense of belonging." Only two departments reported a formal practice for conducting a "cultural overview" or for easing the process of developing interpersonal and professional connections in their department. Overall, answers reflected active engagement with onboarding as a logistical practice and limited active engagement with onboarding as a social process for bringing a new hire into the departmental or college-wide culture and community. No department explicitly reported inclusive practices or culturally relevant mechanisms for welcoming and engaging faculty from a broad variety of backgrounds.

#### **B. Models and Programs**

CSU Libraries assigns each new hire an onboarding guide or buddy, a practice that is also suggested in the onboarding checklist for the College of Business. In the Libraries the onboarding buddy is responsible for assisting with touring the campus and library spaces, arranging introduction with various units, and providing an informal avenue for the new hire to ask questions, gather information, and learn about workplace culture outside of reporting lines or tenure and promotion lines. This practice was explicitly developed to enhance a new hire's opportunities to

understand and successfully engage with unwritten rules and work culture through a low-stakes professional relationship. New hires in the Libraries have reported high utility and satisfaction with this process.

The College of Business has developed an extensive new hire teaching orientation manual and conducts a college-wide onboarding meeting for new hires. The manual collates policies, practices, and logistical information on instruction from the university and college levels and has been found relevant to long-term faculty and new hires. The maintenance of the manual at the college level has redistributed some of the labor in development, updating, and provision of onboarding away from the department, allowing the departments heads to focus on the onboarding needs unique to their department.

This committee is aware of existing support for onboarding provided through TILT, the [HR Onboarding Toolkit](#) and the Office of the [Provost's New Faculty Orientation Series](#). The Faculty Success initiative is also in the process of developing a [Faculty Success Toolkit](#) that will include a section for onboarding.

### **Recommendations**

- Every new faculty hire should receive an orderly and coherent onboarding process appropriate to their role. To facilitate this, we encourage every department to have a written onboarding plan or policy. This could also be achieved by adopting a college level onboarding plan or policy, so long as departmental responsibilities are made explicit.
- Onboarding should be recognized as both a logistically practical enterprise and a critical pathway for building community. Onboarding practices related to workplace culture should be structurally integrated into the process through the plan or policy along with inclusive practices to support unique needs of faculty from diverse backgrounds. An 'onboarding buddy' or other structural role outside of the formal supervisory or mentorship roles should be considered as an opportunity, especially in the initial phases of onboarding, to create social connections and orientation to the departmental and CSU community. If instituted, this role should be acknowledged as a service role with clear expectations.
- Onboarding is a multi-level process including departments, colleges, and the broader university. The Office of the Provost and colleges can assist departments by creating, at a minimum, an easy-to-locate, centralized repository of materials to support the most common needs of new hires that is organized and contextualized to reduce overwhelm. Similarly, we recommend the creation of a centralized collection of materials at the university or college level for the support of department heads engaging with both the logistical and cultural onboarding practices.
- Onboarding is not a singular or even short-term event. It occurs as a journey that may take a year or more and proceed at different paces or along different pathways for each new hire. More information is needed to understand how this is occurring and supported for faculty at CSU. For departments, there should be a clear bridge between onboarding into the

mentoring relationship; however, this alone cannot be guaranteed to meet the ongoing onboarding needs.

## **Section II: Mentorship**

### **Introduction**

This report seeks to summarize faculty mentoring practices across campus and make recommendations for improvement. We start by recognizing that while *student* mentoring is specifically addressed in the faculty manual, *faculty* mentoring is not mentioned. Despite this, faculty mentoring is vital to the success of the institution. Faculty mentoring improves faculty job satisfaction and aids retention. Mentoring supports faculty to be successful in their roles of teaching, research, and service, and student success is achieved through faculty success. And while faculty mentoring is important for everyone, it is particularly critical for faculty from underrepresented and marginalized identity groups.

### **Summary of Survey Results and Other Current Practices**

The majority of responding departments have some type of formal (13) or informal (4) mentoring program for new faculty. Of the departments that have mentoring programs, the majority of these, but not all, include both Tenure-track Faculty (TTF) and Contract, Continuing, and Adjunct Faculty (CCAF). Mentoring programs vary both in their structure and documentation. Many departments assign one mentor to new faculty members. Some assign a mentor for different roles (teaching vs. research). Some encourage new faculty to identify mentors themselves. Most departments encourage or recommend regular meetings (once a semester or monthly) between mentors and mentees. Some departments provide funding to pay for lunch for mentors and mentees. The most common difference in mentoring programs between TTF and CCAF is the inclusion of research mentoring for TTF.

To the best of our knowledge, the only specific, university-wide mentoring effort is the [EnCircle Mentoring Network](#) designed to support women and non-binary faculty members. The Faculty Success initiative is also in the process of developing a [Faculty Success Toolkit](#) that will include a section for mentoring. The university is also an institutional member of the [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#). Identity and affinity groups on campus, such as the [LGBTQIA Employee Network](#), the [Multicultural Staff and Faculty Council](#), the [Womxn of Color Network](#), and the [Women in Science Network](#), also fill mentoring and community-building roles.

We highlight the [mentoring program developed by the Department of English](#) for its CCAF as a model of promising practices. In 2012, the English Department began a mentoring program for first-year faculty. The program was based on the best-practices from TT mentoring research. The program was run by an Assistant Chair who paired new CCA Faculty with experienced CCAF for an expected two-year mentoring relationship. In 2020, the English Department expanded their mentoring program to include a “Paths to Promotion” mentoring program for promotion minded CCAF, who were assigned to “pods” with two master/senior faculty and two instructors seeking eventual promotion. The department created a CCAF Assistant Chair position to run both programs. Concurrently, the CLA Dean’s Office and the CLA CCAF Advisory Committee began to explore possibilities to provide mentoring program options throughout CLA. With help from the

English Department and the CLA CCAF AC, the Assistant Dean for Student Success, launched an interdisciplinary mentoring program in CLA to provide mentoring to new and promotion minded CLA CCAF. Resources for the program are housed on the CLA CCAF [website](#).

### **Recommendations**

- Every new (junior) faculty member deserves a mentor. Departments should have an explicit plan to match all (TTF and CCAF) new junior faculty members with at least one senior mentor. The format and scope of this mentoring is expected to vary by department.
- We encourage departments to adopt a multi-mentor model. Different mentors have different expertise and experience and can serve different roles for mentees.
- Departments are encouraged to facilitate mentoring beyond new faculty, in particular, mentoring in preparation for promotion (and tenure) and mentoring for mid-career faculty. Faculty mentoring needs change as a faculty career progresses. We encourage an adaptable approach to mentoring to meet these needs as they evolve.
- Colleges are encouraged to facilitate group mentoring programs that extend across departments. Such group mentoring programs may be particularly helpful for faculty from smaller departments to engage with a larger and (potentially more diverse) group of faculty. Mentees can often speak more freely to faculty outside their home department. Interdisciplinary groups can help support the mentoring of CCAF in departments with few CCAF.
- To facilitate department and college-level programs, the Provost's Office should publish specific faculty mentoring expectations and recommendations, and support units in their efforts.
- The Provost's Office should support and invest in faculty mentoring by offering university-wide training programs for faculty mentors. As one example, the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research offers mentor training.
- Recognizing that good mentoring takes time and effort and that mentoring service is often unequally distributed among faculty, departments and the university should recognize and support the service of mentors. Formal and informal mentoring activities should be identified on annual review documents.

### **Section III: Future Goals**

Due to time constraints, this report is limited in scope to an assessment of programs and policies. An important limitation of this report is the lack of perspective from faculty who have gone through existing onboarding and mentoring programs. Future work should assess the efficacy of existing programs from a faculty perspective.

## Appendices

### Appendix I. CSU Faculty Success Support links:

<https://facultysuccess.colostate.edu/>

CSU Encircle:

<https://facultysuccess.colostate.edu/encircle-mentoring-network/>

CSU TILT:

<https://tilt.colostate.edu/faculty/>

CLA mentoring resources:

<https://www.libarts.colostate.edu/faculty-staff/continuing-contract-and-adjunct-faculty/interdisciplinary-mentoring/>

### Appendix II. Onboarding and [Mentoring questions](#) posed to department heads/chairs:

1. Does your department/college have any onboarding procedures for new faculty, in addition to the new faculty orientation conducted by TILT?
2. If so, what do those procedures include? Links or documents you can share would be very helpful. Documents can also be sent in a response email.
3. Do onboarding procedures differ in your department/college between tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty? If so, how?
4. Does your department have a mentoring program for faculty?
5. If so, what does the program include? Links or documents you can share would be very helpful. Documents can also be sent in a response email.
6. Do mentoring procedures differ in your department between tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty? If so, how?
7. What do you think your department does well in regards to faculty onboarding and mentoring?
8. In your experience, which aspects of a faculty position do new faculty need the most support with?
9. If you were to improve the onboarding and/or mentoring programs in your department, what would you focus on?