Committee on Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

Faculty Success Report

Onboarding and Mentorship: Faculty Perspectives

Spring 2025

A Report Submitted to Faculty Council

By

The Committee of Non-Tenure Track Faculty (CoNTTF)

Colorado State University

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Executive Summary

Onboarding and mentoring are widely recognized as critical to faculty success at Colorado State University. Faculty across ranks and years of service view both as valuable components of their professional experience. However, access to effective onboarding and mentorship remains inconsistent across the university. Faculty shared mixed perceptions of the effectiveness of CSU's onboarding and mentoring processes.

Faculty believe both onboarding and mentoring can be improved and offer specific ideas for enhancing these elements. This report presents faculty perspectives on onboarding and mentorship at CSU, analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on their experiences, and provides actionable recommendations to strengthen these processes university-wide.

Background

In Spring 2024, the Committee on Non-Tenure-Track Faculty (CoNTTF) produced a report titled *NTTF Faculty Success: Onboarding and Mentorship Report*, which examined existing mentoring and onboarding practices across Colorado State University. This report was submitted to Faculty Council and Provost Underwood on April 16, 2024. The report revealed current programs and policies dedicated to these two interrelated areas – both of which are critical to faculty success – and offered recommendations for improvement. However, as that report stated, this initial study was limited in scope and only focused on a review of documents and programs made available by administration within each College. It did not include the perspectives of CSU faculty who had participated in or been aware of such programs. Faculty perspectives are essential for understanding the effectiveness and gaps in current onboarding and mentoring practices.

This report aims to fill that gap and focuses explicitly on faculty perspectives related to mentoring and onboarding at CSU. In Fall 2024, CoNTTF made this project its primary focus for the academic year. We sought to answer two key questions:

- *How do faculty across all ranks and tracks experience onboarding and mentoring at CSU?*
- *How might the institution improve these practices to better meet faculty needs?*

To address these questions, CoNTTF developed a survey that was distributed to ALL faculty in Fall 2024. In consultation with Executive Leadership and Faculty Council, we made the intentional decision to include contract, continuing, adjunct, tenure-track, and tenured faculty to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of faculty experiences. The impact of both onboarding and mentoring is far reaching and not specific to CCAF/NTTF. The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data on onboarding and mentoring. Throughout Spring 2025, subgroups of CoNTTF members analyzed the data and developed this final report, which presents key findings and recommendations grounded in faculty feedback.

Key Definitions

To ensure consistency in survey responses, the committee generated the following definitions of key terms. These definitions were shared with survey respondents as they completed the survey and are used throughout this report to inform our discussion and recommendations.

- *Onboarding*: a structured process for new employees that makes them feel welcomed and part of the CSU community, informs them of relevant policies, equips them with the tools to do their jobs, and provides reasonable expectations and training.
- *Mentoring*: a relationship in which other faculty members share expertise, experience, and practical advice to succeed to the best of their potential in their role as a faculty member.

About the Survey

The survey was released to all faculty via a campuswide email on November 1, 2024. The collection of survey responses was completed on November 15, 2024. The report was generated over the Spring 2025 semester.

Survey Responses

Overall, 257 CSU faculty members responded to the survey representing all tracks. This number of responses represents 13.4% of all faculty members on campus. Respondents included:

- 157 CCA/NTTF faculty
- 50 Tenure-track faculty
- 50 Tenured faculty

The survey garnered varying degrees of participation across faculty tracks and ranks. Overall respondents were 61.1% CCA/NTT, 19.5% tenure-track and 19.5% tenured faculty.

For the University, 48.5% are CCA/NTT, 12.6% are tenure-track and 38.9% are tenured faculty.

Fig. 1. Table of Survey Respondents by College and Track[1]

College	CCA/NTT	Tenure-track	Tenured	Total	Response Rate
College of Agricultural Sciences	17	8	8	33	20.4%
College of Business	10	0	0	10	6.6%
College of Engineering	7	1	4	12	7.2%
College of Health and Human Sciences	22	5	5	32	12.5%
College of Liberal Arts	40	14	13	67	12.7%
College of Natural Resources	9	6	6	21	17.8%
College of Natural Sciences	20	7	9	36	13.6%
College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences	20	5	4	29	10.7%
Libraries	4	0	0	4	
Other	8	4	1	13	
Total	157	50	50	257	

[1] The response rate shown in this table is calculated using the total number of faculty by college (provided by Institutional Research).

In addition to capturing input from faculty across appointment types, the survey also reflected perspectives from faculty with varying years of service to the institution.

Fig. 2. Table of Survey Respondent by Years of Service

How many years have you been in a faculty position at CSU?	Count	Percent
Less than 1 year	20	7.8%
1 to 5 years	95	37.0%
6 to 10 years	51	19.8%
Over 10 years	91	35.4%

Key Themes and Findings

The following section outlines the key themes and findings that emerged from the faculty survey. For clarity and ease of understanding, onboarding and mentoring are presented as separate subsections. However, the committee emphasizes that these areas are deeply interconnected. While addressed individually, onboarding and mentoring are not isolated challenges – they are closely linked and mutually reinforcing aspects of faculty success.

PART I. Onboarding

Survey responses reveal important insights into onboarding at CSU, defined in the survey as: *"a structured process for new employees that makes them feel welcomed and part of the CSU community, informs them of relevant policies, equips them with the tools to do their jobs, and provides reasonable expectations and training."*

Access to Onboarding

Fewer than 40% of faculty reported receiving onboarding when they started their position at CSU. A slightly higher percentage of non-tenure track faculty indicated they received onboarding compared to tenured or tenure-track faculty, though this difference may be related to response rates and/or length of employment. Notably, onboarding appears to have become more common in recent years. Among faculty who have held their position for five years or less, just over half reported receiving onboarding. In contrast, only 23% of faculty with six or more years of service indicated the same.

Fig. 3. Percent of Faculty Reporting they Received Onboarding by Track

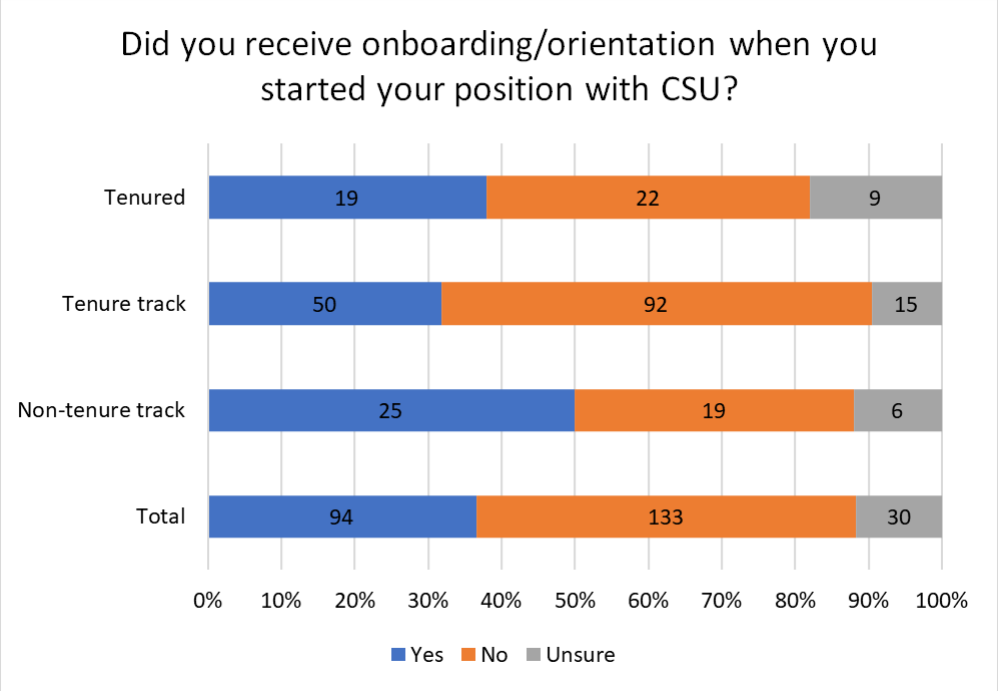
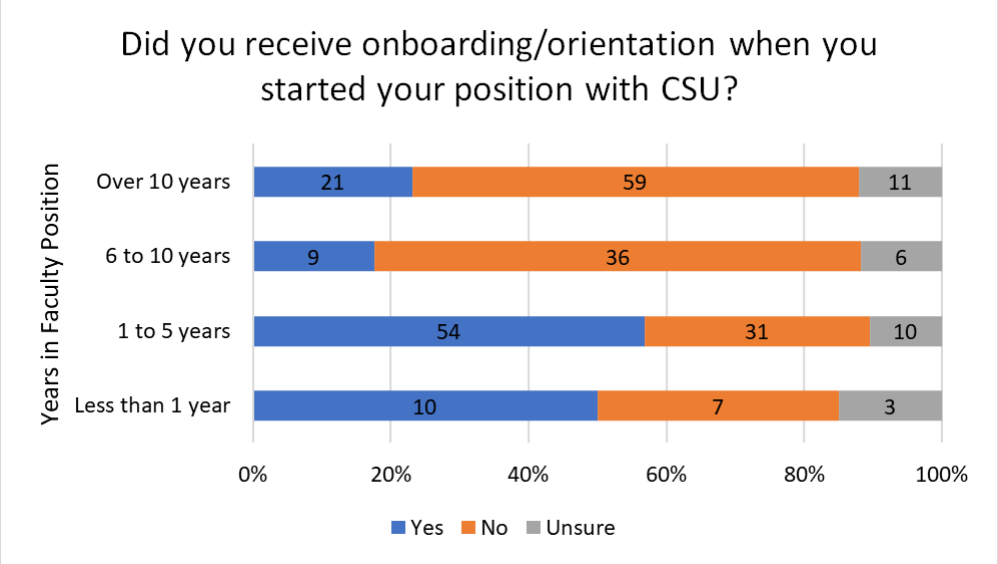


Fig. 4. Percent of Faculty Reporting they Received Onboarding by Years of Service



Onboarding Quality

Although faculty reported increased access to onboarding in recent years, the quality of that onboarding was subject to faculty scrutiny. Quantitative responses indicate that onboarding at CSU is perceived as inconsistent and generally lacking in effectiveness. Overall, 67% of faculty rated the onboarding they received as either *Fair* or *Poor*. These perceptions were largely consistent across appointment types. However, faculty who have been in their positions for less than one year rated onboarding more positively, with just over half of faculty rating it *Good*, *Very Good*, or *Excellent*.

Fig. 5. Faculty Perception of Onboarding Quality by Track

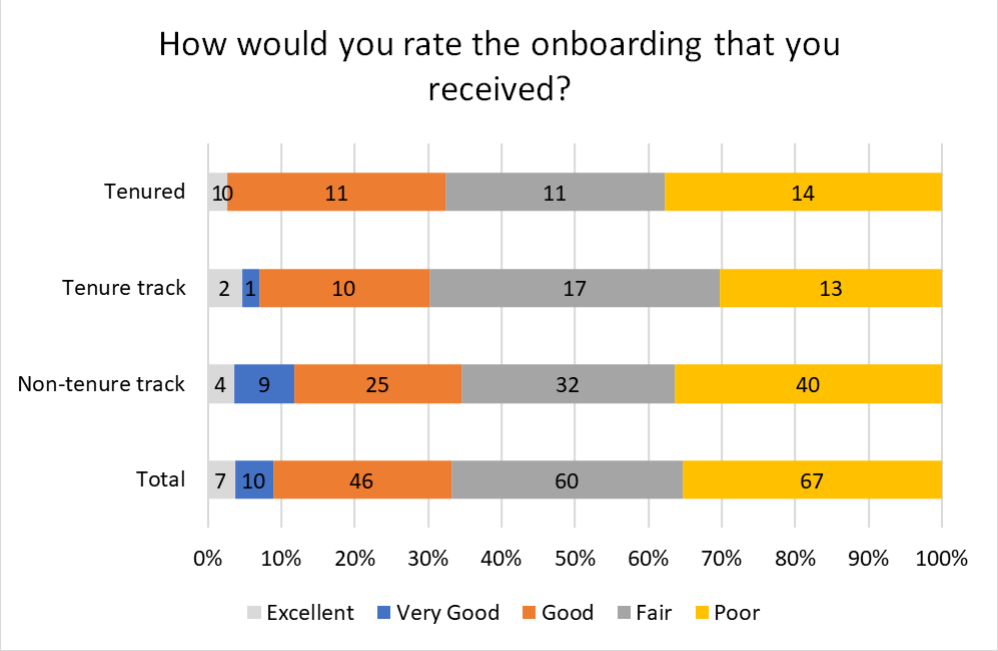
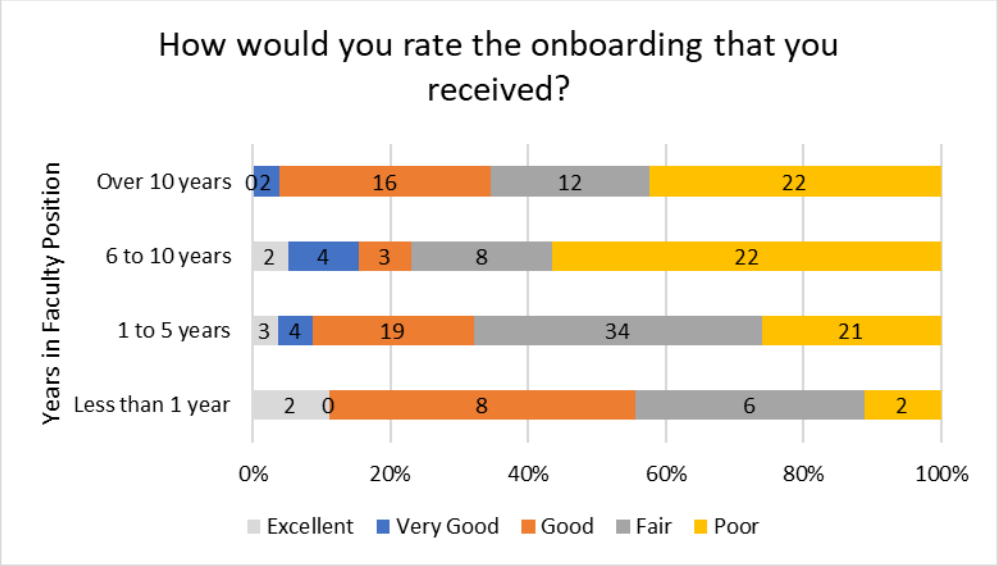


Fig. 6. Faculty Perception of Onboarding Quality by Years of Service



In their open-ended responses, faculty provided more detailed accounts of their onboarding experiences. Regarding the nature of onboarding that was received, overall, respondents shared more barriers and negative experiences than positive ones. Participants primarily indicated that they had to seek out onboarding-type information on their own (which may support "informal" onboarding being the most cited modality). Among those who did engage in some form of onboarding, the most commonly referenced experience was participation in the University's New Employee Resources. However, the majority of respondents described their onboarding as unhelpful or inadequate.

That said, a minority of faculty did report positive aspects. Among these respondents, the most helpful elements of onboarding included the opportunity to build interpersonal relationships within their department, college, and the broader University community. Specifically, they cited colleagues' kindness and willingness to answer questions as key supports. Receiving concrete information – such as guidance on health insurance and retirement benefits – was also identified as a helpful component.

When asked how onboarding could be improved, faculty voiced a clear desire for a more formalized and structured onboarding process. Suggestions included:

- A comprehensive onboarding handbook with key steps, processes, and contact information for a new employee's first 90 days.
- Ongoing onboarding beyond the initial start date.
- Department- or program-specific onboarding tailored to individual roles.
- More detailed guidance on HR processes, including benefits and available trainings.

Faculty also emphasized the importance of learning about available teaching resources and support systems. Many expressed that understanding how their department functions, knowing who to contact at both the department and university levels, and receiving clear expectations for tenure and promotion would have significantly improved their onboarding experience.

PART II. Mentoring

The faculty survey defined **mentoring** as *"a relationship in which other faculty members share expertise, experience, and practical advice to succeed to the best of their potential in their role as a faculty member."* As with onboarding, faculty responses regarding mentoring revealed key areas for institutional reflection and improvement.

Access to Mentoring

Approximately 68% of faculty reported receiving some form of mentoring during their time at CSU. Tenure-track faculty were more likely to report receiving mentoring than tenured or non-tenure track faculty. Unlike onboarding, there do not appear to be significant changes in mentoring practices over time.

Fig. 7. Percent Faculty Receiving Mentorship by Track

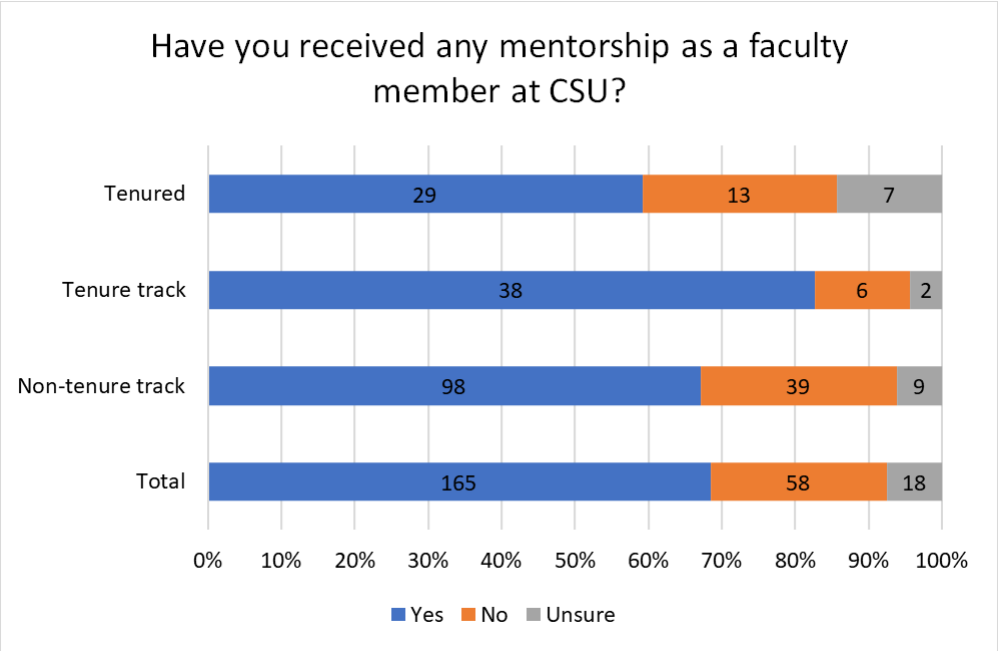
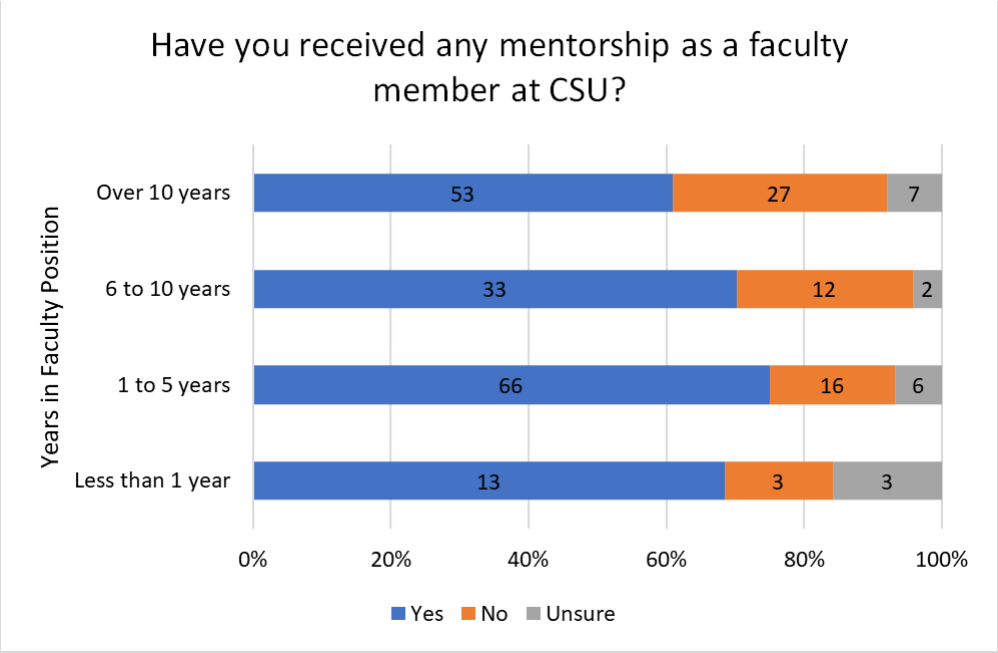


Fig. 8. Percent Faculty Receiving Mentorship by Years of Service



According to faculty respondents who did receive mentorship, the nature of that mentorship varied widely. Respondents described both formal and informal mentoring relationships, occurring within and beyond their departments. Overall, 71 respondents noted some kind of formal mentorship through their department, and 97 respondents noted they had received informal mentorship through their department. It is also worth noting that 74 respondents noted that they had self-initiated mentorship – either by seeking out mentors independently or by connecting with individuals outside their home departments.

Mentoring Quality

A majority of faculty perceived their mentorship experiences positively, with 64% of faculty rating their mentoring as *Good*, *Very Good*, or *Excellent*. Non-tenure track faculty rate their mentoring experiences slightly more positively than tenured or tenure-track faculty.

When asked if their mentorship was helpful, respondents interpreted the questions in two different ways: a ranking (by 24 participants) and in terms of specific helpful elements (by 108 participants). Of those who interpreted it in terms of specific categories, the vast majority (106 out of 108) emphasized the value of interpersonal relationships. Only two respondents referenced “structure” as helpful, suggesting that faculty place far greater value on the relational aspects of mentorship than on formal frameworks.

Fig. 9. Faculty Perception of Mentoring Quality by Track

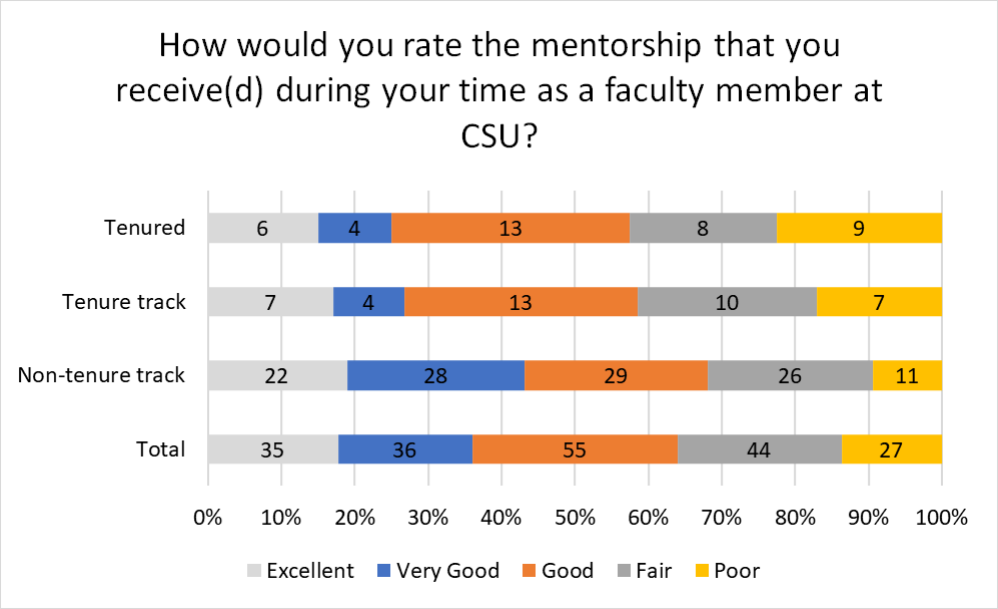
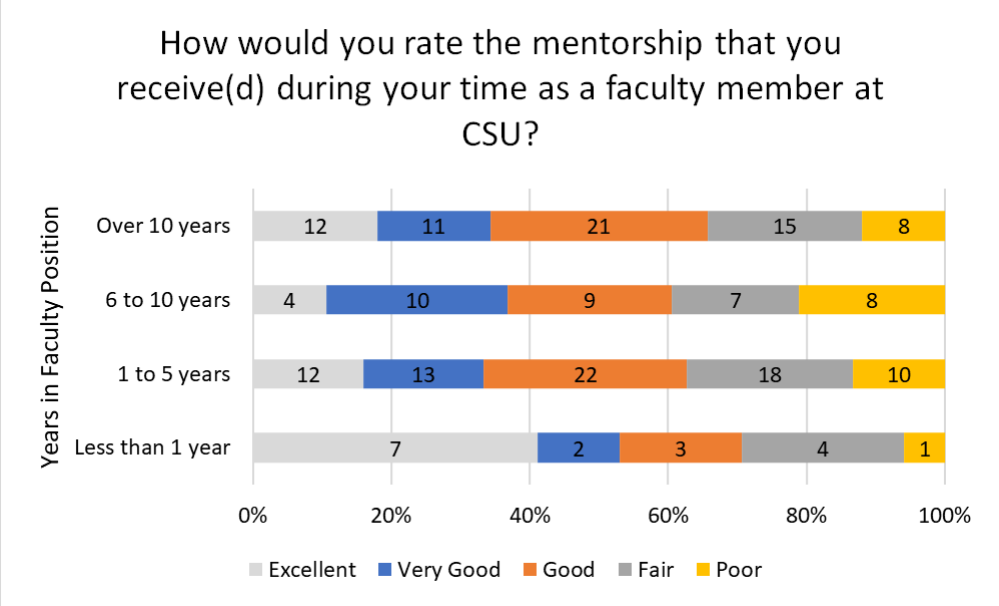


Fig. 10. Faculty Perception of Mentoring Quality by Years of Service



When asked how mentorship could be improved, nearly 60% of respondents pointed to the need for greater logistical support. Suggestions included formalizing the mentoring relationship and providing clear expectations, structure, and consistency. About 25% of respondents identified improvements needed in the interpersonal aspect of mentoring. These faculty emphasized the importance of better mentor-mentee matching and noted that mentor investment and engagement were critical to a positive experience. Specifically, 16 respondents highlighted concerns about mentor commitment and the quality of the mentor relationship. A smaller number of faculty noted the need for better support for mentors themselves. Suggestions included mentor training, strategies for sustaining mentor engagement, and efforts to retain mentors – at CSU or within the mentor/mentee relationship – to better allow for multi-year relationships.

Respondents expressed a desire for additional mentoring primarily in components of their specific job description (including all aspects of teaching, support regarding grants, research, and understanding the scope of their role and associated expectations) as well as individual career growth (such as with promotion and tenure along with professional growth). The other two areas that would benefit from more mentoring included interpersonal relationships (of varying levels) and CSU-specific information and technology. Of these four categories, three of them (components of role, individual career support, and interpersonal relationships) are best understood as ongoing needs that may arise throughout a faculty member's career. In contrast, mentoring related to CSU-specific processes and culture is more commonly needed during onboarding or on an as-needed basis (ie. new system such as Interfolio).

Summary of Onboarding and Mentorship Concerns

Faculty respondents expressed a strong need for a more structured and comprehensive onboarding process, including a detailed handbook covering essential steps, processes, and key contacts for the first 90 days. In addition, respondents called for department-specific onboarding, continued support beyond initial hiring, as well as clearer guidance on HR-related topics such as benefits and training opportunities.

Faculty members indicated that learning about available teaching resources and department functions earlier would have been beneficial. Understanding tenure and promotion expectations, as well as knowing where to go for support at both the department and university levels, were also noted as critical areas for improvement.

Regarding mentorship, nearly 60% of respondents called for a more structured and formalized mentoring process with clear defined expectations. About 25% emphasized the need for better mentee-mentor matching and mentor investment in the relationship. A smaller group highlighted the need for mentor support, including training and retention strategies.

Faculty members expressed a desire for mentoring in four key areas:

1. **Job-Specific Components** – Teaching, grant support, research, and role expectations.
2. **Career Growth** – Tenure, promotion, and professional development.
3. **Interpersonal Relationships** – Workplace dynamics and collaboration.
4. **CSU-Specific Information & Technology** – Training on institutional processes and systems.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. **Enhance Onboarding Structure**
    a. Develop a formalized onboarding program with a structured timeline.
    b. Provide a handbook with key processes, steps, and contacts for the first 90 days.
    c. Offer department-specific onboarding to address program nuances.
    d. Implement ongoing onboarding to support faculty beyond initial hiring.
2. **Improve Access to Faculty Support and Resources**
    a. Create an easily accessible repository of teaching resources and faculty support services.
    b. Ensure clear communication of department functions, tenure, and promotion expectations.
    c. Designate key contacts at both department and university levels for new faculty.
3. **Strengthen Mentorship Programs**
    a. Formalize and structure mentorship with clear guidelines and expectations.
    b. Improve mentee-mentor matching based on needs and expertise.
    c. Provide mentor training and strategies to encourage long-term mentor retention.
4. **Expand Mentoring Opportunities**
    a. Offer mentorship in job-specific components, career growth, and interpersonal relationships.
    b. Provide training on CSU-specific processes and technology as part of onboarding.
    c. Ensure ongoing mentorship opportunities throughout an employee's career at CSU.

By implementing these recommendations, the onboarding and mentorship experience can be significantly improved, leading to better faculty engagement, retention, and professional growth.

Appendix: Survey Questions

1. What College are you part of?
   Options: All Colleges listed and "Other"
2. What is your employee classification?
   Options: Non-tenure track (CCA), Tenure-track, Tenured
3. How many years have you been in a faculty position at CSU?
   Options: Less than 1 year, 1 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, Over 10 years

Onboarding

4. Did you receive onboarding/orientation when you started your position with CSU? *Onboarding is a structured process for new employees that makes them feel welcome and part of the CSU community, informs them of relevant policies, equips them with the tools to do their job and provides reasonable expectations and training*.
   Options: Yes, No, Unsure
5. At which level was the onboarding you received? Check all that apply.
   Options: University, College, Department
6. How would you rate the onboarding that you received?
   Options: Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent, N/A
7. Please briefly describe the nature of the onboarding you received.
8. What went well or was helpful in the onboarding process you received?
9. What could have been improved upon in the onboarding process you received and/or how could you have used more support during onboarding?
10. What's something you wished you had learned during the first few months on the job that would have benefited you as a new employee?

Mentorship

11. Have you received any mentorship as a faculty member at CSU? *Mentorship being a relationship in which other faculty members share expertise, experience and practical advice to succeed to the best of your potential in your role as a faculty member.*
    Options: Yes, No, Unsure
12. How would you rate the mentorship that you receive(d) during your time as a faculty member at CSU?
    Options: Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent, N/A
13. Please briefly describe the nature of the mentorship you have received. Has it been formal or informal mentoring, or both? Have you had one mentor or multiple mentors? Is your mentor(s) within your department or outside your department? Has the mentoring you have received changed over time? If so, how?
14. What has gone well or been helpful in the mentorship you have received?
15. What could have been improved in the mentorship you have received?
16. In which aspects of your position do you feel like you could use more mentoring?
17. Please share any additional thoughts you have about onboarding and mentorship at CSU, including anything that you feel is specific about your situation.