

QUICK QUESTION

Online Newsletter from the Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity



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Orienting to Academe

By Ann Austin, Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity

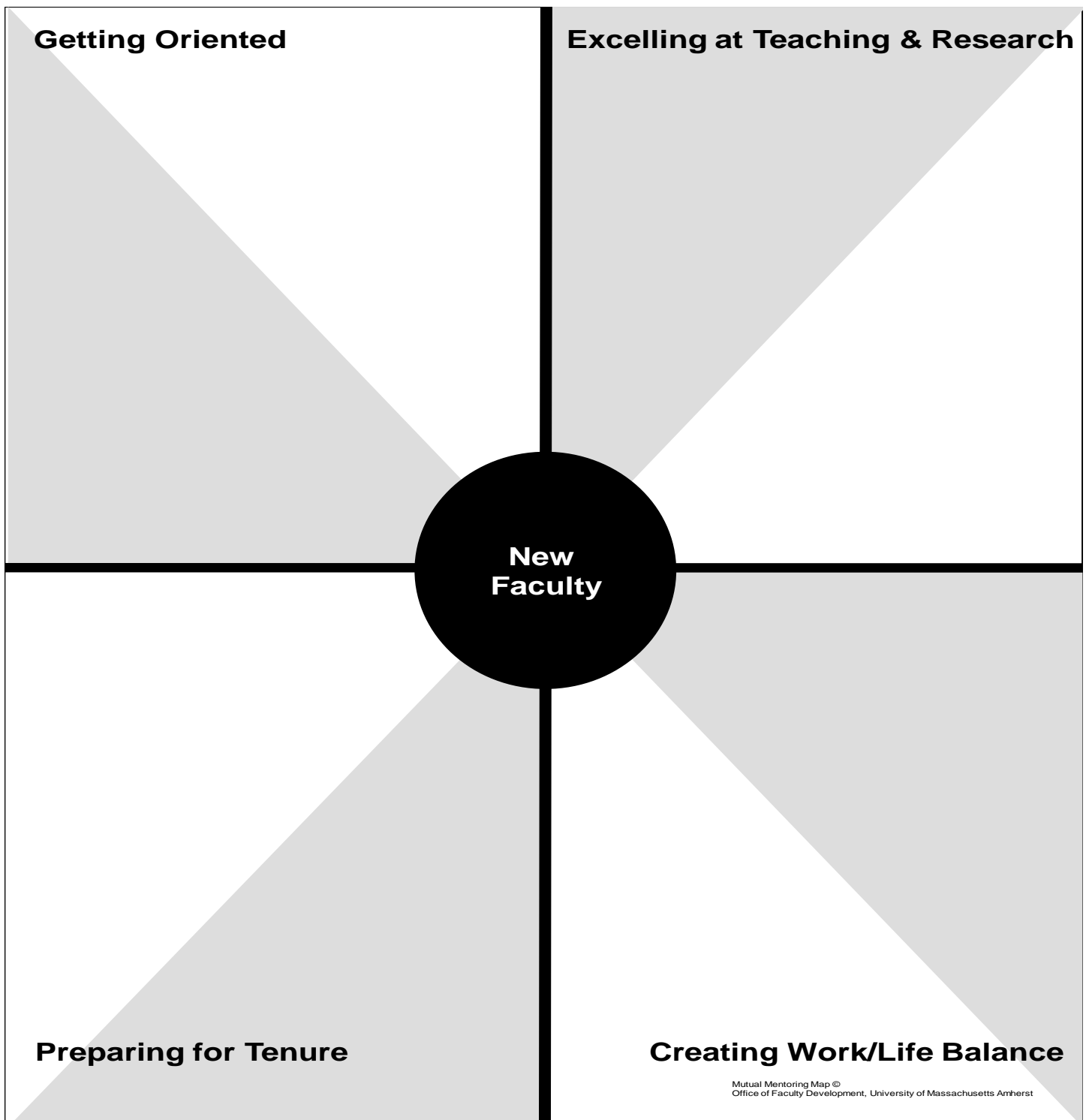


Orienting to Academe. According to Johnson (2007) acclimating as a new professor and developing a successful career in academe is dependent on socialization in the three “Knowings”. Johnson’s discussion of the three Knowings is given below and is a direct quote from his book *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, p. 147, Mahwah, NJH: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.

1. *Knowing why:* The professor must adopt the identity of an academic—including the values, motivations, ethical commitments, and professionalism indicative of members of the academy.
2. *Knowing how:* The professor must develop the expected behaviors, social knowledge, and skills needed for success in the professorial role.
3. *Knowing whom:* The professor must begin to construct a web of relationships that will facilitate his or her career.

Establishing a Network of Mentors. Establishing professional and personal mentors is an important part of career development, especially as one begins a career in academe. We like to think that mentors appear spontaneously, but the truth is, they are more likely sought after and selected by mentees. Thus, don’t be timid about developing a network of mentors. Feel free to ask senior colleagues to serve as mentors, but also recognize the support that junior colleagues can give to

each other (for example, in establishing a writing group). Dr. Mary Deane Sorcinelli and colleagues at UMass have developed a series of handouts on establishing a personal network of mentors. These are found below and begin with a mentorship map followed by suggestions for using the map. I have permission to share their work with you. I hope it will be useful as you develop your identity in academe. Please feel free to visit, call, or email me to discuss mentorship or anything else (Ann M. B. Austin, Vice Provost for Faculty Development, 435.797.8273, ann.austin@usu.edu).



Suggestions for Using the Mentoring Map:

- In the **gray area**, jot down the resources (people and programs) that your department/unit offers for new and early career faculty (e.g., welcoming reception, senior faculty mentor).
- In the **white area**, jot down the campus-wide programs and services offered for new and early career faculty on your campus (e.g., new faculty orientation, teaching and/or grant writing workshops).
- Think about getting input on your mentoring map from a wide variety of colleagues including other new faculty members, junior faculty who have been here a year or two longer, senior faculty members, and your department head.

Some Questions to Consider:

- In the **gray areas** (departmental), what programs/resources do you consider most valuable and why?
- In the **white areas** (campus-wide, interdisciplinary), what programs/resources would be most valuable?
- Is anything or anyone missing from your map?
- Stepping back and looking “globally” at your map, what defines “mentoring” for you?

Other Questions:

- What are the **strengths** of your network?
- Where do you need to find **additional mentoring partners**? Now? One year from now? Two?
- Talk to your colleagues about this map. Do you see any major **similarities (or differences)** between your mentoring networks and those of other new faculty or senior colleagues?

Preparing to Teach. As a new faculty member, you will have the opportunity to participate in Teaching Academy with Dr. Byron Burnham. Throughout the academic year, you will also receive invitations to attend teaching workshops offered through the Provost’s Office. However, if you are teaching a class Fall Semester, 2008, the following teaching checklist may be useful to you as you prepare:

1. If you are teaching a course that has been taught before, see if there are syllabi on reserve from previous years that you could view. If possible, talk to the previous instructor to find out what worked and what didn’t and what a typical reading and homework load would be like.
2. Find out how many office hours per week are expected in your department. Sometimes this will vary by size and level of the class.
3. Are there departmental guidelines for grading, for amount of reading or homework required, or for type of instruction expected in your discipline?

4. Will you have a teaching assistant? Will there be a supplemental instruction section (SI) attached to your course? How will you be expected to interact with the SI instructor?
5. It is usually a good idea to keep your finger on the pulse of your class throughout the semester, so periodically ask your students to respond anonymously to three questions: In order for me to better assist you in your learning, what should I start, stop, continue? In my own teaching, I typically give three exams throughout the semester, not including the final, so I provide 3X5 cards at the front of the room. After students turn in their exams I invite them to take a few minutes to respond to the questions.
6. Your class syllabus is considered a legal document.
7. All USU students sign the USU honor code before admission. It reads: "I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity." Should you have questions about student conduct, you may email dallin.phillips@usu.edu, Campus Judicial Officer, contact the Office of Student Conduct, 435.797.1754, and/or visit the website for the Office of Student Conduct www.usu.edu/studentconduct.

Establishing Your Program of Research or Scholarship. Throughout the year you will be invited to workshops on research sponsored by the Provost's Office and the Vice President for Research. Additionally, you will probably attend research seminars within your department or college and participate in research-focused meetings in your discipline. Below are a few points to think about as you're getting started. They are taken directly from Bensimon, Ward, & Sanders' (2000) *Department chair's role in developing new faculty into teachers and scholars*, Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing company, Inc., pp, 151, 153.

"Productive researchers:

1. Are very involved in the campus and have been successful in establishing collaborative and mentoring relationships.
2. Spend several hours each week building collegial networks for themselves through face-to-face visits, letters, phone calls, and email.
3. Establish productive scholarly habits early in their careers. They incorporate writing into daily activities and try to produce something every day even if it is small.
4. Have positive attitudes toward the campus, colleagues, and students.
5. Try to limit their teaching preparation to about two hours per classroom hour.
6. Are engaged in multiple simultaneous projects (e.g., collecting data, writing articles on completed research).

Productive faculty start early, from their first day on the job, to build a research program and write and submit articles. As you undoubtedly found with your dissertation work, the research process takes longer than even our best estimate!

Profile of USU Students

By Craig Petersen, Director of Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation



Entering Freshmen

(Data are from (1) Banner student records for Fall 2007 and (2) the CIRP Survey, last administered at USU in Summer 2006. The CIRP peer group is "medium selective public universities.")

- The average ACT score for USU entering freshmen in Fall 2007 was 23.6.
- The average high school GPA for USU entering freshmen in Fall 2007 was 3.52.
- Compared to the peer group, a higher proportion of USU freshmen are 18 years of age, but there are also relatively more who are 21 or older.
- USU students are closer to home—68% are 100 miles or less from their permanent residence vs. 46% for peers.
- Nearly 20% of USU freshman plan on living with their family or relatives while at college. About 45% intended to live in a university residence hall. In contrast, only 3% of those at peer institutions expected to live at home and more than 90% plan to live in campus housing.
- 96% of USU students are white/Caucasian vs. 87% of those at peer schools.
- 87% of USU freshmen stated that their religious preference is LDS.
- The survey data provide the proportion of students who reported that they met or exceeded the recommended years of high school study in the following areas :
 - English (4 years) 97% USU 97% Peer Schools
 - Mathematics (3 years) 96% USU 99% Peer Schools
 - Foreign Language (2 years) 63% USU 97% Peer Schools
 - Physical Science (2 years) 64% USU 62% Peer Schools
 - Biological Science (2 years) 49% USU 50% Peer Schools
 - History/American Government (1 year) 99% USU 99% Peer Schools
 - Computer Science (1 / 2 year) 92% USU 67% Peer Schools
 - Arts and/or Music (1 year) 92% USU 81% Peer Schools
- 58% of USU freshmen took at least one AP exam while in high school, slightly higher than the 54% of freshmen at peer schools.

- About 60% of USU freshman indicated that they intended to obtain a graduate degree, compared to over 70% of students at the other schools.
- 87% of freshman said that USU was their first choice for a college or university. The percentage for peer institutions was 78%. USU was the second choice for 12% of students.

Graduating Seniors

(Data are from the 2007 USU Graduating Senior Survey and are based on those students receiving a degree.)

- 54% of USU graduating seniors were female. 5% were minorities, and 3% were international students.
- 49% were married and 22% had at least one child.
- 17% originally came from Cache Valley and 61% were originally from other parts of Utah.
- The average number of semesters required to graduate was 12.7 for students who started their education at USU and 9.5 semesters for undergraduate transfer students.
- 26% had interrupted their education for at least one year prior to graduation.
- After graduation, 63% planned to get a job and 26% planned to go to graduate school.

Graduate Students

(Data are from the 2007 USU School of Graduate Studies Survey and are based on those students receiving a degree.)

- 21% were age 35 or older.
- 60% were male.
- 6% were minorities.
- 72% were married and 52% had a least one child.
- 11% of all students receiving a graduate degree and 20% of those receiving a doctoral degree were international students.
- 60% had prior undergraduate or graduate degrees from USU.

Guidelines for Writing a Self Assessment Statement for Teaching

By Tammy Vitale, Clinical Assistant Professor



Developing a self-assessment statement provides an opportunity to discuss your personal teaching philosophy and practices, document your teaching effectiveness, and provide specific examples of how you implement those concepts and methods. This statement may include your philosophy of how students learn in general as well as within your specific discipline's knowledge requirements. Your personal approach to learning and your teaching style are also valuable components of the self-assessment statement. It may be helpful to use some of the following guidelines while developing your statement.

Teaching Philosophy. What “roles” do you assume with your students and how do these relate to your philosophy of student learning and your classroom activities?

- Professional (is a source of knowledge)
- Teacher (listens/questions/encourages)
- Supervisor (demonstrates, observes, assesses, provides feedback)
- Person (provides atmosphere of trust)
- How do your courses benefit the student, the program, the department, the profession?
- How do you stay current in your field?
 - What is the impact on course content, community, profession?
- How do you help your students learn to think like someone in your discipline?

How You Implement Your Philosophy. Give specific examples rather than “blanket” statements.

Principles that could be included in this section:

- Well-prepared and organized courses
 - Course objectives/lecture objectives
- Clearly defined measures of student performance
 - Use of technology
- Use of teaching methods to facilitate various learning styles
 - Case studies, sensory examples, guest speakers, class discussion, debates
- Assessment of student learning
 - Self-evaluation
 - Peer evaluation
 - Teacher evaluation
 - Rubrics, point systems
 - Student self-reflection

- Portfolios
- Mid-semester evaluation
- End-of-semester evaluation/exit evaluation
- Subsequent problem-solving and curriculum adjustments
- Evidence of student engagement
 - Active and collaborative learning (service learning)
 - Student-faculty interaction
 - Solving real-world problems
 - Contributing to community welfare
 - In-class presentations
 - Other enriching educational experiences
- Provision of student feedback
 - Oral, written, resources, referrals
- Provision of student support
 - Advising, referrals

List Courses. Describe specific assignments/activities that demonstrate the principles above.

SIDEBAR: The following teaching strategies are discussed in Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources. Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2003. A discussion of how you implement any of these strategies in your classroom could also strengthen your self-assessment statement.

Strategies to Improve Student Learning

Students learn most effectively when:

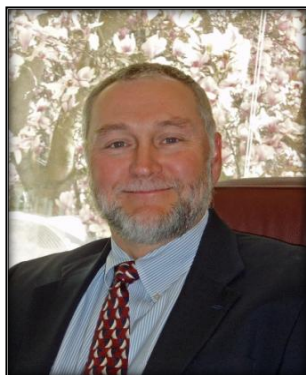
1. They understand course and program goals and the characteristics of excellent work.
2. They are academically challenged and encouraged to focus on developing higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving, as well as discipline-specific knowledge.
3. They spend more time actively involved in learning and less time listening to lectures.
4. They engage in multidimensional “real world” tasks.
5. Their learning styles are accommodated.
6. They have positive interactions with faculty and work collaboratively with fellow students; all learners—students and professors—respect and value others as learners.
7. They participate in out-of-class activities, such as co-curricular activities and service learning opportunities that build on what they are learning in the classroom.

8. Assignments and assessments are intertwined with learning activities and focus on the most important course and program goals.
9. They have opportunities to revise their work.
10. They reflect on what and how they have learned.
11. They have a culminating “capstone” experience, such as a seminar, internship, independent study, research project or thesis that lets them synthesize what they have learned over the course of their college experience.

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Larry's Corner: Tips for How to Address Your Research Program in Your Tenure and Promotion Self Assessment Letter

By Larry Smith, Vice Provost



As the Vice Provost who coordinates the university's tenure and promotion procedures at the level of the Central Tenure and Promotion Committee, I am often consulted on aspects of the tenure and promotion process. Below I address tips for how to address your research program in your tenure and promotion self assessment letter.

Let's pretend that the time has come for you to prepare your "T & P" binder for submission to your tenure advisory committee to start the seven or so month long process of tenure and promotion review. You have carefully considered what kinds of information and documentation to include in the various sections of the T & P binder that will provide evidence of accomplishments and productivity during your pre-tenure probationary time, and that together with the obligatory evaluation letters, annual reviews, etc. results in an impressive two to three inch thick work. However, the physical evidence of your research productivity and creative activity, e.g., reprints of scholarly publications, CDs of performances, funded grants, does not inform all of the various levels of readers of the binder in a clear and concise way what the significance of the your body of scholarship is to your discipline. According to members of the USU Central Tenure and Promotion Committees, one of the most, if not the most, important document of a T & P binder is the candidate's self assessment letter because that is the means whereby a candidate can speak directly to the reader and attempt to convey the context and perspective on the value and impact of their scholarly contributions. So, what advice might be offered about how to craft the self assessment letter in the area of research

and creative scholarship? Below is a list of suggestions from Central Committee members about best ways to address this very issue.

- Understand that there will be readers of the binder who are not experts in your particular field. Depending on your definition of “expert”, this may include even your dean and, in especially large and diverse departments, maybe even your department head. Therefore, avoid excessive use of discipline specific jargon and use language that tells your story in an appropriately sophisticated, yet, easily understandable way.
- Avoid an historic or chronological approach in describing your accomplishments such that you essentially repeat what is already in your CV. It’s guaranteed that readers of the binder will scrutinize your CV so there’s no need for your self assessment letter to consist only of... “I published one paper during my first year, I published three papers in my second year, I published...” Having said that, providing an historical context for the development of your scholarship is very important to reviewers. For example, you might begin your career exploring questions in one area but your efforts lead you to other, new, intriguing realms of interest. It’s also not unusual for investigators to make shifts in scholarly focus to take advantage of funding opportunities or break into a new and growing field. Whatever the motivation or reasons, it is important to articulate them and help the reader understand the progression of your scholarship.
- Perspective and context, perspective and context, perspective and context. While you might have “X” number of publications, of what value are they? What about the quality of the journals or other outlets in which you’ve published? What is the significance of your compositions or invitations to perform or display your works? What impact does your original work have on your field or on creative expression? In your opinion, what is an excellent or effective level of contribution; is it three papers a year in top twenty journals, is it one book in six years, two performances a year? Explain to the reader why your productivity and level of scholarship reaches the standard of “excellence” if research/creative scholarship is your area of emphasis or is “effective”, if it is not (faculty code 405.2.2). Members of the Central Committee in particular will be hoping to learn the value of your scholarship from the self assessment letter.
- Don’t be averse to the use of visuals in your self assessment letter if you feel that it will help build your case for the level of your productivity and the impact of your scholarship. There

has been a rise in the use of creative charts and graphs in the research and creative scholarship section of self assessment letters and they can go a long way to help the reviewer obtain a clear picture of your program. One word of caution, though, don't overdo it, be reasonable and judicious in your use of visual aids.

- Address any “bumps in the road”, “publication gaps”, or other anomalies that might exist in your record of scholarship. First, reviewers will see these – guaranteed – and they won't ignore them, so neither should you. There are perfectly reasonable explanations for these sorts of occurrences, e.g., “my field site burned up” (often used by field biologists working in Yellowstone National Park in 1988!). There are less extreme circumstances; perhaps you made a shift in the direction of your research and you needed time to retool or to retrain. As in every bullet above, strive to be helpful and provide a clear explanation.

Hopefully, you'll find the above suggestions for strategies in writing your research self assessment letter helpful. The common theme in all of them is communication. Don't give a reviewer of your binder any opportunity to guess about any piece of your program of scholarship. Spell out for them in clear terms the value and significance of your professional pursuits and that will go a long way in providing you with peace of mind.

For further clarification of these issues or if you have other questions, Vice Provost Smith can be reached at 435.797.0718 or at larry.smith@usu.edu.

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