

## **TIPS FOR NEW FACULTY MEMBERS**

These tips are provided by department chairs and leaders in the school, to help you succeed as a new faculty member.

### **DEVELOP YOUR SCHOLARSHIP (FOR TENURED/TENURE TRACK FACULTY)**

- For tenured-tenure-track faculty, this is your most important task. In the long run, concentrate on producing high-quality research. Aim to publish in the very best journals. As an assistant professor, however, it is important to get papers out fairly early and at a regular clip. This may mean breaking up research results into a number of smaller papers of more limited scope, particularly when you are getting started.
- Go to national and (a few international) meetings and talk to people about your work. This will help you to refine and develop better ideas and it will get the community familiar with your intellect and your work. Get your graduate students out to meetings too. Develop a presence in your research community.

### **WORK HARD ON TEACHING**

- Work hard on your research, but not at the expense of teaching. We have the dual roles of creating knowledge and transferring knowledge.
- Prepare thoroughly for teaching. Understand that your teaching proceeds from your scholarship so use what you are learning in your research. Challenge your students. Invite senior faculty who are known to be good teachers to observe some of your lectures so that they can offer advice. Always remember that as an instructor, you are your students' mentor above all else; maintain an appropriate distance while encouraging and helping them to do their best.
- Bring rigor, clarity and high standards to your teaching. Don't inflate grades in hopes of getting good student course evaluations. Students respect integrity and fairness.
- Take advantage of University-provided teaching workshops and resources.

### **ENGAGE RESPECTFULLY WITH GRADUATE STUDENTS AND OTHERS**

- Keep in mind that the graduate student/advisor relationship involves a power imbalance. You should remain aware of this, and act accordingly.
- Choose graduate students wisely. Check references orally yourself. Learn to read reference letters. A weak reference is a bad reference. It is rare that you will get a direct negative reference.
- One key to success is assigning the right student to the right project. Take the

time to understand each research assistant's strength and weaknesses.

- Remember that your graduate students are your research colleagues. Do not ask your graduate students to assist you with home or family tasks (baby sitting or pet sitting, personal errands, household chores, etc.)
- Advisors should make accommodations for students' religious constraints. For example, no work on Shabbat for observant students.
- Schedule meetings with students at reasonable times of the day and of the week.
- Advisors should be respectful of students' weekends and major holidays. We all work hard, and especially when we have deadlines, but that doesn't mean students should be available 24/7.
- Do not overwork your graduate students: remember that they also need to do well in their classes and have lives outside of your lab.
- Remember that what you say to students will be interpreted as a directive rather than a question or suggestion.
- If a student is not able to function effectively in your research group, it is better to end the relationship sooner rather than later. The price is much lower to all concerned, including the student, if you act decisively.
- There is no set mark that every graduate student must reach. Your goal is for each student to achieve his or her highest potential. Understand what are your goals for each graduate student, and communicate to those with the greatest potential why you are holding them to a higher standard. All students will nevertheless need to meet a minimum standard set by you.
- Do not transfer the stress you are feeling to your (a) students, (b) significant others, or (c) family. Among the numerous reasons to avoid doing so, student stress and other relationship problems will set you back.
- Just because you may not be paid during the summer does not mean you stop supervising your graduate students and or stop reading their papers/ dissertations/etc.
- Harassment can take many forms, not only sexual. Do not tolerate any of its forms when it comes to your attention.
- Think about your new position as a position of power/knowledge in a hierarchical system, and always consider how having that power puts you in a position of trust. Good professors try to exercise that power justly for the benefit of their students and colleagues (and more widely to promote justice and the well-being of the wider world), and not greedily for our own desires. Sometimes power is exercised against people, as with students that we have to give failing grades. Such power must always be exerted for reasons and from facts that we can clearly articulate and explain (for as the student has failed because s/he

didn't turn in any assignments), within the framework of applicable rules, and not out of bias and prejudice, conscious, or unconscious. Acknowledge power relations between you and your colleagues and your students. Pretending that everyone is on the same level can wind up being less democratic and fair in the end. To do this requires self-awareness and a measure of humility.

- People who can't admit error don't advance knowledge and alienate their colleagues and students.
- Finally, follow the golden rule. Treat every one the same way you want to be treated if you were in their position.

### **GET ENGAGED IN YOUR DEPARTMENT AND THE SCHOOL**

- Participate in the life of your department. Attend your department colloquia. Find some way to contribute to the collective mission of your department. Talk to your department chair to find some task (committee) that suits your interests and the department's needs. But do not overdo it. Do not let your department overburden you with too many tasks---you have other pressing work to do.
- Learn about the School of Engineering: some history, current major thrusts, intellectual leaders, so that you can be an ambassador for the School to the outside world.

### **SEEK WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

- Make friends with other faculty, particularly other junior faculty. Make some regular time to have a life outside of work. There is so much work to do as a professor that it can easily eat up every waking hour, so it's important to make some regular time for recreation and to socialize.

### **ASK FOR MENTORING AND SUPPORT**

- If you feel your department (chair) is not giving you all the support you need, reach out to other senior faculty or other department chairs. Often, they can help.
- Senior faculty should act as good mentors for junior faculty and students. Academia is not a zero-sum game and the best way to advance our careers is to advance along with the people around us, not at their expense.
- For tenure-track faculty: take seriously the advice of your mentoring committee. It is intended to be helpful, not judgmental. The mind set of the mentoring committee is "your success is our success."