

# DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

## DEPARTMENTAL MENTORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

Revised October 2007

### Introduction

To insure that tenure-track faculty receive the support and guidance helpful for a successful career at Denison, the History Department proposes the following plan for supporting its junior faculty. While the plan places a primary emphasis on teaching, given College directives, it recognizes that a productive scholarly program and appropriate community service are also central to the development of effective faculty members. To address the diverse elements of the mentoring and evaluation processes this plan has three sections: mentoring, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation. Aware that the lines between these three functions can be a porous, we nonetheless feel that it is important to keep the processes distinct. We envision mentoring and formative evaluation initiating constructive, mutually beneficial conversations on pedagogy, research, and service among staff members.

### Mentoring

The following procedures define the basic mentoring processes in the department. After appropriate consultation, the chair will assign each new faculty colleague a mentor from among the senior faculty no later than the midpoint of his/her first semester at Denison. The relationship between the faculty mentor and mentee cannot be encompassed in a checklist of responsibilities but should grow naturally out of a shared commitment to the life of the teacher-scholar in the Denison community. Conversations about teaching might well be enriched by visits to one another's classrooms. Mentor and mentee should take the opportunity to discuss teaching responsibilities outside the classroom, such as advising student research, course preparation, academic advising, and how to be a productive scholar and a good citizen in this liberal arts, residential college. In addition, the department plans to devote at least three faculty meetings each year to "Teaching Matters" where the entire staff can discuss such issues as approaches to teaching required courses, course design, grading standards and strategies, innovative discussion techniques, and technology in the classroom. Just as the department fosters wide-ranging conversations about effective teaching, so too it seeks to create a culture in which our work as scholars is shared and not experienced in isolation. The History Forum provides a venue in which we share and engage each other's scholarly work in progress. As necessary, tenured staff members will share their understandings of departmental expectations for teaching, scholarship, and service at the levels of the third year, tenure, and full professor reviews at a departmental meeting.

### Formative Evaluation Process

The following schedule reflects the University's policy of two summative personnel reviews, one in the third and one in the sixth year of teaching. To help junior colleagues prepare for these two summative reviews, the chair, in the second semester of the first year should visit at least one course of the junior faculty member in accordance with the procedures outlined below. At the conclusion of the year, the chair should review the evaluations of the faculty member and have a general conversation about the person's progress during the first year. In the second year, the chair, after consultation with the junior colleague, will ask either two senior colleagues or one senior and one experienced junior colleague to visit two classes of each new faculty member who will choose the composition of the review team, in which semester he or she would like the visits to occur as well as the dates and classes to be visited,

amenable of course to the schedule of the visiting faculty members. Further benefit could come from this process if the junior colleague in turn visited classes of the junior reviewer (if relevant). Again, as was true of the first year, the chair should have an end of year conversation with the junior faculty member. In addition to this specified formative review, junior faculty members may at any point request that their mentors or the department chair observe their classes and provide feedback.

Class observations will follow the procedures below for classroom visitation as specified in the *Faculty Handbook* under III. Faculty Responsibilities, A. Teaching-Related Responsibilities, 4. Evaluation of Teaching in Courses.

“Classroom observation is a required component of formative evaluation. The instructor and the observer(s) should agree upon a specific schedule and the procedures for evaluation before the observations take place. ... In advance of the observations, the instructor should provide the observer(s) with course syllabi, handouts, assignments or other relevant teaching materials. In addition, a brief discussion before the observation should identify the instructor's objectives and planned class activities, materials, and any other concerns or issues identified as important for the observation. A brief discussion should be held immediately or shortly after a class observation in order to get clarification or additional information about the events and activities observed.”

### Summative Evaluation Process

While this plan emphasizes mentoring and formative evaluation, the department recognizes that summative evaluation is a critical responsibility and can also have its formative aspects. In conducting summative evaluations of candidates for third year review, tenure, and promotion to full professor, the department will follow scrupulously the procedures outlined in the *Faculty Handbook*, I. Personnel Policies, A. Full-Time Faculty, 5. Procedures Pertaining to Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion, c. Responsibilities of the Tenured Members of a Department and d. Responsibilities of Department Chairs.

In addition the department will observe the processes described in above-noted Evaluation of Teaching in Courses, part c: “Classroom observation is a required component of summative evaluation. Faculty in a department or program have the responsibility of determining the number and choice of colleagues who will act as observers and the timing of these observations. There will be a minimum of two observers from a department. In addition, any colleague who participates in this process should make at least two observations within a specific course. Colleagues' multiple observations should occur closely together in time or sequentially in order to provide a view of how the instructor develops and coordinates teaching activities on a given topic. The instructor's teaching will be observed in different courses and at different periods of time within a semester.”

Summative evaluation requires the professional assessment of the candidate's performance judged against the specified criteria for teaching, scholarship and contributions to the other purposes of the College. The process can probably never be stress free, but it the goal of the department to make it as humane, transparent, and fair as possible.