

The STP Professional Development Mentoring Service

The Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP) promotes excellence in the teaching and learning of psychology. The Society provides resources and services, access to a global collaborative community, and opportunities for professional development. We also strive to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning, advocate for the needs of teachers of psychology, foster partnerships across academic settings, and increase recognition of the value of the teaching profession.

The STP Mentoring Program focuses on both advanced graduate students and early career faculty (both will be referred to as early career psychologists–ECP). The aim of this professional development service is to provide ECPs with career-related assistance to improve their performance early in their academic careers. In addition, mentors benefit from developing their mentoring skills and learning about new topics from engagement with their mentee.

The program has several components. The program focuses on the needs and interests of the ECP, who will specify her or his goals and interests in the application. Recently, ECPs conducted speed mentoring for graduate students at STP's Annual Conference on Teaching. And we're now adding a mid-career mentoring component.

The program is international, although most participants are in the continental United States, and it's unlikely that mentors and mentees will be geographically close to one another. Therefore, communication generally takes place through phone, web conferencing, and email.

The purpose of the STP Professional Development Mentoring Program is to help new teachers transition into the new role of professional educator. We've designed the program to run from August through May and ask for a commitment of at least one contact a month. Dyads are certainly welcome to connect more often, as schedules and needs demand.

As the program develops, we plan to add webinars and other resources, in addition to special meetings at national and regional conventions.

Program Eligibility and Expectations

The requirements for mentees and mentors are as follows:

Mentees: Mentees must have less than 5 years of full-time psychology teaching experience and be a member of STP. Mentees can participate in the program for a second year but will need to complete a new application for that period.

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Mentors: Mentors are members of STP and have at least 7 years of full-time psychology teaching experience.

Prospective mentors and mentees complete questionnaires that collect information about their current and past teaching experiences, professional development, communication style preferences, interests and more. Our goal is to match dyads based on a mentoring styles and professional needs.

Benefits of Participating: Mentees

New faculty members benefit from STP's Mentoring Program because they have the opportunity to learn from and be supported by an experienced faculty member who is outside of their department and institution, and who is invested in their success. This allows them to get feedback and advice without fear of violating some unspoken norm at their home institutions. Research shows that new faculty who are mentored have an easier transition into the profession and generally have increased job satisfaction. So some of the major benefits include:

- Easier transition
- Safe "harbor"
- Practical "how-to" advice
- Navigation of College rules and regulations (spoken and unspoken)
- Increase in job satisfaction

In order to have a successful mentoring experience, it is helpful for mentees to:

- Have specific questions and concerns for the mentor
- Be realistic in expectations of help mentor can give
- Be considerate of the mentor's time
- Let the mentor know their help is appreciated

Benefits of Participating: Mentors

Mentors benefit from this mentoring relationship as well. Helping a new faculty member transition to the profession can bring personal satisfaction and may even rejuvenate the mentor. It can be exciting to remember one's personal journey into the profession. And the mentoring relationship brings them a close relationship with a new colleague. It's not a one-sided relationship. Among the other benefits to the mentors are:

- Personal satisfaction/fulfillment
- Rejuvenation
- Networking
- Motivation to stay active and current
- Developing new colleagues in a reciprocal relationship

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Mentors are encouraged to see the mentoring experience as a nourishing experience, not an onerous obligation.

In order to be a successful mentor, it is helpful to consider your individual goals. Consider taking a self-assessment. Here is an example:

- <http://faculty.medicine.iu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/IU-Mentee-Self-Assessment-Worksheet.docx>

It's also helpful to review your feedback from course evaluations so you can identify areas of strength that you can share with your mentee.

Benefits of Participating: STP

We also believe that the mentoring program will increase ECPs' involvement with STP. We have an active Early Career Psychologist Committee, where new college faculty can find a ready-made group of colleagues. Additional benefits include:

- Facilitates involvement with professional organizations
- Provides the opportunity for experienced faculty to share their wisdom
- Meets professional development requirements
- Helps to meet Departmental and Program--Level outcomes
- Bolsters CVs for tenure and promotion
- Excellent networking opportunities
- Opportunities to engage in collaborative projects