



Dr. Cynthia E. Ledbetter,  
Department Head

The University of Texas at Dallas  
Science/Mathematics Education Department

Box 830688 FN33  
Richardson, TX 75083-0688  
972-883-2496 | 972-883-6796

June 2, 2006

TO: Dr. Larry Terry, Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
FROM: Dr. Cynthia E. Ledbetter, Head  
RE: Report from the Mentoring Committee

Our meetings this year generated good discussions of the issues faced by new faculty, as well as university wide issues which affect us all. Questions were raised about the quality of mentoring, successful mentoring programs (informal and formal) in each university school, timely fulfillment of start-up agreements and the impact on tenure success, and the role the mentoring committee might play in third year reviews. We also discussed the steps our committee could take to bring issues regarding space, equipment and support to the attention of administrators.

As a committee, we would like to meet with Deans from each school and with Dr. Terry to discuss university wide issues that impact faculty tenure and promotion. Our activities this year have produced the following data:

- New junior faculty from this and last year were contacted by Mentoring Committee members to find out how they feel about their work here at UTD. This was not a 'what's wrong' interview, but an opportunity for new faculty and committee members to establish a rapport.
  - Interviews indicate that the most severe issue is the lack of space for laboratory research, setting back their ability to maintain the required timeline to tenure and promotion.
  - New faculty were very nervous about their ability to succeed if they did not have the equipment and facilities promised as part of their employment.
  - New faculty were concerned about their freedom to contact faculty other than their mentors for information or assistance.
  - Other concerns were lack of technology for teaching (i.e. projectors that connected to laptops).
- The committee chair contact the Committee on Committees to determine if there is an Infrastructure Committee and if the charge to that committee covers our concerns about laboratory/classroom space and about responsibilities for teaching materials supplied to instructors such as instructional technology and audio visual equipment. At this time there does not seem to be such a committee.
- Committee members described the mentoring plans (formal and/or informal) for their schools.
  - Only Management and Engineering have formal mentoring plans. In these the new faculty are assigned to a person or a research group. The new faculty were concerned that if they chose to seek mentoring from others, that reflected badly on their assigned mentor, who might then take punitive measures to block tenure/promotion.
  - In schools with informal mentoring, the Dean or Department Chair is responsible for mentoring new faculty. In general, the new faculty said that they talked to other professors and if they could find someone to work with, they did. Informal mentoring appears to be very 'hit or miss'.

Overall, the Mentoring Committee feels that there needs to be formal education of the Deans and Department Chairs in best practices for mentoring. Formal mentoring plans should be put into place in all schools, and faculty made aware of these plans. The responsibilities of the Mentoring Committee could be expanded to serve as a neutral group to advise new faculty who have issues they do not wish to share within their school/department. New faculty orientation should include meetings with Deans and/or Department Chairs to discuss timelines and expectation for tenure and promotion.