

Learning, Teaching & Innovative Technologies Center



Middle Tennessee State University

Frequently Asked Questions Faculty Teaching Mentor Program

What is the teaching mentoring program?

The Faculty Teaching Mentor Program was instituted by the provost's office to promote excellence in teaching at MTSU. It gives the opportunity for faculty to get connected with and learn from some of the outstanding teachers on campus. The program uses a trained faculty mentor who works with as many as three faculty members per semester. The faculty members who participate in the semester-long mentoring program then have the opportunity to become mentors for other interested faculty in their college or department.

Who can participate?

Participation in the teaching mentoring program is not limited. Any full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty can participate if they:

- desire to improve their teaching effectiveness and student learning,
- are interested in learning more about current pedagogical issues and techniques, or
- have the potential and willingness to share what he/she has learned through the program with other faculty in a structured mentoring relationship.

Is the program for “bad” teachers?

No. The teaching mentoring program is not designed to be a developmental process for improving the teaching skills of “bad” teachers. Its purpose is to further develop and enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning, even among established teachers. It is intended for new faculty members who are seeking guidance in developing their own teaching style and skills. It is also intended for seasoned veterans who wish to learn about new ideas and teaching methods. In sum, the teaching mentoring program is intended for any faculty member who seeks constructive feedback regarding his / her teaching, no matter how effective they currently are as a teacher. It is assumed that all teachers can continually improve their teaching skills.

Is this program mandatory for all new faculty?

No. It is a voluntary program. However, those faculty members who have participated report very high levels of satisfaction with the program.

How are faculty members selected for the program?

It varies. In some colleges the dean requests nominations from the department chairs. Other deans issue an

open invitation to any and all faculty who are interested. The final decision regarding the placement of a faculty member with a mentor is then made based on consultation with the dean, department chair, and the teaching mentor.

What activities can be expected?

This will vary by the faculty member's needs and the mentor with whom they are working. Usually, however, the mentoring process includes:

- regular meetings with the mentor,
- in-class observations by the mentor – some of which can be video taped,
- discussions regarding suggestions for improvement, and
- written feedback from the mentor.

Additionally, participating faculty members will receive a Teaching Mentor Handbook which contains reading materials and references on a number of teaching and student learning topics.

What are the topics covered in the Teaching Mentor Handbook?

Some of the topics included in the teaching mentor handbook include:

- designing the course,
- structuring the course,
- syllabus preparation,
- learning styles
- Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives,
- the first class,
- learning levels,
- learning objectives,
- cooperative learning,
- effective testing, and
- fair grading

A participating faculty member can request help on specific areas such as classroom management issues, developing methods to encourage student interaction in the classroom, presentation and delivery skills, etc. Although the focus is on teaching, some mentors have provided guidance on research and service issues.

Is the feedback from the mentor confidential?

Yes. All correspondences and discussions between a faculty member and mentor are confidential. No materials such as letters or other evaluations are included in a faculty member's application for tenure or promotion without the faculty member's approval.

Can I evaluate my mentor at the end of the semester?

Yes. All participating faculty members complete a faculty mentor evaluation form following their participation in the program.

Does the program offer benefits / incentives to mentors?

Yes. A one-course-load reduction is possible for mentors working with three faculty members in a semester. Some monetary stipend can be arranged for those mentoring less than three faculty members.