

# BRIDGE PROGRAM: ONBOARDING & MENTORING NEW TT AND FULL-TIME NTT FACULTY\*

## UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

*Revised August 2024*

\*This program can be adapted for associate professors to assist with promotions and/or faculty across the faculty ranks interested in pursuing a career in college administration. For questions and more information about the Program, please contact Stephanie Adams, Fiona Goggin, and/or [Anna Zajicek](#), Office for Faculty Affairs.

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**Bridge Program for New TT and Full-Time NTT Faculty  
University of Arkansas**

## Introduction

The University of Arkansas (UA) is committed to supporting the success of all faculty members. Paramount to fulfilling this commitment is **the Bridge Program**. This program consists of two components: 1) a New Faculty Workshop Series offered by the Office for Faculty Affairs and 2) Mentoring Committees organized by each new full-time faculty member's home department to assist with pre-boarding and onboarding activities and career planning. The Workshop Series and the Mentoring Committee synergize to assist each new faculty member in creating a success plan for their first years at the university, as well as a "mentoring map," i.e., a list of colleagues who can assist with different dimensions of the faculty member's professional success. The Bridge Program aims to provide "*equal access to the benefits associated with good mentoring*"<sup>1</sup> and *structural support* to all new faculty. To ensure the faculty's successful integration into their units and the UA campus, the Program assists new faculty with (1) navigating our campus and its culture, (2) integrating into the home unit, college, university, and local communities, and (3) embarking on activities (e.g., instruction, scholarship) that are central to the faculty's success and their career.

The Bridge Program is a formal program. The Provost and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs will recognize the mentee's participation in this program, and the mentor's participation shall *be recognized as part of the faculty's service to the unit*.

The hallmark of the Bridge Program is its flexibility built around the following program components: 1) *mentoring committees*, 2) *a success plan*, 3) *a mentoring map*, and 4) *new faculty workshops*. All faculty who have completed the new faculty workshops offered by the Office for Faculty Affairs, including the mentoring map and success plan, will receive a **Badge of Completion**. Combining the necessary and flexible program components, such as the need or size of the mentoring committee (e.g., some faculty may transition from within the UA), is dictated by the faculty's needs and the characteristics of their home unit. Critical to the Program's success is that the needs of the new faculty play a crucial role in selecting their Committee members and that their evolving needs are assessed throughout its duration.



The guidelines provided in this document are intended to facilitate a successful transition to the UA and ongoing engagement between incoming/new faculty, on the one hand, and the more senior faculty (e.g., advanced assistant professors, mid-career, and/or senior faculty), on the other. While the program centers around the mentee and their interests/needs, it also recognizes that "*We don't know what we don't know.*" In this context, the Program is built around mutual learning, which entails benefitting from each other's experiences, co-creating the mentoring experience, remaining curious, and not making assumptions.

### Key Bridge Program Elements

The Bridge Program includes the following elements, which will be discussed in turn:

1. Unit Leadership
2. The Bridge Team

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<sup>1</sup> (Griffin and Newsome, 2021)

- A. Workshop Series
  - Success Plan
  - Mentoring Map
- B. The Bridge Program Completion Badge

1. **UNIT LEADERSHIP's** activities are critical to the success of the Bridge Program. These activities include (1) pre-boarding communications; (2) selection of the Mentoring Committee chair based on the faculty's needs and interests; (3) formal appointment of Mentoring Committee members in collaboration with the committee chair and faculty member; and (4) assuring the continuity of feedback on the faculty's progress annually and over the long-term.

Specifically, unit leaders should engage in pre-boarding communications after signing the offer letter. Selecting a mentoring Committee chair based on the faculty's needs should occur soon after the offer letter is signed. This can be done in one of two ways:

- The Department Chair/Head communicates with the incoming faculty member to determine their needs.
- The Chair/Head appoints a senior faculty member to lead the Mentoring Committee. This faculty member connects with the incoming faculty soon after the offer letter is signed to determine their needs and answer any questions. Based on the identified needs, the senior faculty member recommends two additional mentors and notifies the Chair/Head of this selection within the first two months of arrival on campus.

To maximize and facilitate the integration of new faculty hires, the Bridge Program begins the process of faculty integration starting at the time of hire. Paramount to successful pre-boarding is *collecting information about the needs/interests of incoming faculty*. This information is critical to successfully integrating incoming faculty with the unit, university, and community.

The Unit Leader provides the names of the incoming faculty and Mentoring Committee members to the [Director of Faculty Development](#) as soon as these are known. The Director of Faculty Development, or their designee, then shares critical information about the Bridge Program and forms such as the Resources List, pre- and on-boarding Checklists, the Mentoring Agreement, and information about workshops with each of them.

Upon receiving a positive response from potential Mentoring Committee members, the Chair shall provide each member of the Mentoring Committee with *an official appointment letter* acknowledging their participation on the Mentoring Committee and defining their role, responsibilities, and appointment duration.<sup>2</sup> The letter addressed to any non-departmental faculty member shall be cc'd to their chair/director and/or dean ([see the example of the Appointment Letter](#)). All members of the Committee shall be given service credit for their activities. It is highly desirable that the mentee and each member of the Mentoring Committee jointly define their expectations, goals, and responsibilities ([see the Mentoring Committee Agreement](#)).

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<sup>2</sup> The Welcoming Committee dissolves no later than at the end of the first year in residence. Follow-up mentoring should be discussed by the junior faculty member and mentors depending on needs and wishes.

The Unit Leader may want to meet with the Committee to discuss their roles and responsibilities and/or designate the primary member who would bring the Committee together for that purpose. The Chair of the Mentoring Committee shall reach out to the incoming faculty as soon as the Committee has been constituted. The incoming/new faculty member should ensure they request the information/assistance they need from each member of the Mentoring Committee.

- 2) **THE MENTORING COMMITTEE** (ideally) consists of three faculty selected by the Unit leader and Committee Chair with input from the incoming faculty member. The Committee may include any combination of faculty that support the needs of the incoming faculty member. Based on the information about the incoming faculty's needs/interests/preferences, the Unit Chair/Head shall contact the potential Committee members. The [Office for Faculty Affairs](#) can assist department heads with finding faculty mentors from outside of the unit to meet needs that cannot be met by the faculty from within the unit.

We recommend considering the following: (1) a “near-peer” who has recently attained promotion and tenure, (2) a more senior departmental faculty with outstanding teaching and/or scholarship credentials, and (3) a third Committee member (who can be a departmental or non-departmental faculty member).

- (A) Peer Member of the Committee assists the new faculty by sharing their know-how, experiences, obstacles, and other tips and resources they wish they had known when they arrived on campus and/or found especially useful.
- (B) For new faculty with teaching responsibilities, the Committee shall include a teaching-focused member to assist the new faculty with preparing course syllabi, providing general information about the unit's teaching mission, and sharing and/or guiding the new faculty to essential teaching resources available in the unit and around campus ([see Appendix A](#)). This Committee member shall ensure the new faculty member is aware of the teaching-related resources available at the university, including the Teaching and Faculty Support Center ([TFSC](#)), [Student Success](#), and [TIPS](#). Upon request, this Committee member may also provide the new faculty with (1) general teaching advice, including informal classroom observations and/or review of web-based assignments/lectures, etc., and (2) recommendations regarding classroom and/or online teaching effectiveness.
- (C) Scholarship-focused member of the Committee helps the new faculty identify scholarship-related resources at the UA (e.g., the [Division of Research and Innovation](#)), internal funding, and stipend options and provides general information about the unit's strategic research priorities areas, scholarship expectations, and mission. Upon request, this Committee member offers (1) general scholarship advice, including feedback on the mentee's scholarship; (2) how to balance research, teaching, and service and (3) information about potential scholarship collaborators across campus; and (4) advice how to construct narratives describing one's scholarship and its contributions/significance.
- (D) The committee's third member shall be selected based on the expressed needs/interests of the incoming faculty. This Committee member will assist the new faculty with the more targeted needs/interests related to navigating our campus

culture, networking, and/or introducing the faculty to crucial campus and community resources.

3) **BRIDGE PROGRAM AND THE OFFICE FOR FACULTY AFFAIRS.** The Director for Faculty Development, the Provost Fellow for Mentoring, and the Vice-Provost for Faculty Affairs run the Bridge Workshop Series and award the Bridge Program Completion Badge. The Office can also support the chair/head, Mentoring Committee, and the new faculty. We provide materials (see appendices), track participation, and evaluate the program.

(A) **Workshop Series:** The Office for Faculty Affairs hosts a workshop series in the fall designed to help set the mentees up for success. The sessions cover topics such as transitioning into a faculty role, grant writing, and publishing successful resources supporting research mentorship of undergraduate students, mentoring graduate students, 3<sup>rd</sup>-year review and tenure review for TT faculty, and promotion review for NTT faculty, among other topics. In addition to providing necessary information, these sessions allow the mentees to form peer-to-peer connections across campus. As part of the Bridge program and in conjunction with the Workshop Series, the participants expected to start working on their Success Plan and Mentoring Map to receive the Program Completion Badge.

- ***Success Plan, aka Individual Development Plan (IDP):*** Developing a SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) [Success Plan](#) is a crucial activity during the onboarding period. The goal of the plan is to clarify T&P expectations, set progress milestones, and ensure a culture and climate that promotes a sense of inclusion and support for the candidate(s) 's success during their first semester in residence. The Unit Head/Chair and the Mentoring Committee shall regularly meet with the new faculty member to review and update the Success Plans/IDPs.
- ***Mentoring Map:*** Developing a [Mentoring Map](#) is another critical activity undertaken during the first year at UA. The Map aims to support program mentees, ensure that all Bridge Program mentees think about their needs, and create a **robust mentoring support system** to assist them in achieving their professional goals. Optimally, the Mentoring Map shall be started during the first semester and finished/edited throughout the first year in residence. The Unit Chair/Head and mentors can help identify and connect other appropriate mentors on and off campus to map out a full support system.
- ***Transition to the Beginning Investigator Research Development Support (BIRDS) Program*** offered in the Spring Semester. The BIRDS program focuses on peer networking, finding funding, and general grant-writing training. Participants will learn more about the services that the Division of Research and Innovation (DRI) offers investigators on campus. They will work one-on-one with the DRI team to create personalized research and funding plans for their careers on campus. Additionally, each participant will receive an individual review of one specific aim or project summary they plan to work on for an upcoming or planned proposal.

- (B) **Bridge Program Completion Badge:** New faculty that participate in 7 out of 8 workshops in the *Bridge Workshop Series*, complete their *Success Plan* through their third year in residence, and complete 60% of their *Mentoring Map* will receive a badge of completion during the Provost's Faculty Recognition Ceremony in the following Spring Semester.

## OFFICE FOR FACULTY AFFAIRS

### NEW FACULTY AND FACULTY MENTORS: SUGGESTED MENTORING ACTIVITIES

#### **Mentee<sup>3</sup>**

- Initiate meetings and communication with mentors (meetings can be formal or informal and as frequent or infrequent as they feel necessary).
- Actively take part in the workshop series
- Use the *Mentoring Agreement* to align expectations with the mentors
- Prepare the Success Plan and Mentoring map and share/discuss with mentors and unit leader
- Understand and communicate their needs as a mentee
- Engage in discussion of research and listen to constructive feedback
- Take full advantage of the mentorship program, including on-campus mentors as well as off-campus external mentors
- Take full advantage of opportunities to meet and network with peers and more senior scholars

#### **Mentor**

- Initiate meetings and communication with mentee
- Use the *Mentoring Agreement* to align expectations with the mentee
- Review and discuss *Success Plans*, both short-term (two-year) and long-term (five or six year) goals, and provide feedback on their progress toward accomplishing the goals included in the faculty Success Plans
- Review and discuss the *Mentoring Map* to fill in any gaps
- Seek input from the mentee regarding their evolving needs
- Engage in discussion of each other's research and offer feedback
- Discuss the key components of promotion and tenure, as applicable
- Read and provide feedback on grant proposals and share successful grant proposals<sup>4</sup>
- Help the mentee learn about navigating the Department and the college, including culture, committee work, and other service activities; discuss which activities are high versus low visibility and are more valued<sup>5</sup>
- Help the mentee learn about teaching expectations, including different teaching roles as an instructor, MA thesis adviser, honors adviser, mentor, GA supervisor, etc.
- Help with entrance into professional networks, introduce to collaborative opportunities, and ensure that other researchers in the mentee's area know about the mentee's research.

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<sup>3</sup> These are examples of activities; neither list of responsibilities/activities is exhaustive.

<sup>4</sup> The mentee should establish how much time, on average, their mentor would need to provide their feedback.

<sup>5</sup> Links to the academic schedules (including College, Registrar's and Graduate School's schedules) shall be included and all key documents placed in box.

- Take the mentee to lunch or coffee to discuss their progress, successes, and/or concerns.

### **Program Evaluations**

At the end of each academic year, surveys will be distributed to Unit leaders, Mentors, and Mentees to evaluate the program. This information is essential for continued program support and shall be used to make yearly improvements to the program.

### **Recommendations post year 1 in residence:**

At the end of year 1, the Unit Chair/Head and faculty member shall meet to discuss future needs. In discussion with the junior faculty member and the chair of the Mentoring Committee, the Unit Leader can decide to continue providing a structured mentoring Committee. This Mentoring Committee may consist of the same or different members from the first-year Mentoring Committee. The Mentoring Committee supports the needs of the junior faculty member throughout the tenure process.

**APPENDICES:**

Appendix A	Department Chair/Head PreBoarding Checklist
Appendix B	Mentoring Committee Mentoring Appointment Letter
Appendix C	Mentoring Committee PreBoarding Checklist
Appendix D	Discussion Topics List
Appendix E	Incoming Faculty Resources
Appendix F_A	New Faculty Success Plan Template
Appendix F_B	Mentor Map Template
Appendix G	Department Chair/Head OnBoarding Checklist Semester One
Appendix H	Mentoring Committee Agreement Template
Appendix I	Mentoring Committee OnBoarding Checklist
Appendix J	Department Chair/head OnBoarding Checklist Semester Two