

How Do I Get a Mentor?

As faculty you will be assigned a mentor for your FRINQ or SINQ by the UNST Mentor Program Director using a process uniquely designed for our UNST courses, which utilizes GTAs (called “Graduate Mentors”) in a unique way based on our UNST’s interdisciplinary program model. We spend a significant amount of time and energy on recruiting the graduate students at PSU who can serve *flexibly* across disciplines to support student learning. The Mentor Director and program staff train, schedule, and support your mentors as follows:

Hiring

When we have new openings arise, we either post individual positions or we engage in a larger, annual hiring, recruitment, and mentor identification process in the spring of the year prior to their appointment. It is important to have mentors from across disciplines because we have a “general education” model and not a disciplinary model fostering expertise. We encourage faculty and work closely with departments to identify excellent candidates to apply for these positions.

Winter	Recruiting and Interviews (over 200+ applicants)
Summer	Training New Mentors (25 – 30 new mentor finalists)
Fall	Hiring Mentors and Scheduling (new mentors and returning mentors) Ongoing Support for Mentors and Faculty

Training

Mentors serve between 1 - 3 years before graduating from PSU with top leadership skills and professional job experiences. Mentor training is intensive and ongoing.

Mentors must have the following skill sets and knowledge, which we offer in our Fall Mentor Training Conference to all new and returning mentors (as examples only):

- Introduction to Pedagogy and Learning Theory in UNST
- Lesson Planning and Syllabus Design
- Running Effective Classroom Discussions
- “Learning How to Learn” Across the Disciplines
- Writing, Critical Reading, and Research
- Basic Technology and ePortfolio Support
- Engaging Diverse Classrooms
- PSU Campus Resources and Support Centers
- Conflict Resolution

Scheduling

With our large, complex program, we schedule nearly 100 mentors each term for over 200 courses (UGs and GRs). Mentor schedules are also limited and ever-changing each term because they are all students as well. This requires a creative scheduling survey and analysis process to create an intricate “puzzle” where all trained UNST mentors can (a) have SINQs to mentor (that is, have a job each term), and (b) maximize their strengths when possible related to themes and interests.

Because of this program need and scheduling reality, UNST mentors and faculty may not be able to directly choose specific “matches” each term. However, mentors and faculty may submit “wish list” items to the Director that our scheduler tries to optimize. Likewise, faculty and mentors wishing to work together more than one term may also contact the Director. This will not guarantee a match due to all other factors (remember: all trained mentors need a job each term!), but it can happen that a match may be made more than once.

The advantage of changing mentors is: (a) they all have different skills and assets to offer to your classroom for supporting students, (b) they may “speak to” students and relate to them in unique ways and reach a wider variety of student audiences to engage them in your course materials, and (c) they may bring new activities that enhance your curriculum that another mentor may not have envisioned.

Some faculty wish they could have the same mentor every term. The schedule alone does not allow for this reality due to mentor’s academic schedules that change every term, so the UNST Mentor Program aims for having highly adaptable, well-trained mentors that can bring multiple disciplinary lenses to your students and the work. Again, we are interdisciplinary, and your mentor can enhance this aspect of UNST whereas your individual faculty expertise may benefit from the mentor’s ability to reach across many audiences with the “learning-to-learn” goal for every student as the primary focus of their role in your classroom—for all students’ success!

Timeline

We would love to schedule your mentor as early as possible. In reality, we work within parameters that are more complex and require longer timelines for hiring and scheduling your mentor each term. These factors affect when we can finally assign your mentors, which is usually toward the end of summer or end of term. As an example, these factors affect when we can schedule your mentors:

- Release of budgets and funds (approvals) to hire our mentors
- UNST enrollment trends for FRINQ/SINQ courses
- Logistics of scheduling 100+ mentors with varying schedules each term

You will get a great mentor, and UNST is here to support you in fostering this relationship for learning! Just contact the Mentor Director or UNST Faculty Support Coordinator at any time.