

# THE STRATEGIST

## Tips and Tactics for Women Faculty

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Annis Pratt, Editor



### **ASKED TO DIRECT? DON'T!**

*New Faculty Member:* Something wonderful has happened! You know how lonely I've been in the department? A graduate student asked me to direct her dissertation!

*Our Advice:* Don't accept: at most universities it is the senior professors who direct dissertations.

This young faculty member agreed to direct, only to find that she had made a powerful enemy. A senior faculty member who felt that she had invaded his turf complained about her to the whole department, said she was not "collegial," and wrote accusatory letters defaming her character and reputation.

*Moral of this Story for Assistant Professor:* Maintain professional relationships with graduate students: look for friends at your own peer level.

Check about requests like these with your department chair or director of graduate studies.

*Moral of this Story for Graduate Student:* It is not in your best interest to have a junior faculty director. She may not be there for you in the future, and she doesn't have the clout yet to mentor you.

National Women's Studies  
Association  
**ACADEMIC DISCRIMINATION  
TASK FORCE**

# YOU NEED A MENTOR!

*Any educational institution that sincerely wants women to progress to full professorships in a timely fashion will develop a mentoring policy.*

## Good Mentoring

Every incoming woman faculty member should be assigned a tenured professor to initiate her into the culture of the department.

The mentor should explain the subtle rules and possible pitfalls of the department, including what personalities to avoid offending, what sets them off, who to seek out as an ally, etc.

The mentor should follow the faculty woman's progress until she is tenured, keeping her from overloading on committee assignments and being sure she has time and facilities for her research.

The mentor should advise the new faculty member on viable topics for publication and use professional networks to place the mentee's articles and books. The mentor should encourage the mentee to attend professional meetings and introduce her to key players in their field.

The mentor should attend the mentee's classes to assess her teaching skills and work with her to improve them.

## Bad Mentoring

Most of this happens in departments still in the grip of the old-boy's-club mentality, and it can be brutal. For example, a new assistant professor was assigned an aggressive male

office mate who situated his huge desk in the middle of the room and dominated the only telephone, persisting in this behavior in spite of her many complaints to the department chair. In another instance, a lesbian assistant professor was told she would not be supported by a senior professor on her tenure committee unless she went to bed with him.

## Non-Mentoring

More covert, but as damaging, are senior faculty who not only fail to provide a mentor but who deliberately create a hostile working atmosphere. Since the unmentored woman does not know their informal mores, she is allowed to make mistakes which impede her progress.

For example, she may not realize that the number of courses she agrees to teach or committees she serves on are greater than the workload of her male peers who are being carefully groomed and mentored toward promotion. She often learns this only when turned down for tenure, though the gradual realization that she is being treated as a second-class citizen may have added to her stress all along.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR SALARY?  
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO  
NEGOTIATE FOR HIGHER PAY?

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