USC Gould School of Law Mentoring Programs and Activities Summary

The Gould School does not have a single, written mentoring policy. We do have mentoring institutions and a strong culture of respect, integrity and support for colleagues, as follows:

- **Faculty Workshops:** Our regular Faculty Workshop series is the backbone of the School’s academic culture. Every other Friday throughout the academic year, a scholar presents a draft manuscript. The presenter may be a distinguished scholar from another institution or a tenured or untenured member of the Law School faculty. Regular attendance at the Workshops and close reading of the papers (which are distributed a week in advance) are expected of all tenured and tenure-track faculty. (Many clinical faculty also attend and participate.) When a member of our own faculty is the author of the workshop paper (and occasionally with outside presenters), a colleague is chosen as “commentator.” (When the Stanford Law School follows this practice, faculty there call it the “USC format.”) The commentator begins the workshop by summarizing and reconstructing the paper’s argument, and then raises questions and makes suggestions meant to help the author make the ultimate published work the best it can be. Thus a junior member of the faculty who is author of a workshop paper has the benefit of a very close reading not only by the commentator, who aims to be especially helpful to the author in every way—substantively, stylistically, and motivationally—but also by the other participants in the workshop who, taking their cue from the commentator, focus on how to make the manuscript better rather than how to tear it (or, by extension, its author) apart. The drafts, commentaries, and questions at each workshop model our school’s academic standards and convey those standards to all members of the faculty, from the most junior to the most senior. Priority in the workshop slots is given to the junior faculty, and most present at least one paper each year, usually in the main faculty workshop and occasionally in the workshop series run by various centers (such as the Center for Law, Economics and Organization, or the Center for Law, Humanities and Culture).

- **Mentors:** When they join the School, junior faculty are informed of our tradition of mentoring and encouraged to ask one or more members of the senior faculty to serve as their mentors, rather than being assigned a mentor; should such informal pairing not occur, the Vice Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs assists the junior faculty member in identifying a mentor. The role of the mentor is to discuss the mentee’s teaching and research and in particular to read drafts of articles and other scholarly products. (Untenured faculty—like their tenured colleagues—commonly share their work-in-progress not only with their mentors and those colleagues who most closely share their methods and field of expertise, but also with a wider circle of colleagues, to benefit from a broader perspective.) Mentors to the junior faculty typically play the role of “commentator” when the faculty member presents a workshop paper.

- **Brown Bags:** For the past three years the academic dean has organized a series of “brown bag” luncheon presentations; these mostly take place during the summer break though a few sessions occur during the academic term. They involve faculty—particularly junior faculty—presenting preliminary ideas about a topic on which they intend to write and receiving feedback and guidance from their colleagues, with no greater formality than a preliminary outline or brief description of their current thinking.

- **Annual Review:** For the faculty as a whole, probably the primary mentoring comes through our intensive annual review of all faculty members. Each year, every tenure-track, tenured and
clinical faculty member writes an annual report describing his or her research, publications, conference participations, teaching, committee service, public service, and other appropriate information. The Administration & Finance Committee, the Law School’s elected Faculty Council, meeting together with the Dean and two Vice Deans, reads, reviews and discusses all of these annual reports. The dean subsequently meets with each person to discuss the review in light of the Committee’s assessment, with special attention to how the school can support the faculty member’s scholarly productivity.

- **Guidance on Teaching**: Senior faculty members observe (and provide feedback on) the classes of untenured members at their request, and always do so as part of the promotion reviews. The Vice Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs reads all teaching evaluations.

- **Tenure Progress**: Each year, the tenured faculty meet to discuss the progress of untenured colleagues. At this meeting, tenured faculty discuss the progress of untenured faculty in both scholarship and teaching. The scholarship of untenured faculty who are in or beyond their second year is reviewed with special care. Every tenured faculty member is assigned to read one or more articles or drafts written by an untenured colleague, and to report on this work during the meeting. The Dean advises each untenured faculty member in light of this discussion.