The Kent School has developed a mentoring process for all new junior faculty. In years where there are multiple hires, the School has supported monthly meetings of all junior faculty as a support group. In the past, this group has been involved in welcoming parties, discussion of and collaboration around scholarly writing, and discussion with the Personnel Committee regarding matters of promotion and tenure. While the School does not assign formal mentors, we are small enough for senior faculty to take responsibility for the well-being of junior faculty. The culture encourages this, and the result is evident in the collaborative projects, including funded research projects that involve all junior faculty engagement with senior faculty. In addition, faculty meet in small curricular groups to develop sequence curriculum and monitor the teaching of those sequences. This is very helpful in providing instructional support and developmental mentoring to all junior faculty.

Another aspect of mentoring comes from the Dean and the Associate Dean of Research primarily, assisted by other faculty, in helping new faculty develop professional connections throughout the university and the community. These foster both interdisciplinary collaborators and community partners that support their areas of practice and research.

The School also has a long-standing external research mentoring program, intended to enhance the capacity of tenure track faculty to increase scholarly productivity in an area of expertise and to strengthen the ability of the School to compete for research funding. The goal of the program is to link junior faculty with productive scholars in their area of expertise or area of interest. The mentors may be from anywhere in this country and must have a record of funded research and scholarship that parallels the interest of the Kent School faculty member. The “external mentors” are recommended by the faculty to the Associate Dean for Research. The Associate Dean considers the field of expertise available, and in agreement with the junior faculty member, makes initial contact, explains the program,
determines interest in participating as an external mentor, and requests a curriculum vitae. If approved by a vote of the faculty and the Dean, the Dean contacts the mentor to discuss the School’s strategic objectives, the faculty member’s objectives, the expectations of the external mentor program and their willingness to work with this faculty member. In addition, the Dean negotiates a modest honorarium and an adjunct appointment in the Kent School of Social Work. This mentorship is expected to last for one academic year. The expectations are that the mentor will assist the faculty in developing a three to five year research trajectory, assist them in preparing an external proposal and provide critical review and direction for proposals, manuscripts and other works. The mentor and mentee determine the forms of communication and meeting they will use. Travel funds are available to allow the faculty to meet the mentor either at conferences they both plan to attend or at the mentor’s university. The objective is to have the faculty member visit other research productive academic environments whenever possible and to increase their networking at professional meetings by attending and meeting the mentor. The usual forms of communication are e-mail, telephone consultation, written review of works and meeting at national conferences. This aspect of mentoring has connected many junior faculty with national scholars with the intent of helping to jump start the new faculty person’s scholarly career.