Faculty rights and responsibilities

Preamble

All appointments to the Columbia University Department of Epidemiology are based on faculty excellence, at the appropriate academic level, as guided by the Columbia University Faculty Handbook and the department’s Guidelines for Appointments and Promotions.

We are a research-intensive department and all our faculty have active programs of science and scholarship. We also have an extensive educational portfolio and are deeply committed to training a diverse body of students who will be leaders in population health science and public health practice.

The department has a long history of pioneering epidemiologic leadership, with many of its faculty having epidemiology as their mother discipline, although we also highly value our interdisciplinary diversity professed by our many faculty who have been rigorously trained in epidemiology and who have demonstrated their use of epidemiologic methods, yet whose mother discipline may not be epidemiology per se. This diversity is one of our core strengths, allowing us to engage faculty with a broad range of expertise and who bring to the department a variety of experiences that well serve the collective vision for our science, education, and impact.

We consider all faculty appointed in epidemiology, whether full-time, part-time, interdisciplinary, joint, adjunct, or other, to be key to the functioning of the department. It is critical that we recognize and respect the differential value commitment faculty make in their engagements with the department. This document aims to clarify the roles of all faculty appointed in epidemiology, to ensure that we optimize both individual faculty engagement and collective departmental function.

Rights of Department of Epidemiology Faculty

- All faculty are members of one or more of the department’s scientific units, and thus have access to a substantial intellectual infrastructure and ample opportunity for collaboration and consultation with peers who work in their scientific unit(s) of interest.
- All faculty are considered part of the department’s intellectual community. As such all faculty are invited to all department events including faculty meetings, department seminars, grand rounds, symposia and other special lectures and events.
- All full time junior faculty are engaged in our structured mentoring program. Upon joining the department junior faculty are assigned a mentor who consults with them on career development and who contributes a separate assessment as part of the annual faculty review process. Junior faculty primarily appointed in epidemiology receive a formal fourth year review in which a committee of senior faculty members conducts a comprehensive and thoughtful evaluation of their scholarly development and meets with them to provides specific and pragmatic advice to optimize their career and potential for promotion.
- All faculty have access to the department chair, vice chairs, senior staff, program directors, scientific unit leaders, and other senior faculty for guidance and support around issues ranging from research directions to administrative challenges and beyond.

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- Full time faculty who are administratively housed in the department are expected to teach at least one 3-credit course annually. Faculty in this group with active research portfolios who can cover 95% of their salary on grants, may, in consultation with the chair, opt out of teaching to accommodate their grant-funded responsibilities. However, no faculty member may have more than 95% of their salary funded by research grants.

**Contribution to teaching mission**

- All faculty are expected to take on student mentoring responsibilities. In general we expect that all faculty mentor 3 or more students annually (master’s or doctoral), although this can be averaged out over time. The general expectation is that senior faculty will mentor more students than junior faculty. Specific ways faculty can mentor students include participating on doctoral dissertations, being a master’s thesis reader, supervising a master’s student practicum placement.

- All faculty are expected to advise master’s students as needed. It is understood that faculty who are housed in the department may be called upon to advise students more than other faculty. Therefore it is also understood that advising students can offset some of the mentoring expectations noted above.

- All faculty are expected to be responsive to our students, engaging with them as needed, participating in events relevant to student life, and to the extent possible, creating opportunities for students to participate in faculty-led research. We aspire to prepare students to be leaders in public health and expect that all faculty commit to helping our students to that end.

- Full time faculty who are administratively housed in the department are expected to teach at least one 3-credit course annually. Faculty in this group with active research portfolios who can cover 95% of their salary on grants, may, in consultation with the chair, opt out of teaching to accommodate their grant-funded responsibilities. However, no faculty member may have more than 95% of their salary funded by research grants.

- All other faculty are encouraged to likewise take on the teaching of courses, but are not required to do so. Faculty who are not administratively in the department may offset mentoring responsibilities described above by engaging as a formal instructor in a course. Details about compensation for faculty teaching are provided in the next section.

- Faculty who seek to opt out of a single semester of teaching may be considered to do so by the Department Chair if they: give at least one full semester advance notice (and one year advance notice if it is a required course), have a viable plan for teaching coverage of their course especially if it is a required degree program or certificate course, use the time away from teaching to engage in additional research activities that would not have otherwise been feasible and submit extramural grant applications as PI/MPI, can cover 95% of their salary on grants or other non-teaching sources of funding, and use their research grant or discretionary funds, and not departmental central funds, to cover the teaching effort they are opting out of for the semester. Faculty wishing to be considered for this should submit a short proposal for Department Chair approval detailing the aforementioned points, a general justification as to why they need teaching relief to accomplish those research activities, and the additional research activities that would not have otherwise been feasible because of their teaching duties (for instance, the need to travel for an extended period of time, perhaps outside the country, in building a new research partnership, engaging in formative collaboration activities that will ultimate lead to a major grant submission or new program of research, etc.)

- While faculty welcome letters, cards and other written expressions of appreciation, faculty of the Department of Epidemiology may not accept gifts of value (above $20).
Annual review

- All faculty are expected to participate in the department’s annual faculty review, conducted at least once each calendar year.

Compensation Model

Rationale

We aim for a clear, fair, and sustainable compensation model for teaching and for undertaking leadership responsibilities. We also are committed to consistency and transparency in all of our operations and polices.

Intent

The compensation levels articulated here build on the culture of the epidemiology department as a research-intensive department with the vast majority of faculty being primarily funded through extramural projects. Therefore, these compensation levels are intended to formalize transparency of our commitment to faculty but do not mean to shift our departmental culture away from research. With few exceptions it is anticipated that faculty who are administratively and academically primarily appointed in the department will not be spending more than 50% of their time on teaching or leadership responsibilities.

All faculty are expected to work to cover their salary through grant funds. However, no full time faculty member at MSPH may have more than 95% of their salary covered by grant funds. The department of epidemiology will therefore provide 5% salary support for all faculty who are administratively housed in the department, in addition to any other compensation due for teaching or playing a leadership role. For faculty who are administratively housed in other departments, centers, or institutes, the expectation is that their home administrative entity will cover this 5%.

Mentoring of students and engagement in department functioning is not compensated separately, being considered a core element of department citizenship.

Part of the intent of this compensation schema is to ensure a sustainable model for department financing. It is expected that all faculty will cover their full salary through a combination of research, engagement in education, and leadership responsibilities. Departmental deficits may occasion the need for the department to rethink particular faculty departmental engagement and some of these norms.
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funds over the 100% (e.g., 50% of 20% coverage over 100%), in consultation with the chair and the Department Administrator. In line with the culture of the epidemiology department as a research-intensive department with the vast majority of faculty being primarily funded through extramural projects and the requirement that full-time faculty who are administratively housed in the department are expected to teach at least one 3-credit course annually, only faculty who have a minimum of 75% extramurally sponsored research project funding with full indirect cost recovery and are teaching at least one 3-credit course will be permitted to divert funds to their discretionary account. No more than 15% per year may be diverted to any one faculty member’s discretionary account. Faculty who are not 100% funded in any given year will be required to use their accumulated discretionary account funds, should such funds exist, in filling this deficit.

**Choosing courses, appointing instructors**

Given our responsibility to ensure full salary support for faculty who are administratively housed in the department, those faculty will be given priority by the chair for course teaching. Faculty whose primary academic appointment is in the department but who are administratively housed elsewhere will have next priority.

Compensation is linked to teaching in courses that are listed primarily in epidemiology, and that are determined by the chair, in consultation with the chair’s leadership group, to be in keeping with department strategic direction. The school compensates teaching in school-wide courses at levels set by the school.

The chair, in consultation with relevant scientific unit leaders and program directors, will make all course instructor selections. The department prizes excellence in education and aims to reward outstanding teaching. We do not explicitly tie in teaching evaluations to the compensation model, recognizing the measurement challenges inherent in evaluating teaching excellence, but note here that teaching excellence will be considered in course instructor selection.

Teaching assistants will be assigned for all courses with more than 20 students, ensuring that larger courses have suitable teaching assistant support. Graduate seminar leaders may, with chair’s agreement, be engaged to assist with smaller courses.

In general, we will not offer classes with fewer than 10 students. Exceptions will be made for classes that are central to the teaching program.

The chair reserves the necessary right to occasionally adjust these policies in order to respect particular course needs and demands with deviations from the general template noted above.

**Compensation for leadership responsibilities**

Leadership responsibility compensation depends on type of responsibility but broadly this refers to chairing a large committee, taking on a named role on a departmental project, or other activities as determined by the chair.