

**Department of Horticulture**  
**Promotion Mentoring Guidelines for**  
**Research Associates and Faculty Research Assistants**  
Revised January 2021

**1. Discuss promotion opportunities with your supervisor.**

When you are first hired as a Research Associate (RA) or Faculty Research Assistant (FRA) your supervisor will explain the expectations and responsibilities of your position. In addition, you will also receive a copy of your position description, which formally details these expectations. It is important that you understand these expectations and that you and your supervisor are on the same page about them. The position description serves as the benchmark for evaluating your performance, both for your annual reviews and for possible promotion.

Soon after you are hired you should discuss with your supervisor what the possibilities for promotion are. In general, there are two higher promotion steps for each rank: Senior Research Associate I, Senior Research Associate II, Senior Faculty Research Assistant I, and Senior Faculty Research Assistant II. Your supervisor can explain what the promotion possibilities are for your specific situation. They can also discuss potential timelines for promotion (four years of service is required), and help you plan your professional development to help you meet the criteria for promotion. You should also make potential promotion a topic during your annual performance reviews.

You and your supervisor should decide on a potential promotion schedule well in advance of your desired promotion date. You must inform your unit leader of your intention to seek promotion by **February 1 of the year prior to your desired promotion date.**

**2. Get a peer mentor.**

Other RA and FRAs who have gone through the promotion process can be a valuable professional resource. It is good to establish a relationship with a mentor as early as possible. You should at least get a mentor when you formally state your intention to seek promotion. Talk with your supervisor and with your unit leader to get suggestions for who might make a good mentor. You want your mentor to have been promoted (i.e. is at least a rank higher than you). In addition, some other good qualities in a mentor include:

- Someone local that you can walk down the hall and talk with.
- Someone you are comfortable talking with.
- Someone who wants to and has the time to be your mentor.

While it is good to have a mentor who is familiar with how the promotion process works in Horticulture, this may not be practical in some circumstances. For example, you might be the only Horticulture RA or FRA at your duty station. In these cases, it is OK to have a mentor who is not in Horticulture. Also, feel free to have more than one mentor and to ask advice from a broad range of other colleagues.

How you engage with your mentor is up to you. They can be a particularly good resource for understanding the practical steps of the promotion process and providing feedback as you craft the important documents such as your candidate's statement and CV.

### **3. Familiarize yourself with the process and timeline**

The promotion process involves many steps stretched out over the course of about one year. Your advisor and mentor can help you get oriented to this process. However, it is your responsibility to make sure you prepare the required documents and meet the various deadlines. You should review the pertinent guidelines and procedures posted on the [Horticulture webpage for "Evaluation Guidelines and Procedures"](#) These include the Horticulture P&T Guidelines and Procedures. New P&T guidelines with specific dates are posted each year.

#### **Appendix A**

[month, day, year]

To: [mentor]

From: [department head]

RE: Mentoring Committee for [mentee], [rank]

Dear [mentor],

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a mentor for [mentee]. Research support faculty face many challenges at the different stages of their career and having experienced faculty as resources can be a great benefit. Your role is to be a coach, providing advice and information on things like documenting research productivity, program support, networking on campus or the station, and departmental policies.

Your mentee will need your help and guidance for preparation of their dossier for Promotion. I strongly encourage you to have one "formal" meeting per year with your mentee and all committee members. Whether as part of a scheduled meeting or otherwise, the committee should review the mentee's CV and candidate's statement annually. However, for the most part, your interactions with your mentee should be casual, so they feel comfortable coming to you anytime.

Please be accessible and try to actively share your experience and knowledge with your mentee. Encourage your mentee to attend the P&T presentation in their first year and to integrate with the department. Talk to them about work-life balance and how to stay sane. Particularly helpful advice is how to prioritize the multiple requests of their time, and when it is appropriate for them to say "no". If you have any concerns, please let me know so we can work together with the mentee on a solution to the difficulty.

Faculty mentoring is a critical role for experienced faculty, and can have an enormous positive impact. Thanks again for being willing to serve as a mentor.

CC: [mentee]