



The First Two Years:

Getting Launched in the School of Arts and Sciences at Penn

A workshop series: 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Fall 2020 sessions will be held remotely via Zoom. Spring 2021 may be remote or in-person, TBD.

Program website: <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/academics/resources-faculty/first-two-years-program>

September 11, 2020: “You have arrived: Now what?” Tips for Getting Oriented to SAS and Penn”

All institutions have their own logics. Sometimes, these things are so taken for granted, that colleagues simply (and unfairly) assume that new faculty know the “rules of the game.” You are invited for lunch, and a workshop, to meet other new faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) and, more importantly, learn many small but crucial pieces of information. Topics include finding your way in faculty meetings, colloquia, and other new faculty events. We will also discuss how to make the most of our mentoring relationship.

October 9, 2020: “Time: Not Enough of It”

One of the challenges of being an Assistant Professor is that many people want you to do something for them. How do you adjudicate among all of these different requests? How do you set priorities? In particular, how do you juggle requests to do things on campus compared to other priorities, particularly the need to do research and writing? Many Assistant Professors feel overwhelmed. This workshop will provide concrete advice for managing the demands of the first two years. It will also give you a set of principles to guide your decision making.

New: November 13, 2020: “Being a Faculty member in a Pandemic

As you adjust to being at Penn, many parts of your life are different than they would otherwise be due to the pandemic. In this session, we will talk about the ways in which you are impacted, and strategies for building connection and community in an era of social distancing.

December 11, 2020 “Being a Whole Person: Being a Professor with Competing Obligations”

Although research, teaching, and service are crucial parts of a life, they are not the only things professors do. Professors have families, some have children, and social lives. Faculty members often face life challenges as they help their partners get settled in a new city, raise their young children, help their parents with life challenges, and juggle many other obligations. Join us for an informal conversation about the challenges in finding balance with a demanding career and strategies for success.

January 15, 2021: “Learning to Teach and Dealing with Evaluations”

Panel moderated by Bruce Lenthall

For new Assistant Professors, teaching early in a career can be challenging. There are many new tasks: dealing with angry students who feel that they deserve a better grade, figuring out how much work to assign, managing teaching assistants, preparing lectures and assigning grades. Even developing a syllabus can have a learning curve. New faculty can find teaching evaluations hard to discern as well as disappointing in their results. This session will provide valuable tips for (time-efficient) ways to manage teaching and to help make teaching more rewarding. This workshop will discuss the pleasures of teaching, as well as the challenges.

February 12, 2021: “Third-Year Reviews and Tenure Reviews”

Each college is different, and the purpose of this meeting is to explain how things work at Penn in the School of Arts and Sciences. What kinds of things do Chairs, Deans, and the Personnel Committee look for in an outstanding file? Who is on the Personnel committee? How does it work? What is the timeline? Current and former members of the SAS Personnel committee will speak. We will provide information on the kinds of letters department chairs would like to be able to write at tenure. This workshop will give you deeper insight into a stressful, but crucial, step in building a successful career at Penn.

March 19, 2021: “Managing Power and Powerlessness in Relationship”

Assistant Professors are in the middle: they have important forms of control over students, employees, and some staff members in lab, teaching, and other settings. Yet, they also feel vulnerable and powerless with more senior faculty, chairs, and high-level administrators. In these relationships, there are routinely tensions and conflicts. Hence, Assistant Professors need to learn how to deal with frustrated students and recalcitrant teaching assistants; they also face difficulties in feeling “heard” by more senior people or, on occasion, dealing with inappropriate requests or difficult challenges. This session will help faculty members develop strategies for managing power and powerlessness including skills in communication, particularly for having “difficult conversations.”

April 9, 2021: “Networking”

In the tenure workshop, it was stressed that faculty need to have a national reputation in their fields. To achieve this goal, many stress the importance of “networking,” but what exactly does that mean? More importantly, what can you do? In this interactive workshop, we will break down the various skills involved in networking. Almost nobody is good at all of them, so we will discuss how you can approach the process of learning how to network.

May 7, 2021

In this event, we will take stock of what you have learned this year in brief reflections. We will look back on what you learned this past year, and reflect on what steps you want to take in the future. It is also a social event, with alcohol, to celebrate having survived and thrived in the academic year.

In addition, all junior faculty are invited to two important workshops: a grants workshop and a writing retreat.

May 12, 2021: First Two Years Grants Workshops

9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Grants are an important part of the expectations for new faculty, and yet the competition is very stiff. This workshop is designed to help junior faculty learn the elements of an outstanding proposal as well as “rookie mistakes” to avoid. Two concurrent workshop sessions will be offered: one which is focused on NSF and NIH grants and a second which is focused on major foundation grants such as ALCS and Mellon.

Each workshop will feature a panel discussion, led by an Associate Dean and a relevant program officer. Participants are expected to read and write reviews of two grant proposals, which they will review in a mock panel at the workshop in order to illuminate the key challenges proposals face. Workshop participants will each have two mentors read the proposal. Participants commit to sharing a draft of their grant proposal with their mentors one month before the deadline. In addition, workshop participants will share their reviews with one another and have a discussion at the November 2020 meeting for the First Two Years Workshop. After lunch with the new faculty in the fall meeting, they will convene to debrief on the experience and get additional advice.

Faculty who are enrolled in the workshop, The First Two Years, automatically are admitted to this grants workshop. To be effective, the workshop needs to be small. If there is space, additional SAS faculty will be admitted; priority will be given to former members of The First Two Years workshop.

SAS-GSE Writing Retreat: May 31 - June 4, 2021

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, lunch is served

Organizers: Ayako Kano, East Asian Languages and Civilizations and Jennifer Moore, GSE

Since 2012, a writing retreat has happened which has invited SAS and GSE faculty to spend one week writing together in a room on campus. Faculty commit to only work on their writing during that time. A professional editor, provided by GSE, is onsite during the week to discuss writing projects with faculty. The lunch provides a chance for faculty to meet other faculty in SAS and GSE to build valuable connections. There are four or five follow-up mini writing retreats during the academic year. All faculty are invited.

Program contacts:

Annette Lareau, Faculty Leader, alareau@sas.upenn.edu or (cell) 267-981-4754

Jody Chavez, Program Staff, jchavez@sas.upenn.edu.