

GUIDANCE FOR MENTORS OF NEW FELLOWS

Thank you very much indeed for agreeing to act as mentor to one of our new colleagues. I know from experience that the advice and guidance that mentors give is extremely welcome to newcomers, perhaps especially to this with no prior connection to the College. This document is not intended to be a script or prescribe the role and messaging, but it emerged in the discussions of the Working Group on Fellows' Benefits that it would be helpful to produce a bit more guidance than is currently available about what mentors can most helpfully provide.

The Guide for Fellows explains that:

All newly-elected Fellows are assigned a mentor for their first year. This colleague should be a point of contact for them early in their time to help explain Selwyn's working, introduce them to others, and provide them with advice and guidance. It is important to stress however, that the Senior Tutor (on academic and pastoral matters) and the Bursar (on financial and organizational ones) are easy to contact and happy to answer questions. The Chaplain is available to colleagues as well as to students of all faiths or none as a source of personal support.

That is a start. The Guide itself will be updated in the coming weeks. But in the meantime, it may be useful. In appointing a mentor, however, the idea is to identify someone who can become the first point of contact for a newcomer, the person to whom they can quickly come to feel comfortable addressing questions that begin with the (perhaps unspoken) qualifier: 'this is probably a really dumb question, but....' It might therefore be helpful to ask you to think back on what perplexities and oddities caused you to think in such terms yourself when you were first a Fellow or that you have since heard other new Fellows articulate. This year Covid regulations may well be a matter of concern. Counter-intuitively, that may be a bigger issue for someone moving from another Cambridge College where the rules have been different from ours than for someone moving from another continent and who assumes that everything may be very different. Dining, meals and etiquette form an area of concern for many. Another is the issue of how to access the various services and support the College offers – whether grants and allowances, maintenance and domestic staff help, understanding how to book a supervision or seminar room, how best to approach Heads of Department if they need something done or clarified. There is also the associated matter of which is the appropriate one for any given purpose. A walk around Selwyn on a nice autumn day might be a good way to orient a new Fellow in both the literal sense and giving an opportunity for them to be wheeled in to meet key staff. The specifics may depend on whether the new Fellow already knows the College, whether they are to be a DoS immediately, and so on. A meeting very early in the mentee's time here that takes in lunch might be a very good way to get these conversations under way. The new Fellows this year all have dining rights with immediate effect and we will be happy to see them around the place.

From the point of view of the College, it would be desirable if mentors could encourage new Fellows to participate actively in our collective life. Lunching, dining and social activities such as the receptions for postgraduate students or the matriculation and graduation dinners are an excellent way to get to know people and settle in. The Master and Senior Tutor are also keen for Fellows to be encouraged to take part in events in the Lodge, alumni relations (many

old members like to hear about how the College has changed and/or about developments in their subject), outreach activities or committee service. No individual need to ever-present in all these areas, but we do want to encourage all Fellows to be active and civic members of the Selwyn community.

New Fellows should also be made aware that they are Trustees of the Foundation and as such expected to participate in its governance. Initially, this only involves attendance at Governing Body, but new colleagues may be asked to participate in some committees. They should be encouraged to let the Master, Bursar and Senior Tutor know if there are particular areas in which they would like to contribute and/or in which they have relevant expertise.

A final point bears stressing. New Fellows should be actively encouraged to approach the Bursar and the Senior Tutor if they have any questions and concerns over how the place works. They need not work only through their mentor. The start of the academic year is a busy time and it may be that we will seem rather preoccupied. That should not be taken as a sign that we are unapproachable, just busy. We welcome conversation with colleagues!

Please let us know if you have any further suggestions for what to cover in this briefing note and of any issues that you and your mentees may encounter that could usefully be addressed in the *Guide for Fellows* and/or through mentoring.

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