

Faculty Mentoring Paper Summary

Mellon Academic Mentoring Support Project

A mentor is a trusted and experienced advisor who has a direct interest in the development and education of a less experienced individual. A mentor is that person who achieves a one-to-one developmental relationship with a learner, and one whom the learner identifies as having enabled personal growth to take place.

The relationship between the mentor and protégé is unique. The mentor assumes numerous roles, while contributing to a sustaining relationship of shared interests and goals. A mentor makes a commitment to an assigned protégé to help her or him grow into the organization's culture and become a productive and effective organization member. A person can never have too many mentors. As a faculty member, you might have several formal and informal mentors at the same time.

Within academe, mentoring can, and usually does take several forms: faculty-to-faculty (often senior-to-junior faculty), faculty-to-graduate student, and/or administrative mentoring (department chair-to-faculty). Although traditionally thought to involve a single person, current perspectives of mentoring more often value group approaches and multiple mentors as viable alternatives as well. Mentors may also serve a variety of roles that encompass professional, personal and social growth. A mentor is not automatically a friend, “exclusively” assigned to a protégé, nor expected to be “on call” to listen to grievances and frustrations.

The precise definition of “mentor” is difficult to pin down, but in his book *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, David Levinson wrote that the mentoring relationship is one of the “most complex and developmentally important” in a person's life. Levinson did not see the relationship in formal terms, such as “teacher/student” or “boss/subordinate,” but rather in terms of its character and its functions. Several functions are considered integral in the mentoring relationship: teaching, sponsoring, guidance, socialization into a profession, provision of counsel and moral support. Of all of these, Levinson believed that the most important function of a mentor was assisting in the realization of a dream.

The relationship is, at its most fundamental, a multifaceted collaboration between a junior professional and a senior professional with the primary goal being the nurturing of the junior professional's development. In virtually every profession imaginable, a mentoring relationship is considered an excellent route toward ensuring not only a profession's vitality, but also growth of the workers within that profession. Since the days of the guilds, we have recognized the synergy of the “master/novice” combination. Many industrial professions still use the

apprenticeship model. In 1979, the business world turned its attention to revitalizing the concept of mentoring when an article in the *Harvard Business Review* reported that mentored executives earn more money at a younger age, are better educated and more likely to follow initial career goals, and enjoy greater career satisfaction.

THE MYTHS OF MENTORING

Although the literature on mentoring points out a multitude of benefits to the protégé, the mentor, and the organization, mentoring is not a panacea for all problems in a department, college, or institution. In fact, a field-based research project funded by the Women's Education Equity Act under the purview of the U.S. Department of Education has identified some myths of mentoring:

Myth 1: Mentoring is a reward in and of itself. It is a myth that the mentoring process is inherently rewarding and that remuneration is therefore not necessary. While mentors do realize the benefits and “warm fuzzies” of teaching a protégé the ropes, the truth is that organizations need to reward those individuals who agree to take on additional responsibilities. Providing incentives turns mentoring into an important activity and a priority in the workplace.

Myth 2: Mentoring programs are a panacea for difficult problems, such as orientation, affirmative action, and problem employees. Mentoring should be reserved for developing human potential in terms of improving organizational goals. Too frequently, quick-fix programs are initiated under the rubric of mentoring. Although the organization's problems need to be addressed, people should not confuse the programs to fix them with mentoring.

Myth 3: Any mentor and protégé can be paired. Too often, mentors and protégés are thrown together with the assumption that a common workplace will be enough to make the relationship work. Sometimes a similar manner or personality is perceived to be an adequate link. If either the mentor or protégé is unwilling to participate or if one is uncomfortable within the pair, the relationship could be doomed. Not everyone is a good mentor or protégé, and participants' readiness, communication, volunteerism, compatibility, and mentoring style should be assessed. Carefully talking with the mentoring pair helps to ensure a better understanding of the relationship's potential viability.

Myth 4: Mentoring programs must be controlled to be successful. Organizations are known for operating policies and procedures, and this same philosophy is applied – mistakenly – to mentoring programs. Each member of the pair has different needs and developmental considerations. Training and guidelines are important, but a successful mentoring program allows individualized goals jointly drawn from the pair. Organizations benefit when they provide resources for the pair and do not hamper their progress.

Other considerations in mentoring programs should include communications and information. Academic institutions cannot assume that personnel have the same understanding of and perceptions about mentoring. Knowledge about mentoring can vary based on individual mentoring experiences or the lack thereof. Nor can colleges and universities assume that mentoring will be accepted within the faculty and/or administrative ranks. Mentoring programs can be met with skepticism or resistance from the organization's members who want to maintain the status quo. Further, mentoring could intimidate people, threaten turf, or increase departmental politicking.

It is also important to remember that mentoring might not automatically change institutional expectations, solve a disappointing career situation, remedy a career that has reached a plateau, reduce stagnation and withdrawal of individual faculty members, change attitudes, or build requisite personal and professional skills. Moreover, mentoring might not be viewed positively, and it could indeed be perceived as a form of tokenism or favoritism.

MENTORING ROLES

Advisor: Provide the protégé with useful information about the University; offer the protégé an avenue for social and emotional support during his/her transition into the University; familiarize the protégée with the numerous resources located throughout the University community.

Role model: Teach the protégé how to succeed in the University by modeling how individuals in senior positions conduct themselves and interact with others.

Coach: Advise the protégé on how to accomplish his/her goals and provide feedback. Help the protégé develop alternatives to address work-related problems or create learning opportunities. Teach the protégé organizational and professional skills and help "decode" the University culture; create an atmosphere where protégés can learn from their own and each other's experiences, mistakes and successes as well as from their mentors' experiences.

Advocate: Encourage the participation of the protégé on committees to increase visibility; enhance the protégé's self-esteem through supportive, nonjudgmental discussions and "pep talks." Help the protégé establish a professional network.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD MENTOR

- Considered a role model in his/her position or area
- Committed to the mentoring process
- Responds to individual circumstances
- Encourages and motivates others

- Creates a continuous learning environment
- Has the respect of others at the University
- Commits time to be a mentor
- Possesses the knowledge and influence needed to be a mentor
- Willing to share knowledge
- Possesses good interpersonal communication skills
- Similarity of subspecialty is not as important as willingness to serve as mentor

BENEFITS OF BEING A MENTOR

- Gain increased respect and recognition from others in the University as individuals who have the ability to identify, encourage, and promote other employees
- Extend your network to other mentors and protégés
- Contribute to the development of new employees
- Experience professional and personal growth and renewal
- Contribute toward increasing the protégé's enthusiasm about being an employee of USC
- Use or develop additional skills not required in current position
- Keep you sharp and encourages creativity
- Enhance your value to others
- Satisfaction of helping with the professional growth and development of a faculty member
- Collaboration, feedback and interaction with a junior faculty member
- A network of former protégés
- Expanded networks of colleagues and collaborators

A MENTOR'S CHECKLIST

1. Set aside an hour for the first meeting with your protégé. Obtain his/her CV prior to this meeting so that you already know pertinent professional information. Use this hour to get to know other aspects of your protégé. Is he/she married? Any children? Any hobbies? Share similar information about yourself. You may want to conduct this first meeting away from the office, or go to your protégé's area.
2. Be sure that your protégé knows how to contact you: e-mail address, telephone numbers, fax number. You also should have this information from your protégé.
3. Ask your protégé what he/she expects from you.
4. Tell your protégé what you expect.
5. Together, go over strengths and weaknesses. Ask what he/she sees as the most important aspect of career development.

6. Familiarize yourself and then your protégé with the institution's promotion/tenure policies. The two of you can develop a "check list" that you can follow in regard to the protégé's progress.
7. Either set up a regular time to meet or set the next meeting at the conclusion of this meeting. Try to meet at least once a month with your protégé. Be flexible, but insistent about meeting.
8. With your protégé write out one-year and three-year goals for your protégé's career. At the end of each year, re-examine those goals and determine if they have been met.
9. Obtain the protégé's written position description from the department chair to ensure that the expectations of the mentor, protégé and chairperson are aligned. Make sure that you and your protégé have a chair-signed position description in your files.
10. If your protégé is interested in (or struggling in) an area that is not your strength either, actively seek others who may assist in this regard. This is called "layering" mentors and takes the pressure off one individual to be "super mentor."
11. At the end of a year in this relationship, try evaluating each other.
12. Be aware that as the relationship evolves, and your protégé progresses along his/her career path, his/her needs may change in a direction that leads away from you. This can be an awkward time for both of you, but consider it your success. You have helped this person develop an insight that would not otherwise have been gained without a mentor. Help him/her locate others who may take over the mentoring duties. By that time, you will probably have several new junior faculty seeking your guidance. You may even meet junior professionals outside of your institution who request that you serve as a mentor to them.
13. Never see your protégé as a threat to you. As with others we teach, we want to see them reach beyond us. Your protégé's success is ultimately your success.

MENTOR-RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. Recognize and evaluate what you can offer, keeping in mind that you should not expect yourself to fulfill every mentoring function.
2. Clarify expectations with your protégé about the extent to which you will offer guidance concerning personal as well as professional issues such as advice about how to balance family and career responsibilities.
3. Give constructive feedback (as well as praise) when warranted but present it with specific suggestions for improvement.
4. Help new faculty learn what kinds of available institutional support they should seek in order to further their own career development – such as faculty development funds.

5. Take time to be available to your protégé (keep in contact by dropping by, calling, sending e-mail, or inviting your protégé to lunch); ask questions and to read proposals and papers, and for periodic review of progress.
6. Tell your protégé if he/she asks to little – or too much – of your time.
7. Maintain confidentiality.
8. Discuss with the protégé the “rules” of the department or team.
9. Advise on tenure and promotion requirements and processes.
10. Provide advice on University, college, and department/team policies.
11. Suggest strategies for effective teaching, grading, and writing grant proposals.
12. Propose effective ways of interacting with students and colleagues.
13. Help sort out priorities: budgeting time, publications, teaching, obtaining appropriate resources, setting up a lab or experimental work if appropriate, committees.
14. Suggest how to say “no” to certain demands on his/her time.
15. Provide social support, act as an advocate for the new faculty member.
16. Introduce him/her to colleagues from other departments.
17. Explain the written and unwritten rules of the University.
18. Discuss research, publication and presentations at conferences.
19. Discuss short term and long term career goals and professional interests.
20. Share information on academic and student support services on campus.
21. Discuss effective instructional techniques, course development and curricular issues.
22. Explore research and sponsored funding opportunities, and writing publications.
23. Discuss academic policies and guidelines, and university governance structure.
24. Discuss student issues such as advising, motivating, and handling academic dishonesty.
25. Encourage and demonstrate confidence in your protégé.
26. Recognize your protégé as an individual with a private life and value her/him as a person.
27. Ensure a positive and supportive professional environment for your protégé.
28. Do not deny your own ignorance on a particular topic.
29. Allow your protégé to assist you with projects, papers and research whenever possible and be generous with credit.
30. Help establish a professional network for the protégé.

CHAIR-RELATED MENTORING ACTIVITIES

1. Make sure the new faculty member understands what is required for tenure, both officially and unofficially. Give all new faculty copies of the promotion and tenure guidelines for the department, college and university upon arrival. Include a copy of the “checklist” for promotion. Specify which records should be kept or filed in the department office.

2. Make sure the new faculty member understands the time tables and deadlines.
3. Be explicit about the way in which a new faculty member will be evaluated. The new faculty member should be given the answers to these and related questions: What is the relative importance of student evaluations, peer evaluations, and letters from inside or outside the institution?
4. Once a new faculty member knows the rules and expectations for promotion to tenure, a major responsibility of the chair is to ensure the physical and information resources to meet these expectations.
5. Give the new faculty a list of the right person to call for different needs. This could include phone numbers for everything from the grants and contracts office, to whom to call to unlock a classroom. Including a list of the current committee and teaching assignments within the department is also quite useful, as is a listing of the responsibilities of the department staff.
6. Introduce the new faculty member to the rest of the faculty. Let him/her know which ones might be particularly helpful as mentors for teaching, dealing with graduate students, writing grants, etc.
7. Ask appropriate senior faculty to make a point of offering specific help.
8. Make sure the new faculty member gets put on all the appropriate distribution lists. These include announcements of faculty meetings, seminars, grants, fellowships, internal funding sources, industrial affiliate programs, seminars for developing skills in teaching and grant writing, etc. Make sure the new faculty member gets in the phone book, and gets an electronic mail account and phone.
9. Give the new faculty member a list of department teaching policies. Specific policies might address grade distributions, student cheating, syllabi, office hours, keeping exams, changing grades, student evaluations, etc.
10. Facilitate getting help in learning to teach well. Ask a master teacher to be a teaching mentor for the new faculty member. If there is a course with two sections, or which is co-taught, assign the master teacher together with the new faculty member. Give the new faculty member a list of the last few people who have taught the course assigned to him/her, and specify who would be most helpful.
11. *Steer the new faculty member towards workshops on teaching.* Identify meaningful ways in which teaching effectiveness can be evaluated.

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1. U. W. Oshkosh - <http://www.uwosh.edu/mentoring/faculty/benefits.html>
 2. Northern Illinois University - <http://www3.niu.edu/facdev/development/mentoring.htm>
 3. Washington State University – http://provost.wsu.edu/faculty_mentoring/guidelines.html



4. Virginia Commonwealth University –
<http://www.medschool.vcu.edu/intranet/facdev/facultymentoringguide/pastpresfuture.htm>
5. Olmstead, M. (1993) Mentoring new faculty: Advice to department chairs. *Committee on the Status of Women in Physics Gazette*, 13(1).
6. Luna, G. & Cullen, D (1995). Empowering the faculty: Mentoring redirected and renewed. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports, V3.

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