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A Model for Mentoring University Faculty

By
Angela Lumpkin

Abstract:

Operational characteristics for successful mentoring programs of new university faculty include clarity of purpose of the program, methods for matching mentors and protégés, mentor training, mentor-protégé relationship building, and program effectiveness assessment. Strengths of formal, informal, peer, group or consortia, intra-departmental, inter-departmental, and research mentoring approaches to mentoring from the literature are presented. Using characteristics and outcomes from successful programs, a proposed four-stage model of conceptualization, design and development, implementation, and evaluation can lead to the benefits of socialization into the culture, emotional support, networking, and increased job performance.

Mentoring in higher education can help faculty grow and develop (Ragins, Cotton, and Miller 2000; Eby et al. 2006). For example, Lumpkin (2009) and Sorcinelli and Yun (2007) describe how mentoring programs can help smooth the transition of faculty into new roles. There is support for the value of mentoring in higher education (Luna and Cullen 1995) even though the academy has been slow to formalize faculty mentoring programs. Darwin (2000) and Wunsch (1994) stated that there is no universally accepted definition of mentoring. Baldwin (1990, 20) suggested this may be because of higher education's failure "to acknowledge the developmental nature of faculty careers."

Mentors guide, advise, or coach colleagues in their development. Mentors support and encourage protégés while developing mutually respectful and trusting relationships. Mentoring is complex, multi-dimensional, idiosyncratic, and contextualized process which depends on the academic unit's culture, the type of institution, and the expectations of those involved. Potential benefits of mentoring include: (1) facilitating the recruitment, retention, and advancement of faculty; (2) socializing protégés into an academic unit's culture; (3) increasing collegiality and building relationships and networks among protégés and mentors; (4) increasing productivity for protégés and mentors; and (5) promoting professional growth and career development for protégés and mentors (Boyle and Boice 1998; Luna and Cullen 1995).

The purpose of this article is to identify the characteristics and outcomes of successful mentoring programs to serve as the basis for a model for mentoring. This model would provide a systematic approach to conceptualizing, designing and developing, implementing, and assessing mentoring to facilitate the growth and development of the professoriate.

Methods

The research of literature is was based on an extensive review and analysis of books and articles on mentoring in publications specific to higher education (Boote and Beile 2005). Scholarly works describing mentoring programs open to faculty in all disciplines were used while those specific to a particular disciplinary area were excluded. In addition to reviewing the literature about mentoring new faculty, mentoring faculty more broadly was included. Excluded from this analysis were works emphasizing mentoring for one gender or race or ethnicity, as well as those that described mentoring undergraduate or graduate students. Thus, this research thus focused on examining mentoring programs in higher education, including publications that described and analyzed mentoring through literature reviews.

The first section identifies essential components to mentoring by describing operational characteristics associated with mentoring programs in higher education. The second section examines several approaches to mentoring in order to identify key outcomes of mentoring programs. The third section describes the proposed model.

Key Characteristics of Mentoring Programs

A plethora of characteristics of and best practices in mentoring programs have been identified and described (Boice 1992; Wunsch 1994; Luna and Cullen 1995; Johnson 2007; Johnson and Ridley 2008; and Nakamura, Shernoff, and Hooker 2009). Those frequently identified include defining a clear purpose, goals, and strategies; selecting, matching, and

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preparing protégés and mentors for their new roles; holding regular meetings to nurture interactions among protégés and mentors; and evaluating program effectiveness.

Defining a Clear Purpose, Goals, and Strategies

When embarking on an initiative to mentor faculty, clarity of focus is important. If an analysis of context indicates that faculty, protégés and mentors alike, could potentially benefit from mentoring, then formulating a program purpose is the first step in establishing a program. With the involvement of a representative, campus-wide group, a succinct purpose statement is needed. It is important to have a commitment from administrators at this initial juncture, so they will be more likely to provide release time for a program coordinator, space for a centralized home, and resources and support for an advisory committee (Gaskill 1993; Wunsch 1994; Boyle and Boice 1998).

An advisory committee can identify specific, measurable, attainable, and timely goals and operational strategies for initiating and institutionalizing a mentoring program. Boyle and Boice (1998, 177) concluded, "Effective mentoring begins with institution-wide programs that coach departments in ways to systematically immerse their newcomers in support programs and provide them with a sense of connectiveness."

Selecting, Matching, and Preparing Protégés and Mentors

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Developing informational materials about mentoring is an extension of the purpose. If protégés and mentors are to be recruited, promotional advertisements and enrollment packets are essential. An advisory committee can develop orientation information, compile a program handbook or resource guide based on the literature and benchmarked programs, and provide other orientation materials. These resources are invaluable in helping participants understand the scope of their involvement, what they will be expected to contribute, and what they can hope to gain through participation in the mentoring process.

An important factor in program effectiveness (Allen, Eby, and Lentz 2006b) is to provide ongoing professional development for mentors and protégés. Poteat, Shockley, and Allen (2009) reported mentors and protégés enjoy the greatest satisfaction when their commitment levels are high. By encouraging mentors and protégés to provide input into the components of professional development programs, their commitment to the program increases.

Key professional qualities, according to Boice (1992), are organizational knowledge, technical and disciplinary competence, professional influence and status, a willingness to promote another person's professional growth, and knowledge about career advancement. Luna and Cullen (1995), based on their review of the literature on mentoring, identified honesty, reliability, mutual caring, sharing, giving, patience, and strong interpersonal skills as optimal personal attributes of mentors. Borisoff (1998) found that the best mentors listen, support, encourage, advise, and sponsor their protégés. Sands, Parson, and Duane (1991) added that successful mentors are sensitive to the abilities, needs, and perspectives of

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protégés. Identifying these characteristics helps protégés and mentors decide whether participating in a mentoring program is a good fit for them.

Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008), based on 10 years of assessing faculty mentoring programs, suggested that interrelationships are key characteristics of a successful mentoring program. The best mentors they studied served as sponsors or coaches to guide, protect, teach, challenge, open doors, and provide feedback. They also became role models who demonstrated appropriate behaviors, attitudes, and values, as well as counselors who provided support and advice. Finding, nurturing, or developing these characteristics and qualities in mentors empowers them to give quality professional and personal guidance and support to protégés.

However, no clear-cut guidelines or expectations for mentors have been identified. Neither is the literature clear regarding what mentor preparation should entail and how much is needed. But several studies have shown that mentors are more engaged and effective if they feel well prepared to meet the needs of their protégés. According to the 18-year success of the Teaching Scholars Program at Miami University (Cox 1997), mentoring programs achieve their potential when mentors are thoroughly prepared for their roles. Also important to the success of these programs is the collaborative efforts of academic administrators, leaders of campus centers of learning and teaching, faculty interested in mentoring, and prospective mentors in designing orientation practices for mentors that help them assimilate their new roles and responsibilities within that institutional context.

Protégés cannot necessarily be paired with a random mentor because the most important characteristic of a mentoring program is the match between the protégé and mentor. While mentors are often older and more experienced, there is no evidence to support limiting mentors to only senior faculty members; junior mentors potentially can be just as effective. Mentoring success depends less on personality matches than on what mentors and protégés do together (Boyle and Boice 1998). Allen, Eby, and Lentz (2006a; 2006b) reported that protégé and mentor input into the matching process is directly related to a higher quality of mentoring and greater program effectiveness. This involvement leads to greater commitment to and understanding of the program for both.

Increasingly protégés and mentors play active roles in the matching process, which can be quite beneficial. Cox (1997) pointed out these advantages of mentor selection by protégés: (1) the protégé feels a sense of ownership; (2) the mentor may feel a stronger connection due to the protégé's selection; and (3) the process of identifying and interviewing potential mentors broadens the protégé's network. On the other side of the equation, Allen, Poteet, and Russell (2000) reported that two factors are important to mentors in their selection of protégés: (1) perceptions regarding the protégé's potential or ability; and (2) perceptions regarding the protégé's need for help. That is, some mentors may choose protégés with a high likelihood of success as a way to mutually advance their careers. Other mentors may prefer to assist protégés with a greater need because they see this as highly rewarding. Once protégés and mentors have selected one another, it is important for their relationship to evolve through shared time and talk to meet the unique needs of the participants (Boyle and Boice 1998).

Holding Regular Meetings and Interactions

To maximize the potential benefits for protégés and mentors, spending time together is imperative. These interactions often begin with an orientation session and can be enhanced through information provided to each protégé and mentor. Beyond organized sessions, regularly scheduled meetings are important and should be monitored until they become habitual, according to Cox (1997). Boice (1992) suggested that shared time allows mentors to listen as well as inform, act as advocates, and provide socio-emotional support, which helps ameliorate the loneliness and isolation of protégés as well as enhance rapport among colleagues at all stages of their careers.

The most successful mentoring programs, according to Boyle and Boice (1998), include structured weekly meetings of the mentor and protégé, weekly ratings of mentoring interactions, and monthly meetings of several mentoring pairs for open sharing of alternative approaches to mentoring, discussion topics, and emerging issues. Wasburn and LaLopa (2003), in reporting on the Faculty Mentoring Network at Purdue University (West Lafayette, IN), recommended facilitating mandatory group sessions of all program participants and encouraging each mentor and protégé to develop a contract of expectations. Meeting together and having a contract helps all stakeholders focus on the benefits to protégés and mentors.

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Evaluating the Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs

Gaskill (1993), Keyser et al. (2008), and Wasburn and LaLopa (2003) emphasized evaluating mentoring programs to determine their effectiveness. Formative evaluations of mentoring programs should be completed at regular intervals by the program coordinator to check how things are progressing for each protégé and mentor. Boice (1992) and Luna and Cullen (1995) suggest that the program coordinator call or visit mentoring pairs or groups to ask about their meetings and collect ratings on or reflections about their interactions. Questions that might be asked in person, via email, on the telephone, or through a short questionnaire could include:

- (1) How often do you meet?
- (2) What are the topics of conversation?
- (3) If there is a shared project or activity, what is this?
- (4) What problems or issues, if any, have been experienced?
- (5) What has been the resolution of any problem or issue?
- (6) How would you describe the relationship between you and the other member of your dyad?
- (7) Is there any resource or assistance you need to enhance this relationship?

Summative evaluations, conducted semi-annually, could examine via quantitative and qualitative measures how effectively program goals are being met overall and for each

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participant. Additionally these evaluations can demonstrate the impact of the program and advise changes needed to improve outcomes. As might be anticipated, the evaluation of mentoring programs is challenging because it is difficult to measure causation. That is, are the specific benefits accruing to protégés and mentors directly attributable to the intervention of the mentoring program? Or, is increased socialization, collegiality, or professional development the result of mentoring, passage of time, personal efforts outside the dyad or group, or other contributing factors? Despite any associated uncertainties, it remains important to assess whether mentoring is beneficial to protégés and mentors as well as the institution. Empirical data are needed to verify whether mentoring leads to positive outcomes for mentors and protégés.

In summary, these important operational characteristics have been described in the literature as important for success in mentoring: (1) having a clear purpose, goals, and strategies; (2) selecting, matching, and preparing protégés and mentors for their new roles; (3) conducting regular meetings to nurture interactions among protégés and mentors so both can achieve their goals and benefit from their interactions; and (4) evaluating the program effectiveness.

Outcomes from Selected Approaches to Mentoring

Perna, Lerner, and Yura (1995, 39) argued against a narrow description of mentoring where one senior faculty member is matched with one junior faculty member. They concluded

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that the primacy of one mentor to one protégé in classic mentoring "...is not supported in academia." Rather, they suggested that alternative types of mentoring can more appropriately address the developmental needs of faculty members, including role-specific mentoring, as when a mentor helps a protégé prepare a grant proposal. They also endorsed informal mentoring based on mutual interests, which often are cross-disciplinary. Several approaches to mentoring are associated with positive outcomes, which in turn, support the proposed model for mentoring.

Formal or Classic Mentoring

Formal or classic mentoring programs historically are structured and time-limited with assigned mentors, thus sending the message that mentoring is an accepted and expected part of academic life for the development of young professionals (Perna et al. 1995; Darwin 2000). This approach assumes mentors accept responsibility for helping protégés grow and develop as they adapt to their new roles. Allen, Eby, and Lentz (2006a) suggested that a greater personal investment by protégés and mentors is a key component to the success of formal mentoring practice. Formal mentoring programs are more likely to maintain the existing culture, increase job performance, enhance the confidence and self-esteem of new colleagues, facilitate networking, decrease turnover, and advance careers, factors that positively impact the entire academic unit.

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring is more spontaneous, more egalitarian, longer lasting, and sometimes occurs with greater frequency than formal mentoring (Ragins and Cotton 1999). The flexibility of informal mentoring is viewed positively, since there is no constraining structure about how mentors work with protégés. Protégés have greater ownership of, stronger connection to, and broader interaction with selected mentors who provide information and varied perspectives (Sands et al. 1991). Ragins and Cotton (1999), who report that informal mentoring is associated with more positive career outcomes, suggest that informal mentors bring greater communication and coaching skills to mentoring relationships since they participate voluntarily. They found protégés with informal mentors report greater satisfaction and receive significantly greater benefits in 9 of 11 mentoring roles than did protégés with formal mentors.

Peer Mentoring

Through peer mentoring among the pre-tenured, faculty with mutual interests and stature (i.e., equal in experience, rank, and position) develop supportive, reciprocal networks and collaborate in sharing career information and strategies (Angelique, Kyle, and Taylor 2002). Smith et al. (2001) suggested peer communities facilitate naturally-developing relationships characterized by shared power and collective action and help build connections to address psychosocial and emotional needs, contribute to group cohesion and collegiality, and reduce

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feelings of isolation. They concluded that group formats among peers are more dynamic and humanistic than more traditional approaches to mentoring.

Group, Networking, and Consortia Mentoring

Assistant professors are more successful in research and scholarly productivity when they receive mentoring from multiple sources, and especially from colleagues within their professions, according to Peluchette and Jeanquart (2000). Additionally, Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008, 563) stated,

One mentor is no longer adequate to meet the full complement of another's technical and personal needs in the context of modern society. Dynamic organizational change, increased specialization and innovation, and the acceleration of technological advances prescribe a new mentoring paradigm in which mentoring relationships are pluralistic and reciprocal.

In group mentoring every faculty member assumes responsibility for helping develop new colleagues. In the New Faculty Program at Montclair State University, participants in group mentoring share a range of perspectives so each faculty member's unique strengths benefit others (Pierce 1998). Similarly, Wasburn (2004–2005) described networking mentoring as non-hierarchical, involving multiple mentors and protégés, flexible in its operation, and not tied to interpersonal relationships with a single person. Many protégés prefer to develop a network or consortia of mentors from whom they can learn and draw support. These broad partnerships also can become reciprocal as young professionals share their technological savvy and recently learned skills and abilities.

Intra-Departmental Mentoring

A protégé pairing with a mentor in the same department, or intra-departmental mentoring, facilitates socialization into the departmental culture (Cawyer, Simonds, and Davis 2002). The physical proximity of departmental colleagues (to stop by a mentor's office to ask a question or just to talk) helps in developing stronger relationships. Mentors in aligned disciplines can guide teaching, research, and service activities of protégés as well as provide advice associated with disciplinary and departmental issues.

Inter-Department Mentoring

The formation of a mentoring dyad or groups among faculty members from different departments, or inter-departmental or multi-disciplinary mentoring, at times can be more successful than mentoring dyads within departments, according to Wasburn and LaLopa (2003). Boice (1992) suggested mentoring works best through inter-departmental pairings because protégés feel more comfortable expressing concerns and weaknesses and asking questions than they do within their own department. Boice (1992) argued that mentoring is much more about relationships than about providing help in teaching or research in a specific discipline. Non-departmental mentors also can provide objective perspectives not influenced by departmental issues and politics and facilitate networking through meetings on campus with a diversity of faculty.

Research Mentoring

While faculty members at research-intensive institutions may apply any of the approaches described here, they also may need to focus specifically on research mentoring. Research mentorship encompasses helping protégés meet the norms and standards and to acquire the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values needed for successful advancement in their careers (Keyser et al. 2008). Building upon the characteristics and outcomes of successful mentoring programs, these authors propose that mentors and their protégés develop a self-assessment tool to track the policies, programs, and structures for supporting research mentorship. Although the authors have not tested it empirically, the self-assessment tool holds promise because it describes how to evaluate the key domains of research mentorship, such as mentor incentives, mentor-protégé relationships, and mentor-protégé professional development.

These and other approaches to mentoring enjoy varying degrees of success. Institutional context influences whether informal mentoring fits the needs of faculty better than a formalized program, or whether an intra-departmental or inter-departmental approach is preferable. In analyzing the outcomes of these approaches, four interconnected outcomes of mentoring are most often reported. First, mentoring assists in socializing faculty members into the academic culture. Second, mentoring is mutually beneficial in that when mentors provide encouragement and guidance to their protégés, they, in turn, can benefit personally and reap intrinsic rewards. Third, through the mentoring process mentors can facilitate networking for

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their protégés. Fourth, because of socialization, support, and networking, protégés are positioned for greater job performance and tend to enjoy higher levels of satisfaction in their work.

Model for Mentoring

The proposed model (see Figure 1) is built upon the assumption that mentoring is the process of mentors supporting, advising, and encouraging protégés as protégés and mentors develop mutually beneficial relationships. The first stage in the formulation of this model is *conceptualization*, since it is important to determine whether and how a mentoring program should be envisioned. The second stage, *design and development*, builds upon the purpose, goals, and strategies of the first stage as materials are developed, protégés and mentors are selected and matched, and mentors are prepared to serve in their new roles. The third stage, *implementation*, begins with orientation and training sessions and emphasizes protégés and mentors having regular meetings and interactions. In the fourth stage, *evaluation*, formative and summative assessments measure outcomes and impact on an ongoing basis so that changes can be made to enhance the benefits for protégés and mentors as needed.

Clear goals and strategies established during the conceptualization stage are linked with administrative support for ongoing success. Facilitating the process of selecting protégés and mentors, as protégés look for individuals who are caring, patient, reliable, and communicate well, can lead to better connections between and more commitment from protégés and

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mentors. That is, protégés want mentors who have skills in supporting, encouraging, and advising. Members of the mentor pool are likely to have these traits as well as a willingness to enhance their abilities—as needed—to address the needs of protégés. In addition, these mentors enjoy helping colleagues as they also reap personal benefits, such as the intrinsic satisfaction of helping a colleague grow professionally and making a contribution to enhancing the quality of departmental and institutional faculty. The proposed mentoring model emphasizes nurturing relationships through frequent interactions. This model uses quantitative and qualitative measures to verify that outcomes are being achieved.

One way to measure the effectiveness of mentoring is to directly obtain qualitative feedback from protégés and mentors. The questions in Table 1 can be used to investigate what each person gained or contributed in the mentoring relationship and what was valued most highly. This analysis would provide the basis for program changes and enhancements.

The true value of the mentoring process should not be dependent on quantitative data about number of meetings held, submissions of collaborative publications, or promotions in rank. Rather, most important should be the positive interrelationships among mentors and protégés and the resultant enhancements in more collegial cultures within the academic units. If institutions of higher education provide financial support and facilitate organizational policies and structures for mentoring, the professional growth and development of protégés and mentoring is likely to benefit everyone.

Specific strengths associated with mentoring can enhance the proposal model. First, mentors socialize protégés into the culture of academic units and emphasize interactions and

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connections with protégés to help reduce feelings of isolation, while mentors benefit by helping initiate the next generation into the professoriate. Second, mentors provide emotional support, facilitate networking, and encourage open communications, actions they find personally rewarding. Third, mentors can provide disciplinary and role-specific assistance to help increase job performance as protégés gain confidence in their abilities. Reciprocally, protégés may share with their mentors disciplinary and technological insights brought from their doctoral studies. These outcomes contribute directly to protégés and mentors enjoying mutually beneficial relationships.

Concluding Remarks

Mentoring contributes to a more collegial culture in the academy through interpersonal relationships based on trust and respect and to the professional growth and career development in both protégés and mentors. Successful mentoring programs are characterized by clarity of mission for the program and ongoing assessment of program effectiveness. Best practices, which also shape a program's success, support active engagement of, the fit between the mentor and protégé, and nurturing interactions among protégés and mentors. Incorporating mentoring into the fabric of an academic unit and institution is an important investment in people and is congruent with and integral to higher education as a learning community.

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Table 1

Possible Survey Questions to Measure the Effectiveness of Mentoring

Questions for the Mentor

1. What characteristics or commonalities do you share with your protégé?
2. How frequently do you meet with your protégé to talk about the roles and responsibilities of being a faculty member?
3. How would you assess your personal benefit of conversations with your protégé?
4. How frequently do you meet with your protégé to discuss specific issues or problems she or he faces?
5. What feedback have you received from your protégé about how helpful your guidance has been?
6. How would you describe the interpersonal relationship you have with your protégé?

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7. How would you describe the level of trust that you have developed with your protégé?
8. What types or areas of coaching have you provided to your protégé?
9. What do you see as your primary contribution to the growth and development of your protégé's career?
10. How have you helped your protégé in ways other than career development?
11. In what ways has the protégé contributed to your career?
12. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your protégé?

Questions for the Protégé

1. What characteristics or commonalities do you share with your mentor?
2. How frequently do you meet with your mentor to talk about the roles and responsibilities of being a faculty member?
3. How would you assess your personal benefit of conversations with your mentor?
4. How frequently do you meet with your mentor to discuss specific issues or problems you face?
5. What feedback have you shared with your mentor about how helpful the guidance provided has been?
6. How would you describe the interpersonal relationship you have with your mentor?
7. How would you describe the level of trust that you have developed with your mentor?
8. What types or areas of coaching has your mentor provided?
9. What do you think has been your mentor's primary contribution to your growth and development as a faculty member?

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10. How has your mentor helped you in ways other than career development?

11. In what ways has the mentor contributed to your career?

12. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your mentor?