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## Treating Mentoring Programs as a Scholarly Endeavor

Shane P. Desselle

*Touro University California*, shane.desselle@tu.edu

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## VIEWPOINTS

### Treating Mentoring Programs as a Scholarly Endeavor

Shane P. Desselle

College of Pharmacy, California Northstate University, Rancho Cordova, CA

It has been said that poor mentoring in early adulthood is the equivalent of poor parenting in childhood.<sup>1</sup> In 2003, Brown and Hanson opined that formal mentoring appears to be more common in the business world than in the academic world.<sup>2</sup> Thankfully, the academic world appears to be catching on to the value of mentorship and formal mentoring programs as it seeks to develop its faculty members as a cadre of knowledge workers seeking the highest levels of self-actualization. A recent report from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Council of Deans/Council of Faculties Task Force on Faculty Workforce identified mentoring as 1 of 4 key elements to elevate the productivity and quality of work life of pharmacy faculty members.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the task force viewed mentorship and development as inextricably linked with other organizational outcomes, particularly an academic program's culture, proffering means in which a program can imbue mentorship as part of the ethos and expectations of junior and senior faculty as well as administrators.

A dyadic model that includes only mentor and protégé limits optimal development compared to a triad model that includes the organization, wherein mentoring relationships are more likely to affect an organization and its culture and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> Fuller and colleagues point out that mentorship transcends providing career or vocational assistance, but also should include a psychosocial function. This view is shared by experts in the field, particularly after a careful structural analysis of mentoring functions revealed 3 unique domains: professional dyadic exchange, collegial/task, and collegial/social domains.<sup>5</sup> While the former 2 focus on items such as advising on promotion/tenure, coaching about office politics, role-modeling behavior, and sharing expertise on technical skills, the latter involves exchanging confidences, sharing personal problems, and even engaging in social camaraderie. The social aspect of mentorship is especially important in light of findings by Nair and Gaither demonstrating

a powerful interface between role conflict at work with overall life satisfaction among pharmacy faculty members, which can be ameliorated by collegiality that extends to both the professional and social spheres.<sup>6</sup> Other evidence points out the problematic nature of the job for junior faculty members whose role stress can be buffered by friendly colleagues and supportive mentors and administrators.<sup>7,8</sup>

The academic pharmacy literature is becoming more commonly populated with expert opinion and with initial reports of nascent mentoring programs. Haines describes preferable attributes of successful mentor-protégé relationships to include technical competence, mutual synergism, self-perceived growth needs, and relationships not confined to merely professional or business interests.<sup>9</sup> These comport nicely with the many components of successful qualities cited by others.<sup>10</sup> Ziend and colleagues reported on how to develop a sustainable faculty mentoring program. Their program included program goals for mentoring, criteria for mentors, and examples of workshops mentors and protégés had attended together.<sup>11</sup> They also reported some successes from the program, primarily self-reported satisfaction by both mentors and protégés on various activities, including developing a new course, initiating creative teaching techniques, generating grant applications, and demonstrating effective leadership activities. Suggestions for improvement from participants were to arrange more formal occasions for the mentor-protégé pairs to spend time with one another, facilitate introductions of mentor-protégé pairs, define expectations for mentors and protégés, and provide more specific information about mentoring.

These suggestions for improvement are not surprising with any new program. Budding programs naturally might be missing some well-needed experience and a few elements found in well-established programs, particularly those outside of pharmacy and other health professions programs.<sup>12</sup> This is where the literature can be most helpful. In particular, there are theoretical foundations and underpinnings extraordinarily helpful to understanding, crafting, and monitoring the results of mentoring programs. Social interactional and invitational learning theories are 2 of them.<sup>13,14</sup> These theories provide well-founded, yet straightforward roadmaps to follow, with suggestions on

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**Corresponding Author:** Shane P. Desselle, PhD, College of Pharmacy, California Northstate University, 10811 International Drive, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. Tel: 916-631-8108 ext 286. E-mail: [sdesselle@calpharm.org](mailto:sdesselle@calpharm.org)

how to give praise to participants, leverage the strengths of each faculty participant, match mentors and protégés, be sensitive toward intergenerational dynamics, assess the program beyond self-perceptions, delineate expectations, and use participatory governance among mentorship groups. There also is literature demonstrating research and teaching self-efficacies of faculty members, thus indicative of the types of programming and workshops that can be offered, although this does not abate any exigency that a program conduct its own need assessments.<sup>11,15</sup>

Those of us behind attempts to develop mentoring programs are trying to perform a service extraordinarily beneficial to our organizations and to the entire academy. And there is little doubt that those of us in the process of implementing such programs are putting considerable time and energy into doing so. The challenge for us is to put the same level of faith and necessity into literature evaluation for designing mentoring programs as we do when executing research projects or designing courses in our respective areas of expertise. This is akin to similar pleas made for conducting survey projects for those not accustomed to this type of methodological approach.<sup>16</sup> We might be somewhat dismissive of the literature or perhaps we lack the self-efficacy to truly discern and evaluate what is out there in a field somewhat foreign to us. However, as stewards of mentorship programs aimed to promote the continuous professional development of faculty members, we owe it to ourselves and all stakeholders involved to treat these programs as we do any other scholarly endeavor. Perhaps then we could see the fruits of mentoring programs better realized, as evidenced when Ziend and colleagues reported that only 24% of deans indicated that their mentoring program was used in faculty recruitment.<sup>11</sup> As such, we will gain the full benefits of mentoring programs for succession planning and even in molding our future leaders, including deans.<sup>17,18</sup> The issue of mentoring intertwines into so many areas of concern throughout the academy, including recruitment, retention, development, productivity, quality of work life, and commitment, to name a few. So let us as pharmacy educators treat the concept of mentoring like we should, ie, as scholars.

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