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A Comprehensive, Tailored Approach to New Faculty Mentoring

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In academia, the need for creating an environment that promotes faculty retention and career success is even more important today as members of the millennial generation, frequently referred to as job hoppers, are entering the professoriate in growing numbers. The “one size fits all” mentoring programs at universities are no longer adequate as more faculty are graduating from online programs with little career mentoring; have a variety of terminal degrees, including the practice and clinical doctorates of healthcare disciplines; and are faced with a myriad of changing requirements, such as technology, student outcomes, and accreditation. It is essential that Department Heads (or Chairs) develop the knowledge and skills to be able to develop and tailor a mentoring program that meets new faculty’s needs. This presentation will incorporate best practices reported in the literature and reports from individual university and department mentoring programs that have been successful.

The mentoring of new faculty must include not only a formal mentoring program, but also an environment in which the faculty member can be successful. It is the role of the Department Head to adjust workload, teaching assignments, and service commitments to facilitate integration into the institution and development of the faculty role. The mentoring program that will be described is divided into phases, with the environment and mentoring changing as needed. The program is dynamic and adaptable to accommodate diverse faculty roles and requirements. .

Components of the comprehensive mentoring program include:

1. A self-evaluation by the new faculty of knowledge and skills needed for the academic role.
2. The assignment of a mentor, based on specific faculty needs, for the new faculty by the Department Head.
3. A one-week orientation that consists of University, College, and Department workshops, meetings, and networking.
4. Written Resources, including the University Faculty Handbook, a Department of Nursing Faculty Handbook, and copies of the most recent accreditation self-study documents.
5. A formal written mentoring plan developed by the Department of Nursing faculty and Department Head that addresses skills, knowledge, and resources in the areas of teaching (online, classroom, hybrid), research, and service. Practice also is addressed for clinical faculty.
6. Regularly scheduled meetings; a checklist of readings, activities, and discussions to be addressed during the year; and regularly scheduled feedback on performance through peer-evaluations.

For this session, I will present a case study of a new faculty member and discuss strategies from the audience on how to tailor the mentoring plan based on size, type, and culture of the university and department. Examples of forms and documents used in our mentoring plan will be used as examples. Finally, the role of the Department Head in the mentoring program is discussed, as well as how to gradually integrate the faculty into the role and how to create an environment conducive to the success of new faculty.