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## Thinking Outside the Dyad: Incorporating Cohort-Based Experiences into Mentorship

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## Thinking Outside the Dyad: Incorporating Cohort-Based Experiences into Mentorship

Angela Yon, Grace Allbaugh, and Susan R. Franzen

### Abstract

A benefit of the traditional one-to-one, hierarchical mentoring relationship is the individualized attention and guidance the mentor provides the mentee. This singular mentoring relationship can be effective but is not always sufficient in addressing institutional acculturation and meeting personal needs of the new employee. This paper discusses how an emergent mentoring program at Milner Library blended the dyadic mentoring relationship with cohort-based programming to create a space for participants to learn from colleagues across departments, share experiences, and consider psychosocial issues. These grassroots programming efforts have cultivated holistic engagement and renewed community.

### Introduction

Mentoring is an essential component of successful onboarding and community-building within any library's organizational development. By providing a solid foundation for an employee's professional and personal growth, the organization actively supports an individual's success and retainment. An effective formal mentorship program helps employees feel engaged in their new position and environment by fostering connections with colleagues based on mutual trust and respect.<sup>1</sup>

Different mentoring models exist formally and informally, including the traditional mentor-mentee (or dyad) structure, peer mentoring, group mentoring, and mentoring at point of need. While the traditional mentoring one-to-one relationship can be effective for focused individual attention, it can be difficult to maintain due to busy schedules, personality conflicts, or changes in administration.<sup>2</sup> The singular mentoring relationship is not always sufficient in addressing institutional acculturation and meeting personal needs of the new employee.<sup>3</sup> Cohort-based programming offers unique opportunities for mentees to understand the day-to-day work of colleagues as well as to have deeper, more meaningful psychosocial conversations about what

impacts us all. Such programming allows mentees to form relationships with colleagues of different skills and experiences and not rely on a single individual for support and guidance. Group programming allows personal connections collectively when sharing experiences and emotions about work, creating safe spaces for conversations. Holistic understanding of each other inclusively is essential in a time when many people are grappling with disconnection.

This case study reports on a mentoring program in an academic library that combined formal mentor/mentee interactions with cohort-based programming that attended to the holistic needs of employees as professionals and individuals. The review fills a gap in the literature on how to achieve balance between the positive aspects of a variety of mentoring models and styles in a mentorship program by using cohort-based supplemental programming to create a network of “developmental relationships,”<sup>4</sup> and community. The study also shows how mentorship cohort programming can incrementally foster positive and valuable change to the institution’s culture.

## Literature review

Mentoring is an established professional development practice, the benefits of which have been studied across a variety of disciplines including library and information science.<sup>5</sup> However, there has also been a lack of clarity about what mentorship means in the published literature. Previous researchers have attempted to describe mentoring as it relates to every instance and variation, creating multiple definitions that are vague and difficult to apply. Without a consistent unifying standard for mentoring, it is problematic to identify success at an individual institution.<sup>6</sup>

The literature largely agrees that mentoring programs are worthy investments. Mentees, mentors, and organizations all benefit from the learning relationships developed in mentorship. Having a mentor is valuable for the mentee’s career growth and workplace acculturation, while the mentor gains opportunities to learn new perspectives and skills. A mentoring program can foster an environment of productivity, increase employee retention, and engage leadership at organizations such as libraries.<sup>7</sup>

### Informal v. formal, blending models

Mentoring models vary in their formats, from formal to informal. Formal mentoring programs are structured, assigned, and evaluated by a group or organization.”<sup>8</sup> Hierarchical dyads are common in formal mentoring; other formal models exist, such as one mentee with two or more mentors, a group of mentees with one mentor, and many mentees to many mentors.<sup>9</sup>

Individuals, however, may develop informal mentoring relationships with colleagues regardless of a formal mentoring program. Couture, Gerke, and Knievel define informal mentoring as developing “through friendship, collegiality, teaching, or any informal means.” Conceivably, the most successful program would incorporate both informal and formal mentoring relationships.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of mentorship in the traditional dyad relationship has evolved to reflect that a mentee may need multiple mentors to establish a network of support throughout their career.<sup>11</sup> “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.”<sup>12</sup> This paradigm shift has produced a wide range of mentoring practices in academic libraries.<sup>13</sup> Often formal and informal models are mixed, and traditional and non-traditional tactics are used to meet the needs of the participants.<sup>14</sup>

Mentorship is not a standardized practice and, while there is not a one-size-fit-all approach, case studies reveal a program should be customizable, flexible, and monitored on a continual basis to ensure needs are met.<sup>15</sup> The formal faculty mentoring program at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa incorporates the traditional dyad relationship with supportive workshops, seminars, and online information to encourage a developmental mentor network for different stages in an individual’s career.<sup>16</sup> Michigan State University Libraries incorporates multiple programs based on need. Popular among employees is the formal program with the senior/junior dyad model which runs for one year and then continues informally if the pair chooses. Formal group mentoring programs for new librarians and managers based on cohorts also exist. Librarians create informal group mentoring programs based on similar concerns and interests.<sup>17</sup>

### Psychosocial mentoring relationships, holistic practice, whole person mentoring

A mentoring program must not only familiarize the mentee with new job responsibilities but also provide a supportive and nurturing environment. There are two aspects of a successful mentoring relationship: activities that enhance a mentee’s career goals, and psychosocial encouragement, such as emotional and personal support.<sup>18</sup> Psychosocial mentoring focuses on personal facets to support the mentee’s confidence and professional identity. Findings by Farrell et al. indicate there is a minimal body of literature on mentorship regarding psychosocial factors.<sup>19</sup> They argue that “a more personal approach to mentoring—one that addresses such issues as racial microaggressions, the impostor phenomenon, and burnout—is needed to create a more welcoming, inclusive organizational and professional culture.”<sup>20</sup>

Recent case studies explore mentorship as a holistic and empathetic practice. Michelle Santamaria and Megan Donnelly document their “informal mentorship as a nourishing practice.” They detail how they navigated the relationship by establishing trust, addressing psychosocial issues such as imposter syndrome and stereotype threat, and confronting identities as academics from underrepresented communities. Their analysis and recommendations provide insight into a whole person mentoring relationship.<sup>21</sup> The mentoring program at McGill University Library underscores whole person librarianship. The program is open to all employees and permits participants to customize what they would like to receive from the experience, including professional and personal development, and work-life balance.<sup>22</sup>

## Background and Program Introduction

Milner Library at Illinois State University is a public university institution administered by the dean and two associate deans. The library staff consists of sixty-six employees under three classification types: tenure-track faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and state universities civil service system positions. The library currently operates with thirty librarians, thirty-six staff members, and continues to grow at all employee levels. With such a large library population, it can be easy for individuals to feel disconnected and isolated when they start.

Substantial changes at the library in 2020 opened the door to implement a mentorship program welcoming new employees and fostering connections from day one. That summer, Milner Library welcomed an unprecedented number of new faculty members. Library administration also welcomed a new dean and associate dean. These colleagues began their new positions under unusual and difficult circumstances as they worked remotely at a new university and in an unfamiliar community. Most individuals moved from out of state, adding to the difficulty of their transition. All training and onboarding needed to be conducted remotely. The library previously had no formal program of mentorship, but the situation offered a prime opportunity to foster community-building with intention and create a more inclusive library culture.

As a result of a grassroots effort from library employees and approval from administration, a proposal was written, and a call made for interested library faculty to create a new mentoring pilot program to build strong support for the large incoming cohort of librarians. Within a short timeframe, a working group was formed and determined that traditional dyad mentoring would be supplemented by cohort programming. They began by matching incoming employees with mentor librarians. The first cohort began with nine pairs. The group created a

collection of shared documents, planned programming, and facilitated various online meetings and check-ins for the group. Mentees and mentors met regularly throughout the year in addition to attending the larger group activities. After the first semester, the working group surveyed the participants. Based on that feedback, spring programming was developed. Participants continued to offer survey responses and comments at the end of each semester. Working group members used these evaluations to make necessary changes to planned events so that meetings remain relevant and responsive to the group's needs.

The program grew when four new employees were hired. Those employees, along with their accompanying mentors, joined the first cohort in summer 2021. Both groups participated together in activities and met within their mentee/mentor pairs, fostering a close-knit team of colleagues. The joint interactions have created a gentle environment in which mentees and mentors alike feel comfortable asking for help when they need it, and colleagues work toward a shared vision rather than as siloed professionals. Even as partnerships from the original cohort reached their natural conclusion and pairs stopped meeting, those participants continued attending the cohort-based discussions and maintained their relationship with the larger group.

## Programming Features

Milner Library's mentoring program has put on several kinds of events to sustain relevance and engagement that are supported, but not directed, by library administration. The mentoring working group facilitates workshops and other gatherings based on employee requests and feedback. The planning stays nimble and responsive to those involved for a person-centered mentoring approach. To succeed, the working group must remain responsive to the dynamic responsibilities of its participants and the unique challenges they face. These cohort-based programs can add value by supplementing the conversations between paired mentors. Several different types of programming were developed for the mentorship group to help meet the needs of mentors and mentees not fulfilled through the one-to-one discussions. The programming exists in a nonhierarchical setting for a cohort of new employees with similar concerns and apprehension in a new workplace. The shared space offers an opening for new relationships to bloom as a type of peer mentoring, peer bonding, and camaraderie for lateral support during this precarious time in a "community of care."<sup>23</sup> Examples of the program activities are described in subsequent sections.

## Coffee Hours

These unstructured events bring the group together on a semi-regular basis to talk about non-work-related topics. The coffee hours were originally meant to mimic the “water cooler” conversations that naturally happened in a physical workspace but could not take place during the pandemic. Even after returning to work in the physical library, the virtual coffee hours continued. A large part of the mentorship program at Milner Library is to socialize and build community. Employees who enjoy spending time with their coworkers are happier and more productive. These coffee hours are meant to foster that internal community at the institution. The discussions facilitate socialization and potential friendships to develop among peers. Friendship expert Shasta Nelson has identified three things that allow friendships to flourish, “positivity, so we can feel satisfied; vulnerability, so we can feel safe; and consistency, so we can feel seen.”<sup>24</sup> The mentoring working group sought to nurture and instill these same traits in the community via group programming sessions like the coffee hours. Human connection is indispensable for creating a great place to work.<sup>25</sup>

## Conversation Corner

Conversation Corners are a series of informal discussions that enable the mentorship group to delve into complicated issues within the profession and safely discuss soft skills to navigate individual challenges. The program has hosted conversation corners about identifying and easing imposter syndrome, burnout, and overcommitment. Typically, these discussions start with either a prompt or a preliminary reading on the topic, but quickly transition depending on the needs of the group. Individual pairs are free to have these conversations, but multiple viewpoints afford a broader perspective than do one-to-one discussions. Conversation corners are meant to focus on tricky topics without clear solutions.

When colleagues openly share their experiences, they express vulnerability, and foster unstated trust within the group. Collaborative reflection on psychosocial topics connects the participants to one another and helps diminish isolation. Common with informal peer mentoring, these discussions can lead to personal growth and participants can help one another navigate these experiences with their work together.<sup>26</sup> Collectively sharing similar feelings and experiences allows room for emotion at work. Peers validating one another in their emotions offers a way to combat these issues together.<sup>27</sup>

## Professional Development Discussions

Milner Library's mentoring program also puts together conversations aimed at offering professional development opportunities. The mentorship group has hosted round robin discussions where the cohort is broken into smaller groups to discuss service and scholarship opportunities. They have also hosted conversations about Milner Library's internal review process to ensure that new employees are prepared for their work to be evaluated. These discussions are meant to supplement the meetings between partners, and to offer greater context and a variety of peer learning opportunities. Facilitating conversations on professional development encourages a culture of learning and the group collectively motivates peers to take ownership of their own development. Inspiring engagement in a "continuous learning process" enables employees to stay current on evolving knowledge and developing roles in their specialized areas; to seek mobility and promotion (management training, tenure); and to experiment, engage in, and create innovative practices that advance their future professional growth and the institution as a whole.<sup>28</sup>

Group participation in professional development opportunities can be encouraging and inspire new ideas. As most individuals do not typically interact with one another in their daily work, their unique perspectives are energizing and bring appreciation and fresh ideas for a peer's development and projects.<sup>29</sup> This case study is similar to the informal group mentoring at Bowling Green State University where participants with different specializations, experiences, and backgrounds share their narratives, provide feedback, and connect on common interests for possible future collaborations.

## Getting to Know Milner

Getting to Know Milner is a series of virtual presentations offered by the mentorship program that gives individuals from the different library areas the opportunity to share their work with the rest of their colleagues. This series resulted from feedback that newer employees lacked understanding about the work of departments they did not interact with regularly. Although this started out as part of the mentorship program, interest from outside the program led to these presentations being offered to the rest of the library. These sessions exemplify the interconnectedness of employees' roles and departments and strengthen relationships among colleagues. Connecting employees with one another adds a sense of community and investment in the institution. Collaboration resulting from the library's mentorship program breaks down workplace silos. By sharing work and receiving positive feedback, library employees understand their efforts matter to colleagues and the larger institution.



Each session in this series was recorded to allow future viewings for those who were unable to attend live. These recordings can also be repurposed to share with existing and potential external partners for purposes such as recruitment, marketing, funding requests, and grant applications. In recent faculty recruitment efforts, the search committees distributed the Getting to Know Milner recordings to final candidates to give them an internal view of the people, departments and current projects happening at the institution.

The Getting to Know Milner platform provides departments the opportunity to share their expertise, publicize their new projects for greater visibility, connect with colleagues, and share their work in a holistic manner. Due to the popularity of the series and the attentiveness of audience members, employees have reached out and requested to share special topics and new projects outside of departmental operations in a Getting to Know Milner presentation.

## Collaborations

The mentoring program has also prompted opportunities for programming collaboration with other groups outside of the library. These collaborations allow for expansion of one's personal and professional networks, building a stronger community not just within the mentorship program, but with other colleagues. These larger programs also act as a potential catalyst for complex discussions between mentor pairs. For example, Milner Library's mentoring program encouraged those in the cohort to attend several workshops put on by the larger university called the Foundations of Diversity and Inclusion. These introductory workshops help bring discussions of equity and justice into academia. The intent behind attendance was to spur conversations within mentorship about centering equity in library work and making the library community a welcoming and culturally competent space for patrons and employees.

The working group also joined forces with Milner Library's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) committee to host a few panels directed at students interested in librarianship or library work. Library employees were asked questions about their work and how they came to the job they are currently in, while allowing students a chance to get their own questions answered. Several of the panelists were members of the mentorship group. This work will hopefully plant the seeds in these students to pursue a career in librarianship to further build a larger library community.

## Program Assessment

From the outset of the program, the mentoring working group planned to garner feedback from the participants to build and improve the program with them. This approach

allowed customizing and shaping a flexible program to specifically meet the needs of the individuals and environment at Milner Library.

The working group emailed anonymous surveys to collect opinions and perspectives from the mentees and mentors, and to rate aspects of the program on a scale of one to five (five being the highest). There was also an area for personal comments. The working group conducted three surveys, one at the end of the pilot in December 2020, one after a full year of the program in August 2021, and another in December 2021 that included participants from both the first and second cohorts. The survey instrument [Appendix A] and research plan received institutional review board approval.

Participants offered a variety of perspectives on the mentoring received from the formal dyad relationship and cohort-based programming. Some mentees expressed the dyadic relationship to be beneficial. There were several instances in the program where pairs were ideally matched and developed a strong relationship to address both career and psychosocial concerns.

- “I appreciated having a ‘go-to’ person that I could confide in about things I was struggling with or to ask questions of, without judgement.”
- “I found it helpful to have a dedicated person to whom I could ask a wide variety of questions, and I appreciated that this person was not my supervisor.”

However, not all dyadic relationships will grow in this manner. Some mentees did not find the relationship sufficient and appreciated the support from the programming.

- “There has been value to all elements of the program. Any aspects that weren’t as beneficial were related more to the personal mentorship relationship and not the program’s structure.”
- “While it is useful to have a specific mentor to ask particular questions of, I really enjoyed the group meetings where questions could be asked to the group and get multiple perspectives, like a crowd-sourced mentorship.”

Overall, the authors found that one-to-one mentoring proves most successful for job-related questions, or those that relate to institutional norms. This is extremely helpful but limited in scope for only specific purposes such as quick, point of need discussions or with one’s individual work and tasks.

While the dyadic relationship was valuable overall, mentees indicated the importance of connecting with other colleagues and building additional relationships in the program cohort sessions. They conveyed that the group dynamic was engaging, and the inclusion of multiple perspectives was beneficial. The combined formal dyad mentoring relationship, in addition to relationships developed in cohort programming, allow flexibility for the varied needs of an

employee, including essential emotional support which often is absent in formal library mentoring relations.<sup>30</sup> The cohort programming of social gatherings and professional development sessions rated highly, and many expressed they gained information and camaraderie among their peers in the discussions. Participants provided feedback and offered comments on both social gatherings and professional development activities.

Although social gatherings were well received, perspectives varied on the benefits from formal structured conversations versus the advantages of open informal conversations in social gatherings. Some feedback indicated these discussions would have benefited from specific prompts; yet other participants saw value in the spontaneity from the informal unstructured meetings to socialize, ask questions, and get to know their colleagues better. Such responses include:

- “I think the social events throughout the semester have also been bright spots. I would like to see those continue into the spring. :)”
- “I really enjoyed the social aspect of it, the large mentorship "coffees" where people asked job related questions, but we also had the opportunity to just socialize as colleagues which helped relieve the stressful monotony of work in the time COVID.”
- “I thought the mid-semester check-in and coffee hour could have had more structure. I felt like people just chatted, which is okay, but I would have liked something specific to discuss.”

Balancing a right mixture of informal/formal and structured/unstructured sessions could prove more constructive to the participants in the future. However, the importance of informality, social interactions and developing friendships at work should not be underestimated. Poswolsky asserts “time spent playing with your colleagues can lead to deeper relationships and better collaboration. Human connection is everyone’s job.”<sup>31</sup>

Connections were also fostered in professional development sessions. Comments reveal enthusiasm and enjoyment for these workshops. A particularly beneficial series was Getting to Know Milner, in which participants gained usefulness for one’s own work as well as learning from and connecting with colleagues. Mentee responses include:

- “The "Getting to Know" series has been a real high point. We are learning so much about and from our colleagues, which benefits our work in so many ways.
- “The Getting to Know Milner sessions have been wonderful. If I could give them a 6, I would!”

In addition to professional development, feedback indicated participants also received emotional support from this programming, “I didn’t realize that what I actually really needed from this program was less informational support and more emotional support, but the program ended up being very successful in providing exactly that.” The Conversation Corner series

facilitated conversations on psychosocial topics such as burnout and imposter syndrome where individuals shared and discussed experiences to mitigate any isolation one may feel.

“Vulnerable sharing and storytelling spark curiosity and compassion and have been shown to foster belonging.”<sup>32</sup> These phenomena are not usually addressed in formal mentoring relationships. Building awareness of these occurrences in group programming informs employees that their colleagues and the institution are mindful in fostering a community of care.<sup>33</sup> The cohort programming is a humanistic approach for whole person mentoring and offers space for emotion at work, not just for new employees but all participants.<sup>34</sup>

While ratings were high, the success of professional development programming was constrained by the complex nature of the institutional hierarchy. Some participants took the opportunity to share suggestions on how professional development meetings could address the needs of all employees with the three classification types - tenure-track faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and state civil service positions - operating at the library due to varied job expectations. Such mentee responses include:

- “Some of the activities were not relevant to my position, like service and scholarship discussions. They were still educational, but not as beneficial as other things.”
- “I found the evaluation meeting confusing. Because people have different requirements, it was not always evident which advice mattered to me. It would have made a lot more sense to have them in sections based on requirements. There was a lot of contradicting advice.”

Although mentees noted that not all programming affected their personal work, an all-inclusive approach might be a good opportunity for employees to learn more about their colleagues and the obligations of their positions. Such knowledge may offer better understanding and appreciation of their colleague’s responsibilities across job classifications.

The professional development programming also brought new channels for collaboration within the larger library institution. Employees and committees not part of the program recognize its planning efforts and see it as a good venue for sharing information. For example, a tenured faculty member brought an article on burnout to the working group’s attention, which led to a lively session on the topic. As a result of that discussion, the working group scheduled a follow-up session with the university’s Counseling Services to discuss burnout prevention strategies. Additionally, a member of the Faculty and Research Development Committee saw a correlation to that committee’s charge and inquired about future partnerships to promote the research endeavors of faculty members. Mentorship seemed like a natural partner.

## Program Refinement

Incorporating elements of a community of care into a larger formal mentorship program can help employees experiencing psychosocial issues and make the library culture more respectful of personal needs. Feedback indicates that emotional support at work is just as important as professional support, and some mentees expressed the program provided both. A mentee stated they felt “both professional and personal development is an important part of the culture here.”

Work-life balance issues are often precarious to discuss in a one-to-one relationship especially if the relationship is not fully formed or compatible. These conversations, however, can occur organically through cohort-based programming. Discussions relating to psychosocial issues are most successful in larger groups where individuals share experiences and collectively offer helpful ideas to combat negativity. Similarly, community-building and friendship development come more naturally from informal group discussion without hierarchical power structures, where there is freedom to talk about personal issues or emotions. The programming encourages the belief that in the library “we must acknowledge that our jobs require us to navigate a complex web of social, cultural, emotional, and psychological expectations, and these interactions can affect our performance.”<sup>35</sup> Hosting larger group programs and acknowledging these holistic issues regularly will create more meaningful change and awareness among colleagues and at the institution. Combining more professional discussions with those focusing on compassion and care will help employees feel a sense of belonging and connection to their colleagues and the institution.<sup>36</sup>

The Getting to Know Milner sessions ranked highest and were the most popular of the programming. It is also the series where efforts of all members in the library contributed actively, and notably displays evidence of a renewed sense of community and positive beginnings of a shift in culture at the institution. The sessions are open to the entire library which also shaped a different dynamic and built engagement with a larger audience. This series introduced a network of relationships with colleagues across the library for the participants. It requires time-intensive efforts for one or two people to be responsible for introducing their mentee to the complicated workflows and policies within a large academic library such as Milner Library, especially when the mentor may not have experience with all the workings in the library. Creating programming for the larger mentorship group to showcase aspects of the bigger picture can be an efficient way of building connections and distributes the work among all the departments rather than a

select few (mentor, manager, etc.). The library collectively takes responsibility for teaching and developing coworkers, fostering a supportive mentoring culture at the institution.

The well-attended Getting to Know Milner sessions indicate employees crave this information about the inner workings of the library. All employees, not just new cohorts, possess the curiosity and desire to learn from and connect with colleagues in numerous departments. Many departments emphasize the interconnective nature and essential collaborations necessary to achieve duties and projects in their presentations. The sessions demonstrate the library's collaborative value and nurture the emerging mentoring culture to the audience. Initially grown out of the mentoring program, the Getting to Know Milner series has flourished into an illuminating and community-driven platform that encourages all library members to connect, celebrates colleagues' accomplishments and expertise, and contributes to the institution.

Lastly, the authors firmly believe that the environment of the working group itself reflects the spirit of group mentorship. This partnership, based on trust, empowers each member to embrace creativity and share ideas, leading to innovative and agile solutions. The excitement and dedication of the working group inspires and fuels the mentorship program and has an impact on its success. Working group members learn from one another and the outcome is a strong mentorship program that benefits the larger group of mentors and mentees.

The deliberate and flexible amalgamation of informal and formal programming will remain a focus to continually integrate needs-based mentoring in Milner Library's mentorship program. Building and sustaining an effective program is an iterative process and regular feedback with suggestions from participants is necessary to ensure success. As the institution grows, the working group will need to think more carefully about the size of the cohort-based programming. A larger audience for certain programming sessions may lead to some participants feeling uncomfortable and unsafe to voice concerns or share experiences. Some future considerations include welcoming mid-career employees and tenured faculty librarians needing guidance to obtain full professorship. The mentoring working group has also considered the best way to extend the dyadic relationships to the library as whole, not just new employees, thus creating additional cohorts. The group will explore structured assessments to measure the program's outcomes, partnerships with more library committees, or coordinating a systematic approach on programming with the associate dean for organizational development to align library identity, values, and strategic communications.

## Conclusion

An effective mentorship program provides an inclusive environment of support and guidance and helps diminish feelings of isolation an employee may encounter when acclimating to a new workplace. Mindful that the “human element is vital, and the personal relationships between mentors and mentees rely on numerous factors that must be considered individually,”<sup>37</sup> the emergent mentoring program at Milner Library supplements the traditional dyad mentoring relationship with cohort-based programming to ensure the mentee receives essential support for professional and personal psychosocial development. The employee-led programming builds an inclusive community of care and engagement in a non-hierarchical, holistic support system. Getting to know colleagues, sharing personal stories and experiences in addition to professional accomplishments, creates stronger connections between coworkers. The mentorship program provides a place for these connections to flourish and grow beyond the dyads and cohorts to all library employees. This humanistic approach to mentoring in Milner Library’s promising program allows room for multiple developmental relationships and renders optimistic outcomes while incrementally instilling valuable change to the institution’s culture, inspiring a renewed spirit of community.

## Acknowledgements

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## Appendix A

### Mentoring @ Milner Feedback Survey

#### Q1 Consent to Participate – Mentoring @ Milner Study

The purpose of this research study is to analyze the impact of a new mentoring program on incoming and established Milner librarians mentee/mentor pairs. *Benefits of this study will be to help determine the successes of the new initiative and identify areas for future improvement in order to build a successful and long-lasting mentorship program at Milner library. The findings will contribute to the existing body of research on this subject and assist other libraries in building their own mentorship programs.*

The results of this study may be published in a professional journal and/or presented at professional meetings.

This assessment is voluntary and anonymous. The questions are of a non-sensitive nature. You may decline to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or risk.

If you agree to be in this study, you will complete a self-administered online survey over the next 15-20 minutes.

By consenting to participate in this assessment, you are verifying that you are over the age of 18.

The procedure consists solely of answering the questions within the survey. You will only be asked to fill out the online survey.

The publication or presentation of the findings will include only summarized data, and therefore it will not be possible to identify individual participants. Collected questionnaire data will be kept protected by a secure password and only librarian researchers will have access to the assessment data.

The survey is designed to be anonymous. Please do not provide any information that would identify you in your responses.



Benefits of the study will examine the expectations and experiences of librarians in order to determine the success of the new initiative and to discuss opportunities for future expansion of the program.

We do not anticipate any risks beyond those that would occur in everyday life.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, contact the Illinois State University Research Ethics & Compliance Office at (309) 438-5527 or IRB@ilstu.edu. If you have additional questions or comments, please contact the principal investigator: Angela Yon, ayon@ilstu.edu.

By selecting YES below, I agree that I meet all of the inclusion criteria and I grant permission for my data collected in the assessment to be used for this research project, understanding that my identity will be anonymous.

Yes

No

Q2 What did you find most beneficial about Mentoring @ Milner?

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Q3 What did you find least beneficial about Mentoring @ Milner?

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Q4 Do you plan to continue to participate in Mentoring @ Milner with your current mentor/mentee? Why or why not?

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Q5 What changes would you recommend to Mentoring @ Milner?

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Q6 How did the COVID-19 environment impact your feelings about the program and/or your mentee/mentor relationship?

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Q7 Based on your experience, would you recommend expanding Mentoring @ Milner to all your colleagues at Milner Library in the future?

- Yes
- No

Q8 As a mentee, in what ways did you take the lead in your mentorship relationship?

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Q9 Please give an example or two of how you were supported or what you learned from your mentor.

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Q10 In what ways did the mentor/mentee relationship meet or not meet your expectations?

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Q11 On a scale of one to five (five being the highest), how would you rate the following:

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	N/A (6)
Your overall experience in Mentoring @ Milner so far	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The working group's implementation and coordination of the program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The compatibility of the mentor/mentee pair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication from the working group to the mentoring pairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teams document library	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Over-commitment conversation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Imposter syndrome conversation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Burnout  
conversation

End of year  
celebration

Getting to  
Know Milner  
sessions

Q12 Additional comments/please discuss ratings:

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