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## Chapter 29- Conclusion

David Law  
*Utah State University, david.law@usu.edu*

Nora Domínguez  
*University of New Mexico*

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## CONCLUSION

David Law and Nora Domínguez

### Conclusion

Too often, formal mentoring programs are started at universities without thinking through and addressing the details needed for the program to succeed. As stated at the beginning, the primary purpose of this handbook is to provide a “one-stop shop” resource that guides program coordinators to be intentional and effective in designing, implementing, evaluating, sustaining, and funding their academic mentoring program. In this concluding section, we describe how this book’s chapters and case studies connect to form a comprehensive guide for program coordinators and other stakeholders. Making the chapter’s interconnections explicit makes a needed contribution to the mentoring field, particularly as it applies to academia. We conclude by emphasizing how important it is for program coordinators and university leaders to build their programs upon a firm foundation. Building this secure foundation overlaps with phase 1 of Figure 7.1 in chapter 7.

To build this secure foundation, program coordinators need to understand the interconnectedness of the content of the chapters focused on theories (Chapter 2), operational definitions (Chapter 1), needs assessments (Chapter 5), typology of the program (chapter 3), and goals and outcomes (Chapters 4 & 8). Mentoring programs in academe begin by addressing a perceived problem such as low student retention rates, high faculty turnover, or disenfranchised staff. Too often in academia, the perceived problem is enough to justify developing a mentoring program. Rather than using a perceived problem to justify the development of a mentoring program, we recommend the guidance of Legler in chapter 5 to conduct a needs assessment to ensure that the perceived problem exists supported by measurable data.

When it is clear that a problem exists, the program coordinator should spend time in chapter 4, where Arocho and Johnson describe the benefits and outcomes of formal mentoring programs that may address the identified problem. After reviewing the benefits and outcomes of formal mentoring programs, the program coordinator should know if a formal mentoring program can address the

identified problem.

Once coordinators determine that a formal mentoring program is viable to address the identified problem, the next step in building a firm foundation is creating an operational definition following Garvey's guidelines in chapter 1. The operational definition should align with a theoretical framework that Hager, Hales, and Dominguez explore in depth in chapter 2. Finally, this operational definition should naturally flow into the program's goals, objectives, and outcomes, as explained by Fain and Crites in chapter 8. In this concluding section, we emphasize that the development of an operational definition, theoretical framework, goals, objectives, and outcomes is not a linear process, but rather the process is bi-directional and iterative.

After a program's goals, objectives, and outcomes are explicit, the program coordinator is ready to consider the diverse forms and functions of mentoring relationships described by Murrell and Onosu in chapter 3 and Chanland in chapter 20. As editors, we feel the time has come for program coordinators and university leaders to consider more holistic development networked mentoring models described by Murrell, Onosu, and Chanland. After developing a secure foundation for their mentoring program, the coordinator is ready for the preparation phase, which is phase 2 of Figure 7.1.

In phase 2, the program coordinator assesses available resources, potential costs, benefits, and whether there is institutional support and mission alignment for such a program. In chapter 6, Taylor and Dart describe the processes and considerations program coordinators must take into account to secure institutional support. Without institutional support, the program will well be doomed. While we present institutional support as occurring in phase 2, the reality is that it is not linear. We recommend program coordinators and other stakeholders meet with institutional leaders early and often so that institutional leaders feel that their opinions have helped mold the program, thereby gaining their support early in the process. Securing institutional support is bi-directional, and the program coordinator should be prepared to modify the program goals and objectives relevant to feedback from university leadership.

After securing institutional support, the program coordinator has the approval to begin designing the mentoring program. In chapter 9, Law describes processes and considerations for recruiting mentors and mentees. In this recruitment process, coordinators determine how diversity and inclusion will factor into their program, as outlined by Zerai and López in chapter 12. Next, training materials to prepare effective mentees and mentors, as outlined by Mickel in chapter 10 and Clabaugh in chapter 11, are readied. In this third design phase, the methodology of the evaluation plan described by Lunsford in chapter 13 begins to take shape. In developing the evaluation plan, stakeholders must determine if the program will contain a research component described in chapter 14 by Law, Vouvalis, Harris, and LaMuth, and how including a research component may impact the implementation timeline due to needing Institutional Review Board approval.

In the fourth phase of Figure 7.1, the program coordinator implements the plan determined while designing the program. For example, in addition to developing the training program, the coordinator trains the mentors and mentees. A critical component of phase 4, matching participants, is delineated in Law's chapter 9. As described by Zerai and López in chapter 12, particular attention to diversity and inclusion should factor into the matching process. In this phase, monitoring the progress of the

mentoring relationship occurs, as outlined by Lunsford in chapter 13.

Even though phase five on evaluation and phase six on funding and sustainability are the last two phases of figure 7.1, program coordinators use the guidelines found in these chapters by Lunsford and Castañeda-Kessel throughout all phases of the program. The program coordinator should consider what constitutes functional evaluation and sustainability as they build the program's foundation. Being thoughtful in the early phases of the program will naturally lead to efficient program evaluation and the program's sustainability.

Reviewing the twelve case studies in this handbook illustrates that the programs varied significantly in what areas they emphasized as they described the six phases of mentoring program design, execution, evaluation, funding, and sustaining the program. The program coordinator reading this handbook will gain much insight in reviewing the case studies and comparing them to the recommendations for progressing through the six phases. By following the guidelines of the chapters in this handbook and examining the case studies, the program coordinator will have the tools needed to build their respective program, which is the primary purpose of this handbook.

While editing this book, we have settled on four recommendations that will continue to advance the mentoring field in academia.

## **Recommendations**

We present four recommendations to help shift formal mentoring programs in academia away from ad hoc mentorship toward intentionality. The first recommendation describes how to make a theory of change explicit. The second recommendation explains how to create a mentoring culture. For recommendation three, we advocate that program coordinators and other stakeholders consider adding research to their respective evaluations. Our final recommendation, recommendation four, encourages coordinators to seek funding for formal mentoring programs.

### ***Recommendation 1: Make the Theory of Change Explicit***

Create a visual representation that makes explicit your theory of change. This visual representation should provide an overall framework that explains how the program will obtain its objectives and goals. Program coordinators and university leadership can use this visual representation to explain the program to stakeholders. This visual representation could be a logic model, concept map, or another visual diagram. Most importantly, this visual representation should clarify the interconnections between a needs assessment, operational definition, theoretical framework, methodology, and objectives and goals. These interconnections are explained further in the following subsections.

**1.1 Conduct a Needs Assessment.** Needs assessments are often skipped when developing mentoring programs in academia because program coordinators and university leadership may think a needs assessment takes too long and will not provide new insight into students, faculty, and staff needs. However, conducting a needs assessment is critical in developing a mentoring program because it ensures that university resources address prioritized institutional needs. In addition, identifying needs leads to congruent program objectives and goals. Key findings of the needs assessment should be

incorporated into the theory of change.

**1.2 Create an Operational Definition.** In chapter 14, Law, Vouvalis, Harris, and LaMuth highlight the lack of operational definitions in formal university mentoring programs. Not having an operational definition limits the ability to measure what constitutes a successful mentoring experience, leading to weak evaluation and research design and replication problems. Creating an operational definition makes key constructs explicit, facilitating replication and a more rigorous methodology for evaluation and research. The theory of change should include critical constructs from the operational definition. These key constructs should have natural ties to the needs assessment, theoretical framework, methodology, and objectives and goals. In chapter 1, Garvey addresses the challenges of creating a singular definition of mentoring and offers guidelines to develop a description of mentoring using a dimensions approach for mentoring programs in higher education. In addition to Garvey, we recommend the work of Dominguez and Kochan (2020) in developing an operational definition. Dominguez and Kochan emphasize that, first and foremost, mentoring is a developmental relationship comprised of five dimensions. Putting these five dimensions together constitutes an operational definition. These five dimensions are a *qualifier* that explains the context of the interaction. A *defining word* describing the type of relationship. A description of who the *participants* are. The *activities* in which participants engage. And lastly, the expected goals and objectives expressed in *outcomes*. The case studies provide examples of operational definitions for various formal mentoring programs in higher education in the United States.

**1.3 Develop a Theoretical Framework.** As described in Chapter 14 by Law Harris, and LaMuth, more recent mentoring programs in academia include theoretical frameworks. However, the lack of programs containing theoretical frameworks continues to plague formal mentoring programs in academia. The operational definition of the mentoring program should be influenced by the theory chosen and vice versa. In Chapter 2, Hager, Hales, and Dominguez describe several theoretical frameworks and how they can be applied to mentoring programs. In addition to describing linkages between theory and operational definitions, the theory also influences methodology by making explicit independent, intervening, and dependent variables. Thus, describing theoretical links between mentoring and evaluation/research questions or hypotheses is not just an intellectual exercise; it also shifts the focus and makes explicit what is being emphasized.

**1.4 Increase Methodological Rigor by Clearly Identifying Program Variables.** In chapter 14, Law, Vouvalis, Harris, and LaMuth describe ways to increase methodological rigor in formal mentoring programs by addressing internal and external validity threats. Identifying and operationalizing the independent, intervening, and dependent variables increase internal validity. A theory of change model should show how the program's variables connect to the theoretical framework and operational definition of mentoring, making the relationship between the independent, intervening, and dependent variables explicit.

**1.5 Include Program Objectives and Goals in the Theory of Change.** The program's objectives and goals should evolve naturally from the needs assessment and be reflected in the operational definition, theoretical framework(s), and variables selected. Additionally, program objectives and goals should align with institutional priorities as described in Chapter 6. The authors of chapter 8 guide the

program coordinator using a logic model framework to employ seven design elements. These elements help determine and reach the mentoring program's objectives, goals, and outcomes.

### ***Recommendation 2: Create a Mentoring Culture***

In addition to drawing from the chapters in this handbook regarding this second recommendation, we reference the work of Zachary's (2005) book *Creating a Mentoring Culture: The Organization's Guide*. Zachary and the authors of chapter 6, Taylor and Dart, emphasize that an institution's infrastructure is the foundation of a mentoring culture. At universities, infrastructure is anchored within multiple layers and commits its leadership and time to mentoring over the long run by providing appropriate financial, technical, and knowledge resources. With a supportive infrastructure, Zachary (2005) highlights eight hallmarks contributing to a vibrant mentoring culture. These hallmarks, described next, are alignment, accountability, communication, value and visibility, demand, multiple mentoring opportunities, education and training, and safety nets. We use Zachary's eight hallmarks to help frame our second recommendation, creating a mentoring culture. Similar to recommendation #1, which describes the interconnections between a needs assessment, operational definition, theoretical framework, methodology, objectives and goals, the eight hallmarks though differentiated from each other, are interdependent and contribute together to form a vibrant and full mentoring culture.

**2.1 Create Institutional Alignment.** When mentoring programs align with the university's goals and visions, the reasons to engage in mentoring are evident to university leadership, faculty, and staff. More engagement by administration, faculty, and staff leads to positive effects within the university (Zachary, 2005). In chapter 6, Taylor and Dart describe the process of aligning vision, executive support, and participation in the mentoring program.

**2.2 Create accountability.** When the roles of university leadership, program coordinators, mentors, and mentees are unclear, it leads to ambiguity and unintended consequences, such as resentment and frustration. Accountability increases with participants and the organization when roles and responsibilities are clarified to manage expectations (Zachary, 2005). The authors of chapters 10 and 11, Mickel and Clabaugh, guide readers through preparing effective mentees and mentors to communicate using interpersonal skills and tools, thereby increasing accountability.

**2.3 Develop a Communication Plan.** Ineffective communication in mentoring programs can wreak havoc by creating confusion, false expectations, and eroding trust (Zachary, 2005). Effective mentoring programs have communication plans that are implemented and monitored. At universities, communication plans keep all parties, from leadership to the mentee, informed and how to be involved. As described by Lunsford in chapter 13, evaluative data can be part of communication plans revealing what is and is not working to inform process improvements. Communication plans should be bi-directional, creating a culture that values feedback and dialogue.

**2.4 Increase the Value and Visibility of Your Mentoring Program.** As the right people talk about mentoring in formal presentations, speeches, and informal meetings, it increases the value and visibility of mentoring and increases momentum (Zachary, 2005). University leaders can do much to structure job recruitment, application, and selection procedures that highlight the university's commitment to mentoring. Department chairs and academic deans can recognize and reward effective

mentoring much as they do teaching and research through annual rewards, promotion, and tenure practices (NASEM, 2019).

**2.5 Increase the Demand for Your Mentoring Program.** Creating demand for the mentoring program is best served when mentors and mentees are not forced to participate; instead, they are motivated to participate (Zachary, 2005). Leaders of the program increase motivation when they have credibility with the participants and when they join the program, as Taylor and Dart describe in chapter 6. A well-thought-out strategy jump-starts the program and creates buy-in. Patience is required as the demand for mentoring at universities evolves and is stimulated by non-mentors and mentees learning of the success mentors and mentees enthusiastically share. Inclusive mentoring, described in chapter 12 by Zeria and López, increases feelings of belonging which are highly contagious and motivating for those not yet participating.

**2.6. Create Multiple Mentoring Opportunities.** Chapter 3 of this handbook, authored by Murrell and Onosu, describes various mentoring relationships such as hierarchical, peer, group, reverse, and developmental networks. Chanland, in chapter 20, focused on four networked mentoring models that have shown promise in maximizing mentoring's effectiveness in universities. The key word in Zachary's sixth hallmark subtitle is "opportunity." As explained in chapter 4 by Arocho and Johnson, formalizing mentoring opportunities and practices distribute the benefits of mentorship more equitably and effectively among its members. The main point of Zachary's sixth hallmark is that an effective mentoring culture provides opportunities for mentees to engage with one or more mentors at the appropriate developmental time to receive the guidance and support needed to flourish in their university roles.

**2.7 Develop Continuous Education and Training.** Mentoring programs in academia should begin by providing evidence-based training and curriculum development that prepares mentees and mentors to be effective, as described by Mickel and Clabuugh in chapters 10 and 11. This training and curricula should explore the interpersonal and intrapersonal elements that facilitate successful communication between mentor and mentee. Guidelines for developing curricula for academic institutions should be included. In addition, training materials should consist of tools and frameworks such as guided discussions, communication plans, and mentoring compacts to ensure clear expectations between mentor and mentee.

Zachary (2005) emphasizes that a culture of mentoring not only supports education and training at the beginning of mentoring relationships but provides continuous and ongoing training. For example, mentor groups should meet regularly to exchange best practices and promote peer learning. Veteran mentors should have opportunities for advanced training. Mentoring coordinators and other mentoring leaders should keep themselves updated about best practices. Ongoing training can also make explicit the process for addressing problems in mentoring relationships or the program, thereby mitigating unintended negative consequences of mentoring relationships.

**2.8 Create Program Safety Nets.** In chapter 7, Christiansen and Busenbark describe the many roles of the program coordinator, including designing structured feedback systems as part of the overall assessment and evaluation plan. When appropriately designed, feedback systems provide safety nets that help mentees, mentors, and program coordinators deal more adeptly with obstacles they may

encounter. Safety nets are the eighth and final hallmark of Zachary's (2005) mentoring culture. Safety nets minimize negative consequences.

As described by Chapter 13's author Lunsford, assessment involves direct feedback from participants about their self-reported experiences in the program, including the quality of the mentoring relationship. An example of providing a safety net as part of the program assessment is creating a feedback system where mentors and mentees can share concerns regarding their relationship. We recommend that such assessments be conducted regularly through reliable electronic surveys and programmed to alert program coordinators of existing or potential problems immediately. This feedback loop creates a safety net in four ways. First, this safety net improves accountability. Second, it provides data for who should and should not be in the program. Third, it gives insight if a new strategy is needed. Lastly and most importantly, this safety net clarifies if an intervention is required to mitigate any unintended consequences of mentorship.

### ***Recommendation 3: Turn Your Evaluation into Research***

As explained by Lunsford in chapter 13, international standards for mentoring programs require assessment and evaluation as markers of an effective mentoring program. Lunsford, along with Law, Vouvalis, Harris, and LaMuth in chapter 14, distinguish the differences between assessment, evaluation, and research. Our third recommendation is that as stakeholders design their formal mentoring program, they consider adding a research component as part of their evaluation. When program coordinators conduct effective assessment and evaluations of their respective programs, they are already completing the bulk of the necessary steps to conduct research, such as collecting and analyzing data to assess mentoring relationships and to determine if the program is achieving its desired outcomes. Adding a research component is not as extensive of an "add-on" as one might think. The benefits of adding a research component far outweigh the extra work. The benefits of including research into the design are; first, research will create a more extensive scope for the program. Second, the study will clarify how the proposed mentoring program fits within the general mentoring field and what contributions the program will make to the science of mentoring. Lastly, including research better positions the mentoring program to be externally funded, which is our fourth recommendation.

### ***Recommendation 4: Seek Funding for Your Formal Mentoring Program***

Few handbooks on formal mentoring programs provide a step-by-step process for securing external funding. This handbook makes this unique contribution in chapter 15 as Castañeda-Kessel offers this step-by-step guide and alerts program coordinators and university leaders about the many possibilities for funding mentoring programs. We recommend that during the design phase of program development, program coordinators and other interested stakeholders familiarize themselves with funding opportunities to determine if there is an overlap between their program and funding sources and the viability of pursuing these resources.



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