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## Retention and Mentoring (RAM) Initiative


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**Authors**

Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, Virginia Commonwealth University; Susan DiGiovanni; Donna Gibson; Anne Hofler; Florence Johnson; Michael Southam-Gerow; and Jenilee Stanley-Shanks

## **RAM Initiative: Retention and Mentoring Initiative**

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

Susan R. DiGiovanni, Associate Dean of Medical Education, School of Medicine

Donna M. Gibson, Associate Professor, School of Education

Anne A. Hoffler, Senior Director of Donor Relations, Development Office

Florence Johnson, Compliance Audit Supervisor, Audit and Compliance Services

Jenilee Stanley Shanks, Executive Coordinator, Dean's Office, School of Engineering

Michael A. Southam-Gerow, Graduate Program Director, Department of Psychology

*Project Sponsor: Timothy L. Davey, Associate Vice President Faculty Recruitment & Retention*

### **PROJECT ABSTRACT**

National and local surveys (e.g., COACHE, 2010; VCU Great Place Initiative, 2013) suggest that a primary reason for workplace dissatisfaction among faculty and staff is lack of adequate mentorship. Evidence also suggests that mentoring programs improve recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty and staff (e.g., Daley, Wingard, & Reznik, 2006). VCU and VCU Health currently have decentralized and isolated mentoring programs across campuses: a centralized mentoring program accessible to all employees does not exist to address faculty and staff professional development and networking needs. Our project sought to fill this gap. Specifically, we proposed to develop an online database designed to match mentors with mentees based on multiple criteria. Our goal was to address faculty and staff mentoring and professional development needs as a means to build a culture of connection to promote retention of employees.

### **QUEST FOR DISTINCTION**

This project directly addresses two themes from VCU's Quest for Distinction. First, the project addresses Theme I Goal D: "Recruit and retain faculty, staff and administration with the skills and talents to increase quality teaching and learning, high-impact research, and diversity at all levels." Second, the project also addresses Theme II Goal C: "Grow the next generation of researchers and scholars who will focus on the discovery of new knowledge and the advancement of clinical applications." Strong mentorship of faculty and staff at all levels of their career is important to aid in professional development, produce quality research, grow and develop teachers, create a culture of network and connectivity, and aid in realizing career ladders. Quality mentorship of faculty and staff requires formal programs that include, among other attributes, a strong method for matching mentee to mentor. Our proposed mentoring database will match mentees with mentors who have the skills mentees need to develop at that particular time in their career. The system is flexible to permit the same mentee to seek another mentor with a particular knowledge base later in her/his career.

### **PROJECT GOALS**

1. Develop a centralized online database that (a) stores information on potential mentors and mentees and (b) matches mentees with mentors.
2. We also suggest other elements to consider for a university-wide mentoring program, including: (a) framework for the program, including structural, administrative, and marketing recommendations; and (b) mentor training and support program.

### **PROJECT STRATEGIES**

Our team was interested in the issues of retention and recruitment, with a particular interest in retaining diverse faculty and staff across both VCU campuses. In pursuit of this goal, we engaged in a number of activities. Early in the process, members of the team met with

individuals from the Great Place Initiative, a meeting that coalesced us around the idea of a mentoring initiative. Next in our process, we investigated the mentoring efforts at peer institutions, including the University of South Carolina, University of South Florida, University of Louisville, University of Alabama-Birmingham, and the University of Cincinnati. We also identified the various mentoring programs around VCU and VCU Health. Through this effort, we learned about mentoring programs in various units, including the Department of Internal Medicine, School of Engineering, Center for Clinical and Translational Research (CCTR), Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, the Wilder School, and the Center for Cultural Experience in Prevention. Our research led us to identifying our team sponsor: Dr. Tim Davey, Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Recruitment and Retention. In working with Dr. Davey, we identified an initial goal of developing an online database capable of matching mentors with mentees, much in the way that online dating services operate. We learned that the School of Social Work uses a similar database to match students to their off-campus placements. In conversations among team members and with stakeholders around VCU, we identified a key set of characteristics for an online database, including (a) coverage of both faculty AND staff professional development needs, (b) coverage of a variety of professional development needs, and (c) an assessment of mentor strengths.

### **ACTION STEPS**

We engaged in multiple steps to complete our project:

- Obtained sponsorship for the project from Dr. Tim Davey, Associate Vice President for Faculty Recruitment and Retention
- Met with Terrance Henderson, Associate Director Digital Technologies University Marketing, to discuss the design of the database
- Developed a mock-up of the database using Survey Monkey
- Modified categories and units and included areas for possible mentoring
- Revised the mock-up survey based on feedback
- Presented the mock-up to Dr. Davey
- Obtained estimate of cost to develop soft-ware
- Obtained cost data to examine cost effectiveness of the project
- Developed other aspects of a mentorship program, including program administration, mentor training program, and evaluation of the program's efficacy

### **OUTCOMES**

**Employee Satisfaction and Retention.** If implemented, our proposed program has the potential for far-reaching effects. The national COACHE survey and our own local Great Place Initiative survey have found mentoring a key need by faculty and staff. Successfully meeting this need has the potential to help improve job satisfaction, productivity, retention of faculty and staff, improve diversity, and reduce hiring costs. These outcomes would be measurable in faculty and staff surveys that are ongoing and could also be assessed as part of the mentorship program itself. A sustainable mentoring platform would contribute to our Quest goal of retaining a more diverse faculty and staff. Further, our project would help VCU and VCU Health maintain the reputation as being one of the best employers in the area.

**Cost.** We conducted a rough calculation of the cost of the program compared to employee replacement. If VCU lost 10 employees per year to lack of mentorship, the cost could exceed \$900K for recruitment alone (i.e., not including start-up funds, relocation costs, etc.). Our proposed program would cost about \$41K, of which about \$15K would be a one-time cost. These calculations do not include hidden costs such as employee stress and failure to develop our existing employees.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The mentoring database is meant to be a centralized comprehensive database that will work in conjunction with existing mentoring efforts and be a resource to all VCU and VCU Health faculty and staff. In addition to the database, we have recommended development of a framework for the mentorship program that would include administration, evaluation, and marketing initiatives. Our project would require a percentage of a full-time employee's job responsibility to administer the program (e.g., review potential mentor-mentee matches, coordinating compatible "matches," assess quality of program). In terms of marketing, we developed a set of recommendations such as use of a variety of media channels and periodic in-person mixer events. We recommend the program be centralized in the *Office of the Provost*.

## FINANCING AND RESOURCES

The cost for the development of the database was estimated at \$16,000. Our cost analysis was described earlier. A specific budget for the program is provided here

### Project Budget

|    | <u>Item Description</u> | <u>Justification</u>                 | <u>Cost</u>    |
|----|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. | Mentoring Platform      | Computer programming (one time cost) | \$16,000       |
| 2. | 0.2 FTE Coordinator     | Assuming annual salary 75K + fringe  | \$20,100       |
| 3. | Marketing/Outreach      | Mixers/advertisement-annually        | \$10,000       |
|    |                         |                                      | Total \$46,100 |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for implementation include:

1. Development of the database
2. Partial FTE to administer database and mentorship program; person would report directly to Dr. Tim Davey (Office of Faculty Recruitment and Retention)
3. Other aspects of a mentorship program
  - a. Mentor training program
  - b. Incentive program for mentors, including credit for promotion and tenure, other rewards, and protected time for mentoring
  - c. Marketing efforts to include annual kick-off, midway check-ins and mixers.
  - d. Evaluation of the program, including surveys at pre-determined intervals during the mentoring process and at the conclusion of the mentorship.

## FINAL PITCH

Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff represents a cornerstone for the success of VCU's efforts to fulfill the Quest for Distinction. Data from national and local surveys suggest that faculty and staff find mentorship is an area for improvement at VCU. We propose that one important element of a university-wide mentoring program would be a database capable of producing flexible matching of willing mentors to mentees. A successful mentorship program has the potential to improve job satisfaction, improve development of faculty and staff, and increase productivity. The cost of the program is small relative to the cost of hiring new faculty and staff.

## APPENDIX

### Model Database Application VCU RAM-Research and Mentoring Initiative

At VCU, we believe that mentoring and being mentored is the key to retention and motivation among faculty and staff. This application can be completed more than once and across the career of the individual. Faculty and staff can sign-up as a mentor and can also complete it a second time requesting a mentor for his/her own mentoring. If you have questions, please contact [timdavywillhelpyou@vcu.edu](mailto:timdavywillhelpyou@vcu.edu).

Please check your responses carefully before you submit this form, as your submission cannot be edited after it is submitted. You will receive a confirmation email to confirm that the form has been received successfully. **All fields are required.**

1. I'm interested in being a: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Current position: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your current work unit? \_\_\_\_\_
4. First Name: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
8. E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Local Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

The information you provide in this section will help you find your best match.

11. What is your preferred unit of match? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is your preferred role/position of match? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Rank your top five interests/needs
  - 1 - \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2 - \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3 - \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4 - \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5 - \_\_\_\_\_
14. What times are you available? (Check all that apply)  
 Daytime  Evenings (after 4pm)  Weekends  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you know a specific person you want to be matched with? If so, please include name:  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Is there anything else we need to know to help make your match? \_\_\_\_\_
17. We are constantly working to adjust and/or improve this process. Your comments and suggestions are welcome: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for completing the mentoring initiative form. As a reminder, you can complete the form again to sign-up for mentoring if you only applied to mentor. If you signed-up to be a mentor, you can also submit a new form to receive mentoring.*

## The Retention and Mentoring (RAM) Initiative



## Our Team

- Anne Hoffer
- Donna Gibson
- Florence Johnson
- Jenilee Stanley-Shanks
- Michael Southam-Gerow
- Susan DiGiovanni
- And our sponsor: Dr. Tim Davey



## Tale of Three Employees



Victor



Carlotta



Umberto

## Missing Piece?



## Mentoring



## Needs and Goals

- Needs
  - Increase Employee Retention
  - Build a Culture of Connection and Inclusivity
  - Support Career and Professional Development
- Aspects of An Effective Solution
  - Reaches Both Campuses
  - Addresses Needs of Faculty and Staff
  - Involves Flexible Subject Matter Driven by Participants
  - Works with Unit Level Mentoring Efforts

## Solution



## Why VCU Needs University-Wide Mentoring Program

- VCU has 3,052 T&R and A&P FT faculty
- VCU and VCU Health have 21,704 employees total
- VCU hires about 350-400 new FT faculty annually

## Why VCU Needs University-Wide Mentoring Program

### Theme I

Become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment.

#### Goals

- I.D Recruit and **retain faculty, staff and senior leadership** with the skills and talents to increase quality teaching and learning, high-impact research, and diversity at all levels.

### Theme II

Attain pre-eminence as an urban, public research university by making contributions in research, scholarship, creative expression and clinical practice to advance knowledge and enhance the quality of life.

#### Goals

- II.C **Grow the next generation of researchers and scholars** who will focus on the discovery of new knowledge and the advancement of clinical applications.



## Why VCU Needs University-Wide Mentoring Program

- Prominent “opportunity”: Opportunities for faculty and staff to receive and support for development/advancement”
- Proposed as an initiative: Strengthen mentorship programs

*the*  
**Great Place**  
INITIATIVE

## Why VCU Needs University-Wide Mentoring Program

- COACHE =National TT faculty satisfaction survey
  - Mentoring rated lowest (3 out of 5)
  - Lowest rated of 17 items in Climate/Culture/Collegiality section



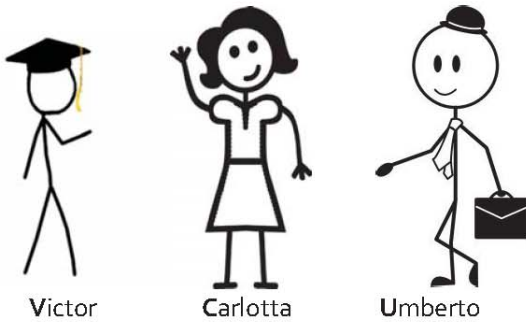
## Why VCU Needs University-Wide Mentoring Program

- VCU’s own 2013 faculty and staff survey data
- Mentoring at VCU scores (5 best, 1 worst)
  - Staff: 3.27
  - A&P faculty: 3.17
  - T&R faculty: 2.99

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INITIATIVE



## Tale of three employees: Revisited



## Victor

1. I'm interested in being a: Mentee (wishing to receive mentoring)

2. Current position: Teaching and Research Faculty-Tenure earning

3. What is your current work unit? School of Engineering

4. First Name: Victor

11. What is your preferred unit of match? School of Engineering

12. What is preferred role/position of match? Teaching and Research Faculty-Tenure earning

13. Rank your top five interests/needs:

| Mentoring Interests/Needs |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| First Choice              | Promotion and Tenure |
| Second Choice             | Research             |
| Third Choice              | Teaching Skills      |
| Fourth Choice             | Grant Writing Skills |
| Fifth Choice              | General Networking   |

## Carlotta

1. I'm interested in being a: Mentor (willing to provide mentoring to others)

2. Current position: Clinical Faculty-Teaching

3. What is your current work unit? School of Medicine

4. First Name: Carlotta

11. What is your preferred unit of match? No preference

12. What is preferred role/position of match? No preference

13. Rank your top five interests/needs:

| Mentoring Interests/Needs |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| First Choice              | General Networking              |
| Second Choice             | Navigating Cultural Differences |
| Third Choice              | Culture of Higher Education     |
| Fourth Choice             | Community Engagement            |
| Fifth Choice              | Leadership                      |

## Umberto

1. I'm interested in being a: Mentee (wishing to receive mentoring)

2. Current position: Staff

3. What is your current work unit? College of Humanities and Sciences

4. First Name: Umberto

11. What is your preferred unit of match? No preference

12. What is preferred role/position of match? Staff

13. Rank your top five interests/needs:

| Mentoring Interests/Needs |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| First Choice              | Staff-based Professional Development |
| Second Choice             | Professional Advancement             |
| Third Choice              | Leadership                           |
| Fourth Choice             | Navigating Barriers to Success       |
| Fifth Choice              | Personnel Management                 |

## The RAM Initiative



- **Other recommendations**
  - Create a model for a permanent university-wide mentoring program
    - Model: From outreach to management and support and evaluation
  - Create training program for mentors that supports and incentivizes participation

## Budgetary considerations

- VCU hires about 350-400 new FT faculty annually
- Some of these new hires are due to growth and retirements
- Others may depart VCU due to missed mentorship opportunities
- **Conservative assumption:** 10 of the new hires were due to missed opportunities to mentor adequately (about 3% of total)

## Quest Peer Mentoring Programs

|                                   | Formal Match Process | Formal Program | Mentor Training/ Handbook | Annual Evaluation | Serves Faculty | Serves Staff | University-Wide |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| University of Alabama, Birmingham | ✓                    | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓                 | ✓              | ✗            | ✗               |
| University of Cincinnati          | ✓                    | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓                 | ✓              | ✓            | ✗               |
| University of Illinois, Chicago   | ✓                    | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓                 | ✓              | ✗            | ✗               |
| University of Louisville          | ✓                    | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓                 | ✓              | ✗            | ✗               |
| University of South Carolina      | ✓                    | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓                 | ✓              | ✗            | ✗               |
| University of South Florida       | ✓                    | ✓              | ✓                         | ✓                 | ✓              | ✗            | ✗               |
| Virginia Commonwealth University  | ✓                    | ✓              | ✓                         | ✗                 | ✓              | ✗            | ✗               |

## Current Status of Mentoring Efforts at VCU

- VCU has an associate vice provost for faculty recruitment and retention
- Formal mentorship programs (selected)
  - GEHLI
  - Staff Senate (role-based mentoring)
  - VCU CCTR
  - Internal Medicine
  - Wilder School
  - Center for Cultural Experience in Prevention
- School of Engineering has a mentorship series

## The Retention and Mentoring (RAM) Initiative



## Vision and Mission

- Vision
  - Retain a body of excellent faculty and staff, with a strong population of traditionally underrepresented groups, that will develop and grow through formal mentoring at VCU.
- Mission
  - Develop a database to match faculty and staff together into mutually beneficial mentoring relationships

## The RAM Initiative



- Goal
  - Address university-wide retention and mentoring issues at Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Primary Team Project Goal
  - Create a mentoring platform for mentor/mentee matching for BOTH faculty and staff at VCU

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spark.com  
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## Let's look at costs

### HIRING A NEW EMPLOYEE

- Search costs
  - \$96,000 (per search per year)
- times 10 searches
- NOTE: does not include start-up and assumes new salaries are same as old salaries

■ \$960,000\*

### MENTORING PROGRAM

- Mentoring Platform
  - \$16,000 (one time cost)
- 20% of 1 FTE (plus fringe)
  - \$20,100 (annually, assumes annual salary of \$75K)
- Marketing and outreach
  - \$10,000

■ \$46,100

\* Source: Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC)

## Proposed Outcome Measures

- Increased retention of faculty and staff (Source: VCU Human Resources)
- Improved workplace satisfaction (Source: GPI)
- Lower turnover of faculty/staff (Source: VCU HR)

## Proposed Outcome Measures

- Satisfaction with mentorship program (Source: Proposed program surveys)
- Improved collaboration and communication (Source: Annual Evaluations and Unit Reports)
- Improved diversity (Source: VCU HR)
- Improved culture of connectedness (Source: COACHE survey)

## Tale of three employees: Reprise



Victor



Carlotta



Umberto

## Tale of three employees: Reprise



V



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# VCU RAM Initiative

## Questions?

- Thanks for your attention!

