

## Heads & Deans: Configuring and Supporting Mentoring for the Best Faculty Outcomes

### ***Know the Types of Mentoring & Offer a Mix***

Several approaches to mentoring are associated with positive outcomes (Lumpkin 2011), and having more than one faculty mentor increases mentees' research productivity and career satisfaction (Peluchette and Jeanquart 2000; van Emmerick 2004). Your department or college should ideally offer a mixture of the below formats to capitalize on the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of the different types (Reimers 2014).

*“That mentoring makes junior faculty more productive and satisfied scholars means that institutions with mentoring programs are likely to see more fruitful scholarly returns from their junior faculty,” (Trower 2012, p. 130).*

**Formal or Classic Mentoring:** This type of one-on-one mentoring pairs a senior faculty member with a junior faculty mentor, usually from the same department, for a specified time period. It is associated with positive benefits such as increased productivity, it guarantees a mentor for junior faculty, and it provides mentees with useful discipline-specific information (Lumpkin 2011; Reimers 2014).

#### ***Considerations:***

- The assigned mentor and mentee may not be a good fit for any number of reasons, such as personalities (Reimers 2014). To reduce this likelihood, both the mentor and mentee should have input on who is assigned to them (Allen et al. 2006a; 2006b).
- Since they're from the same department, mentees may be reluctant to admit struggles candidly and not get the mentoring they need. Therefore, specify expectations for confidentiality.
- A department may not have enough senior faculty to serve as mentors depending on the ratio of junior faculty to senior faculty, so engage mentors from a related department (Reimers 2014) or configure mentoring programs in one of the alternative ways below, such as peer mentoring.

**Informal Mentoring:** Informal mentoring – without assignment or structure – may produce stronger connections, more satisfaction, and occur with greater frequency (Lumpkin 2011; Ragins and Cotton 1999).

#### ***Considerations:***

- Many departments do not have strong mentoring cultures that naturally lead to informal mentoring. As deans and heads, you can intentionally set up structures and events to nurture informal mentoring (e.g., research presentations, workshops) (Reimers 2014).
- Having a mentor is not guaranteed as it is with a formal program, and faculty most in need of mentoring may be the least likely to find an informal mentor. Furthermore, because mentors tend to gravitate toward younger versions of themselves, groups underrepresented in academia – women and minorities – may be mentored less frequently, thereby perpetuating inequities (Bova 2000). As such, informal mentoring is best paired with a formal mentoring assignment.

**Peer Mentoring:** Faculty members with equal ranks from either the same or different departments develop supportive networks. They meet regularly to discuss issues and challenges they're facing, as well as share advice, information, and strategies (Angelique et al. 2002; Lumpkin 2011; Reimers 2014). It can also effectively address psychosocial needs, increase collegiality, normalize challenges, and reduce isolation (Smith et al. 2001). Peer mentoring has been positively evaluated and shown to be effective for both junior and mid-career faculty (Smith et al. 2001; Rees and Shaw 2014; Wasburn 2007). For example, associate professors who will be going up for promotion in the next few years may form a peer group to discuss promotion issues (e.g., documenting impact of work) and get feedback (e.g., candidate statement). Its benefits include ensuring mentoring occurs with unbalanced numbers of junior and senior faculty, exposing mentees to a *range* of opinions rather than relying on one mentor's opinion (Mitchell 1999), and benefiting those with unsatisfactory classic mentoring relationships (Wasburn 2007). Peers may be best suited to give advice since they likely have the most recent experience with similar issues (Reimers 2014).

*Considerations:*

- Since peers have not experienced all levels of the university, this type of mentoring cannot address all aspects of a faculty career, nor can it address in-depth discipline-specific information if cross-disciplinary. Though beneficial, peer mentoring should be complemented with senior faculty mentoring to provide departmental and institutional contextual knowledge (Reimers 2014).

Group or Team Mentoring: In group mentoring, senior faculty members serve as mentors for a group of junior mentees who meet regularly as a team (Reimers 2014). For example, a senior faculty member may meet with a group of junior faculty on a monthly basis. Monthly meetings are most effective when given a discussion topic or a speaker/panel is arranged to address a topic. It has many of the same advantages of peer mentoring, including addressing unbalanced numbers, but with the bonus of a senior mentor who can provide advice beyond what could be gleaned from peers (Reimers 2014). A few mentors can also serve many mentees, which can maximize the impact of excellent mentors (Reimers 2014).

*Considerations:*

- Confidentiality and trust issues may arise. Faculty must be assured that nothing that is said during these group sessions can be used against them by other members (Hunt and Weintraub 2002).
- Because of group size, scheduling and having everyone attend all meetings may be difficult, which may cause some mentees to not have the regular contact that is necessary for effective mentoring (Reimers 2014). Like other forms of mentoring, this is best paired with different types of mentoring to address the shortcomings of this approach.

Faculty Writing Groups: Writing support groups improve publication rates (see Dankoski et al. 2012), promote work-life balance, retention, and promotion (Davis et al. 2011), and can be broadly considered a form of peer mentoring. They can be interdisciplinary or discipline-specific. *Traditional writing groups* meet monthly to read, critique, and provide feedback to scholarly writing. These offer substantive feedback, but risk being time-consuming (Rockquemore 2010). *Writing accountability groups* meet briefly weekly wherein each member sets and shares short-term goals for the next week for their research and writing, and shares progress on meeting their previous week's goals. This promotes continual progress on scholarly writing (Silvia 2007), but offers little substantive feedback (Rockquemore 2010). In *write-on-site groups*, people meet to write independently in the same location (e.g., an office) to force accountability (Rockquemore 2010). This type of group may be most effective for people really struggling to sit down and write. As heads or deans, you may want to facilitate the organization of writing groups, particularly project-based groups. For example, you may want to organize a writing group for those interested several months before a popular grant deadline so that faculty can make continual progress on their grant applications.

Workshops & Colloquia: Workshops and colloquia can supplement or complement mentoring as these support faculty development and transfer knowledge. The Office of the Provost, the Office of Research and Discovery, and the Office of Instruction and Assessment all offer campus-wide workshops and networking opportunities. Be sure to actively spread the word about these programs and encourage your faculty to attend. You may want to organize your own departmental or college-level workshops to mentor your faculty, as well as to facilitate the formation of informal mentoring relationships.

**Combine types of mentoring to capitalize on the strengths of each. For example, a head may assign one senior mentor, encourage and facilitate peer mentoring, and set up group mentoring, in which senior faculty present to junior or mid-career faculty on their strengths, such as grant-writing, teaching innovations, or effectively mentoring graduate students.**

### **Effectively Build Mentoring Relationships**

- Formally assign at least one mentor. The stakes are too high to assume effective relationships will be formed through osmosis (Wilson et al. 2002, p. 317), and relying primarily on informal mentoring may disadvantage underrepresented groups (Bova 2000).
- Ask for mentor and mentee input into the matching process, which increases mentoring quality and program effectiveness (Allen et al. 2006a; 2006b). With mentees' input, they feel a sense of ownership, the mentor may feel a greater connection because they were chosen, and identifying and talking to potential mentors broadens the mentee's network (Cox 1997; Zerzan et al. 2009). Mentors are also more engaged and effective if they feel well-prepared to meet the mentee's needs (Lumpkin 2011).
- Ask the mentee to identify mentors within their first few months of employment so they receive support from the start of their career (Fuller et al. 2008).
- Encourage mentees to build a network of mentors. Junior faculty with multiple mentors are more successful with their research productivity (Peluchette and Jeanquart 2000) and report greater job satisfaction (van Emmerick 2004) than those with one or no mentors.
- Think beyond junior faculty. Associate professors can also benefit from mentoring, especially for promotion. The COACHE survey results show that only 23% of UA associate and full professors agreed that there is effective mentoring of associate faculty in their department. Peer mentoring has been shown to be an effective form of mentoring for associate professors (Rees and Shaw 2014), including cross-disciplinary peer mentoring.
- Be sensitive to the needs and challenges of women and faculty of color (see information [here](#)), who may be less likely to find mentors while simultaneously valuing mentoring more (Fox 2001; Holmes et al. 2007; Preston 2004; Thompson 2008; Wasburn 2007). Be sure that they are able to build their mentoring networks and actively facilitate the process if necessary.
- Partner with other departments in the college to help mentees find mentors outside of their department, which allows mentees to speak more candidly about their struggles (Boice 1992), provides a wider range of professional networking, and affords objective perspectives uninfluenced by departmental politics (Lumpkin 2011).
- Set up structures and events to nurture informal mentoring (Reimers 2014). For example, brownbag presentations in which faculty briefly present their research can be an effective format for faculty to learn about others' research while facilitating potential collaborations or mentoring opportunities. These can be by college to promote interdisciplinarity or within departments.

*One key reason to support mentoring is that it increases retention, and faculty turnover is expensive. The University of Wisconsin at Madison estimates that across disciplines, they spend an average of \$1.2 million in startup costs for each new professor, and it usually takes eight years for a professor to bring in enough money to cover that initial investment (Reimers 2014; Wilson 2008).*

### **Facilitate Positive Mentoring Experiences**

- Set clear expectations for minimum length of participation (e.g., one year, two years, etc.) and specify how frequently participants are expected to meet at a minimum (e.g., three one-hour meetings per semester, as well as provide feedback on a scholarly product or peer review teaching) (Lottero-Perdue and Fifield 2010; Pololi et al. 2004).
  - One common problem for mentees is being overly cautious about encroaching on a mentor's time so mentees won't approach mentors for help even when it is needed (Reimers 2014). By specifying this minimum, mentees can feel comfortable approaching their mentor for at least this amount of time.
- Encourage the pair to establish goals and expectations for the mentoring relationship, and perhaps even develop a mentoring contract (see example [here](#)) (de Janaz and Sullivan 2004).
  - Clear expectations are critical for the success of faculty mentoring (Sorcinelli and Yun 2007).

- Highlight the value of mentoring by disseminating the research findings on the benefits of faculty mentoring available [here](#) (Trower 2012).
  - Because the success of mentoring relationships is frequently dependent on the level of commitment to the mentoring process (Kram 1985; Olian et al. 1988; Ragins and Cotton 1991), faculty may be more likely to take mentoring seriously if they know the benefits.
- Encourage faculty to attend campus-wide workshops.
  - It can strengthen mentor-mentee relationships if they attend together, or these are good opportunities for mentees to find additional mentors.
- Recognize good mentoring and include mentoring in the service component of faculty reviews.
  - Mentoring produces a wide range of benefits for mentees and should be rewarded (Kanuka and Marini 2004).
- Evaluate mentoring programs to determine their effectiveness from both mentors' and mentees' experiences (Bickel and Brown 2005; Lumpkin 2011; Wasburn and LaLopa 2003). It could be a simple online survey to assess general levels of satisfaction and elicit feedback. Or it could be more formal and include evaluations for the mentoring relationship's process (e.g., clear objectives, regular meetings), communication (e.g., feedback), and outcomes (e.g., sense of progress and development) (Detsky and Baerlocher 2007; Grainger 2002). If online surveys are chosen, Laura Hunter ([lahunter@email.arizona.edu](mailto:lahunter@email.arizona.edu)) can assist in developing, conducting, and analyzing the survey.

### ***Engage in Mentoring***

- Consider your own mentoring of faculty. As Reimers (2014) suggests, the dean might hold an annual meeting to discuss the process and requirements for tenure and promotion. Heads may give junior faculty the opportunity annually to assess their teaching, research, service, and outreach in relation to their progress towards tenure. In the meeting, the head should be able to make concrete, specific suggestions about appropriate goals and strategies to reach these goals (Reimers 2014). Research shows that the clarity of the tenure and promotion process is one of six most important factors for faculty satisfaction (Trower 2012) and this is an area in which we could improve upon given the results of the [2013-2014 COACHE survey](#). Additionally, the COACHE survey revealed that 32% of assistant professors and 77% of associate professors have not received formal feedback on their progress made towards tenure or promotion, respectively.
- Review faculty's work assignments carefully to ensure that junior faculty members are not being unduly burdened by an excessive number of new course preparations or demanding service assignments (Reimers 2014). This is especially important for women, as the research shows that women associate professors spend far more time doing service than men, which then hinders their promotion prospects (Misra et al. 2011; 2012; Perna 2001).
- Sponsor and nominate faculty in the department or college for opportunities that would lead to career advancement (Tillman 2001). The COACHE survey found that the U of A also could improve on faculty recognition, and one way to do this is to nominate excellent faculty for opportunities and awards.