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Lindsay J. Hastings

Cindy Kane

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# Distinguishing Mentoring, Coaching, and Advising for Leadership Development

Lindsay J. Hastings<sup>1</sup> and Cindy Kane<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clifton Professor in Mentoring Research and director of Nebraska Human Resources Institute at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

<sup>2</sup> Director of student involvement and leadership and special assistant to the provost for academic innovation at Bridgewater State University

## **Abstract**

Mentoring, coaching, and advising are often confused as similar interactions with developmental intent, yet their scope, purpose, and utility in leadership development are distinct. The purpose of this chapter is to provide clarity as to what constitutes mentoring, coaching, and advising for leadership development and to compare and contrast each relationship type.

Developing the “whole” student often requires identifying unique needs and helping students recognize when they need mentoring, coaching, and/or advising. While mentoring, coaching, and advising are all developmental interactions, their scope, purpose, and utility in leadership development are distinct. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the distinctions between mentoring, coaching, and advising and synthesize their utility in leadership development. In doing

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so, we will be better prepared to recognize when mentoring, coaching, and/or advising will be the most powerful tool for student leadership development.

## **Mentoring**

The concept of mentoring originated in Homer's *Odyssey* when Odysseus beseeched his wise and loyal friend, Mentor, to bring Telemachus (Odysseus's son) under his care and tutelage during Odysseus's voyage. While mentoring research took several years to catch up to the eighth century BCE epic Greek poem, seminal authors in the 1970s and 1980s ranging from Chickering (1969) to Vaillant (1977) to Levinson, Darrow, Levinson, Klein, and McKee (1978), to Kram (1985) documented and suggested a positive relationship between mentorship and success.

**Purpose and Hallmarks of Mentoring Practice.** The purpose of mentoring is to develop the mentee's ability to acquire knowledge, skills, and self-confidence to become a better student, employee, or organizational leader (Burke, 1984; Fagan & Walter, 1982). Hallmarks of mentoring practice include a dyadic environment, long-term dedication by mentor and mentee, regular interactions, and both formal and informal investments in personal growth, career development, psychosocial development as well as leadership empowerment (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012; Castro, Terri, & Williams, 2004; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010; Nora & Crisp, 2007). While mentoring is designed to develop the mentee, the influence in a mentoring relationship is more reciprocal than unidirectional (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Eby et al., 2010).

Mentoring is a process, not an event; thus, mentoring is not designed for short-term skill development. However, mentoring relationships could evolve from short-term leadership skill programs or organizational experiences. Because mentoring involves investment in personal development, mentoring relationships require willingness by mentor and mentee to engage in a close relationship. Additionally, mentoring cannot always be confined to scheduled meetings, but requires a willingness to help a mentee reflect and integrate their life

experiences in the moment. Students have the unique life stage opportunity to experience mentoring both from the perspective of the mentee as well as the mentor through faculty mentoring (academic affairs or student affairs educators), peer mentoring (being mentored by peers and mentoring peers), and mentoring younger students.

Although mentoring research has not identified a single list of characteristics common among successful mentors, Bearman, Blake-Beard, Hunt, and Crosby (2010) argue the context of the relationship determines desired mentor characteristics. More globally, relationship-building qualities such as empathy have been identified in myriad studies as important mentor characteristics (Allen & Eby, 2010). Keller (2010) noted mentor consistency and follow-through as essential, especially in youth mentoring. Additionally, Fries-Britt and Snider (2015) highlight the importance of authenticity, transparency, and vulnerability in mentoring women and underrepresented minorities.

**Expected Outcomes from Mentoring.** For the mentee, outcomes across multiple contexts (youth, student-faculty, workplace) tend to enhance psychological health, greater positive attitudes, and achievement (Lockwood, Carr Evans, & Eby, 2010). Specific to college students, positive outcomes associated with mentoring include persistence, social and academic integration, and academic success (Crisp, 2010; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Gallup-Purdue Index Report (2014) findings indicate that if college graduates had a professor who cared about them, engaged their excitement around learning, and encouraged them to pursue their dreams, their odds of workplace engagement and well-being more than doubled. Specific to youth, Blinn-Pike's (2010) and DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, and Valentine's (2011) meta-analytic reviews identified positive mentee outcomes across social, emotional, behavioral, and academic domains, such as attitude toward school and violence, academic performance, and improved parental relationships. Additionally, Peterson and Stewart (1996) reported higher generativity (care for establishing and guiding the next generation; Erikson, 1950, 1963) among mentored youth.

For the mentor, positive outcomes include increased pride and satisfaction, sharpened leadership competencies, greater confidence, improved job performance, and higher generativity (Bass, 1990; Hastings, Griesen, Hoover, Creswell, & Dlugosh, 2015; Lockwood et al.,

2010; Newby & Corner, 1997). Allen and Eby (2010) argue an effective mentoring relationship fulfills the need to form and sustain positive relationships, which connects mentoring to positive affective, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes.

**What is Mentoring's Utility in Leadership Development?** Strains of research in K-12 and higher education have identified mentoring as an important tool in developing leadership, in particular socially responsible leadership (Campbell et al., 2012; Collins-Shapiro, 2006; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Hastings et al., 2015; Komives & Collins-Shapiro, 2006; Komives, Longerbeam, Mainella, Osteen, & Owen, 2009). Mentoring for leadership development involves long-term investment in both personal development and leadership empowerment (Campbell et al., 2012). Each type of mentoring will generate unique leadership development experiences and outcomes. For example, consider applications of the social change model—a model of leadership development designed to enhance student self-knowledge and leadership competence and to facilitate positive social change (SCM; Higher Education Research Institute, 1996). While faculty mentoring is expected to impact the majority of leadership values associated with the social change model ranging from consciousness of self to handling controversy with civility, peer mentoring can fill in the gaps by impacting leadership values such as commitment and collaboration (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Dugan & Komives, 2010). Additionally, peer mentoring increases in significance as students progress in their leadership identities (Komives et al., 2009). Peer mentors are more likely to understand ambiguity in complex situations and can co-create shared learning to build a community of practice (Parker, Hall, & Kram, 2008). Peer mentoring also further develops the leadership identity of the peer mentor focusing on generativity as documented in the leadership identity development grounded theory (Komives et al., 2005).

## **Coaching**

Historically, coaching was reserved as a remediation strategy for underperforming managers and executives. Over time, use of coaching

trended away from performance issues and moved toward developing high-potential employees for advancement (Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009; Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Now, the practice of coaching extends beyond business to include varying industries, including education, and is used as a behavioral development tool for a variety of leadership development needs, ranging from problem-solving skill development to making meaning of leadership learning.

**Purpose and Hallmarks of Coaching Practice.** Coaching is branded as a custom-tailored developmental process in a one-on-one, formal, short- to medium-term counseling relationship focused on sustained behavior development and modification in the coachee (Bono et al., 2009; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Korotov, 2016; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014). More unidirectional than reciprocal, leadership coaching centers around developing the coachee's understanding of leadership behaviors and the impact of their behaviors on others. Because leadership coaching is focused entirely on the unique developmental needs of the coachee, no two coaching interventions are alike (Ely et al., 2010). Peer coaching is characterized as having similar developmental intent but offering greatest relevancy in general personal and professional development (Parker et al., 2008). Critical qualities of peer coaching include: (a) equal status as partners (distinct from other coaching characterizations), (b) mutual focus on personal and professional development, and (c) integration of reflection on practice (Parker et al., 2008).

Leadership coaching in management practice over the past two decades has largely followed the Center for Creative Leadership's leadership development model of assessment, challenge, and support (ACS; Ely et al., 2010; Ting & Hart, 2004). Coaching involves helping the coachee reflect and process daily activities as well as learning from a class, workshop, or leadership development activity (Korotov, 2016; Passmore, 2015). The coach works with the coachee to process assessment results (e.g., data from a multi-rater assessment of leader performance, formative or summative assessment data from a leadership course), make a formalized plan for behavior modification designed to improve leadership effectiveness, then support the facilitation of that behavior modification plan (see Chapter 4).

Relative to desired coaching characteristics, Bono et al. (2009) and Ely et al. (2010) agreed that relational qualities, such as rapport, collaboration, commitment, trust, listening, counseling skills, and confidentiality are important considerations for coaching success. In the case of peer coaching, Parker et al. (2008) indicated the importance of unconditional positive regard, authenticity, and trust in selecting peer coaches. Bono et al. (2009) argued that the needs of the coachee should determine the most appropriate coach. For example, if a student has assumed an organizational leadership role and needs to become familiar with leadership structures, processes, and functions, a peer coach who has recently vacated the position might be most appropriate.

**Expected Outcomes from Coaching.** Empirical research in executive coaching, while lacking, has revealed the following positive outcomes relevant to a student population: (a) goal setting, striving, progress, and achievement; (b) positive psychological capacities such as self-efficacy, hope, and resilience; (c) enhanced mental health (reduced depression, anxiety, and stress), quality of life, and well-being; (d) intrapersonal causal attributions—attributing personal success to internal factors; and (e) need satisfaction—need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Grant, 2003; Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009; Green, Oades, & Grant, 2006; Moen & Skaalvik, 2009). Feldman and Lankau (2005), using Kirkpatrick's (1996) framework, suggest that the success of any coaching intervention should be determined by changes in affective reactions (how a participant feels about a coaching experience), learning, behavioral changes, and organizational results.

**What is Coaching's Utility in Leadership Development?** Coaching is considered a promising tool in leadership development (Korotov, 2016; Passmore, 2015), but developmental readiness should be considered carefully. The research behind coaching's contribution to leadership development is lacking due to the individualized and often confidential nature of leadership coaching; however, several authors have offered the following benefits of coaching for leadership development in the coachee:

- Knowledge transfer and skill enhancement—leadership interventions can be personalized and customized plans can be developed for applying the newly developed knowledge and skills to the organization or leadership position (Korotov, 2016; Passmore, 2015)
- Increase in self-awareness and stronger personal confidence, self-efficacy, leader role efficacy, and/or self-regard (Ely et al., 2010; Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014; Passmore, 2015)
- Enhanced motivation to lead and improve job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment; Ely et al., 2010; Passmore, 2015)
- Increased well-being (e.g., stress reduction; Passmore, 2015)
- Cognitive flexibility—successfully operate within complex and changing circumstances (Ely et al., 2010)
- Trust in subordinates (Ladegard & Gjerde, 2014).

Thus, while mentoring is more focused on general, long-term development of an individual, coaching is more strongly associated with an individualized, agile leadership development process.

## **Advising**

Advising relationships between students and members of an institution's faculty, staff, or administration may take place in the form of career advising, academic advising, or student organization advising. For the purposes of this volume, we explore the student organization advising role and its promise and potential for supporting leadership development in students. On any campus, the commitment from a student organization advisor ranges in continuum from one based on volunteer commitment to one tied to accountability and job performance. The common term "faculty advisor" describes advisors in this type of role with students since the origins of this role rested with faculty in the history of higher education (Campbell et al., 2012; Dunkel, Schuh, & Chrystal-Green, 2014). When faculty, administrators, or staff serve in this role, it offers a pathway to faculty-student interaction in support of "enriching educational experiences" as measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE; Center for Postsecondary



Research and Planning, 2000). The structural relationship that student organization advising presents between faculty and student is a powerful predictor for gains in leadership outcomes as well as student engagement (Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning, 2000; Dugan & Komives, 2010).

**Purpose and Types of Advising.** Advising is practiced at educational institutions through a range of approaches and commitments to student organizations. One group of advisors is assigned to this role-based job description. Student affairs professionals typically serve as advisors to many organizations, such as when an Assistant Director for Student Involvement may be the assigned advisor to the leadership honor society, programming board, and the Inter-Fraternity Council. These roles are typically built by institutions, outlined in job descriptions, with the educator's success in these roles typically evaluated as part of an ongoing performance appraisal. While support for the advising role may emerge from a campus activities department, it would be rare for this department to be large enough to accommodate direct advising needs for all organizations registered on a campus.

Therefore, a second group of advisors are connected with student leaders in a role outside of their typical campus responsibilities. In this case, the advising role is not identified as part of any one faculty or staff member's job. With this type of advising role, student leaders would identify student organization advisors as a condition for campus recognition (Council for Advancement of Standards, 2015). In some cases, there is a logical tie for recruitment of advisors, such as the journalism department for the student newspaper, where this voluntary role aligns nicely with the educator's "day job" (See Lebrón, Stanley, Kim, & Thomas, 2017). This group of advisors likely has vested interest in the opportunity that advising offers to extend the impact of classroom learning into the experiential, student-led environment that student organizations represent. At a college or university, advising by faculty members to student organizations connected to the department may be regarded as institutional service for promotion and tenure, but expectations are also likely in place that members of an academic department serve as advisors to corresponding academic clubs. For example, a faculty member in communication studies may advise the college debate team. In other cases, a student

group not logically aligned also needs involvement from an advisor. These groups offer just as much potential for leadership learning, but student leaders depend on availability of generous faculty and staff willing to engage in a role that is typically voluntary, completed after hours, and accepted in addition to assigned job responsibilities such as the outdoor adventure club, Key Club, or the LGBTQ student alliance.

**Hallmarks of Student Organization Advising Practice.** As student groups became politically active in the 1960s and universities became more involved in their activities, the discussion of student organization advising became more present. An important frame of the advising role came from Boland (1967) when he analyzed the function of the student organization advisor into three types of roles including maintenance roles, growth roles, and program content roles.

One of the most understood frames of student organization advising is in the area of maintenance roles, emphasizing the advisor's role in interpreting university policies that support the work of the student organization. When the advisor is a staff member in a campus activities area, they are also frequently responsible for developing policies and practices for all student organizations, facilitating leadership development programs for leaders of student groups, and offering ongoing resources to other student organization advisors (Dungy, 2003; Rentz & Zhang, 2011).

While many on campus would be familiar with these activities, Boland's (1967) other two roles offer direct connection to leader development. Growth roles focus on the advisor's support of group development and the success of individual leaders in facilitating group processes (Dunkel et al., 2014). The third type of role, the program content role, places the advisor as a teacher in the co-curriculum. In the example of the Computer Science Club, an advisor is able to guide students through experiential learning opportunities relating to the Computer Science field. For example, an advisor could connect members with a case study opportunity to help a small business tackle a current challenge they are facing or advise them in entering the regional robotics competition.

**What is Advising's Utility in Leadership Development?** There is a continuum of advising approaches, from the transactional and

reactive to the transformational and highly engaged. One common practice for advisors is to come together with individual student group leaders in one-on-one officer meetings. Others will prefer a group resource approach, offering willingness to attend organization meetings and an open-door policy when students need support or problems arise. An additional model may position the advisor interacting with the executive officers as a group, with less individual interaction but contributing as an informed observer sharing commentary on the work of the group and intentionally leading reflective activities and planning.

The utility of advising in leadership development is seen in the interactions between advisors and students over time. In many cases, the student who is appointed or elected to a student leadership role may be experiencing their first positional leadership role or exploring their potential as a leader for the first time (Dunkel et al., 2014; Komives, Longenecker, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). As such, the advisor plays an important role in realizing the educational promise of the advising relationship. One-on-one meetings may start as times to discuss operational aspects of effective student organizations, but will quickly advance. An advisor who is committed to supporting leadership development is able to assess existing talent within both individuals and groups and design an approach that will cultivate individual leader development in an environment of shared leadership with peers.

### **Synthesis: Comparing and Contrasting Mentoring, Coaching, and Advising**

Mentoring, coaching, and advising are all characterized as developmental relationships, yet comparing and contrasting these interactions will better prepare us to recognize when mentoring, coaching, or advising will be the most powerful and precise tool in developing a student's leadership capacity.

**Table 1** summarizes our model for mentoring, coaching, and advising for leadership development as it relates to context, duration, content, outcomes, and relationship. To enable comparison across type of developmental interaction, Table 1.1 highlights mentoring, coaching,

**Table 1** Comparisons Across Mentoring, Coaching, and Advising

	Context	Duration	Content	Outcomes	Relationship
Mentoring	One-on-one; may be structured or unstructured	Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career development</li> <li>• Psychosocial development</li> <li>• Personal development</li> <li>• Leadership empowerment</li> </ul>	Develop protégé's ability to acquire knowledge, skills, and self-confidence in hopes of becoming a better student, employee, or organizational leader	Reciprocal benefit
Coaching	One-on-one Structured	Varying lengths	Leadership behavior development and modification tailored to coachee	Develop coachee's understanding of their leadership behaviors and the impact of those behaviors on others	Unidirectional and designed to benefit the coachee
Advising	Group or one-on-one; tied to a position of advisor with a specific organization or group	Based on the life cycle of an organization	Learning-centered based on the responsibilities of a given leadership position, organization project, or organizational need	Dictated by needs (responsibilities or actions) of organization or individual needs (such as leadership skill development)	Multiple given the role of advisor and needs of the organization or individual; Mutually beneficial in order to be producti

and advising for leadership development in light of intended goals for a program and purposes in the relationship.

**Context.** Leadership coaching occurs in a formal one-to-one relationship, whereas mentoring occurs in both formal and informal contexts. Advising roles are structured at institutions, while mentoring and coaching roles have more potential to evolve organically. The context of mentoring plays a critical role in determining appropriate mentor characteristics, while the unique developmental needs of the coachee should determine which coach will be most effective. Advisors may serve as a content expert for the focus of an organization while a coach or mentor may or may not need specific content expertise.

**Duration.** Coaching relationships tend to be shorter in length than mentoring relationships while the duration of advising relationships depends entirely upon the life cycle of the organization.

**Content.** Mentoring and advising for leadership development may take on similar developmental processes regardless of mentee or advisee. Mentoring will involve career development, psychosocial development, personal development, and leadership empowerment and advising will involve leadership learning around responsibilities of a leadership position or organizational need. Coaching for leadership development, on the other hand, requires a flexible approach, changing to meet the unique skill and behavioral development needs of each coachee.

**Outcomes.** Advising is utilized for individual and group development, whereas mentoring and coaching are dedicated toward individual development. Coaching is more focused on coachee behavior change through goal setting and action planning whereas mentoring may or may not have goal attainment focus, but could focus on general personal development. Peer mentoring, coaching, and advising for leadership development offer unique outcomes by developing a sense of community, greater academic and social integration, a rich resource and referral network, and a stronger propensity for persistence and completion (Shook & Keup, 2015).

**Relationship.** Developing a bond between mentor and mentee is important due to the focus on personal development, whereas coaching and advising do not necessarily require the development of a personal bond. Thus, while mentoring may be considered reciprocal, coaching and advising may be considered unidirectional in their respective influential intents. Peer coaching, however, is characterized as mutually beneficial and reciprocal (Parker et al., 2008), similar to a mentoring relationship. Ultimately, however, positive relationship-building qualities are essential for success in mentoring, coaching, and advising.

Therefore, our definitions for these concepts are:

**Mentoring** for leadership development is a long-term, one-on-one dynamic process of role modeling and reflection designed to amass knowledge, skills, and self-confidence for personal development and leadership empowerment.

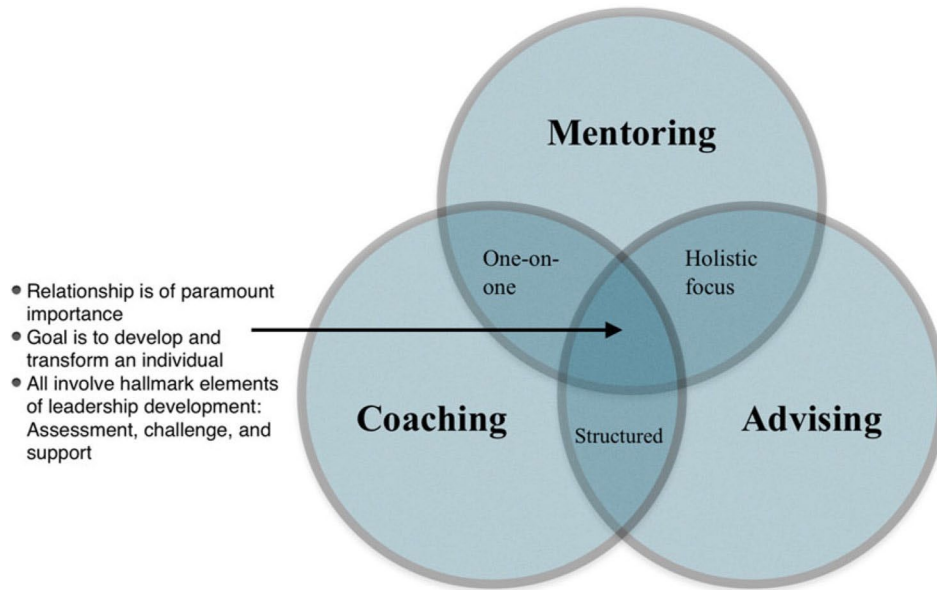
**Coaching** for leadership development is a formal, one-on-one individualized process designed to develop understanding of leadership behaviors and the impact of those behaviors for improved personal and/or organizational leadership effectiveness.

**Advising** for leadership development is a structured relationship between students and leadership educators built around the need to support thriving student organizations that contribute to the educational environment.

## Conclusion

In roles as leadership educators, we may engage in all three types of developmental interactions for leadership development and sometimes draw intersections between mentoring, coaching, and advising. **Figure 1** outlines the intersections between mentoring, coaching, and advising for student leadership development.

The “sweet spot” of mentoring, coaching, and advising for student leadership development is that all three developmental interactions identify positive relationship building as critical for success, with an ultimate goal to develop and transform the student and student organizations. Mentoring, coaching, and advising for leadership development will all involve hallmark elements of leadership development



**Figure 1.** Intersection between mentoring, coaching, and advising for leadership development.

interventions: (a) assessment of student leadership talents, needs, and opportunities, (b) challenge leadership growth, and (c) support the leadership development process (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). Ultimately, mentoring, coaching, and advising are powerful tools because they build necessary bridges between student experience and student transformation. By providing clarity around similarities and differences in mentoring, coaching, and advising's utility for leadership development, we are better prepared to precisely develop student leadership capacity according to need, accurately deliver what we promise in our leadership mentoring, coaching, and advising initiatives, and promptly translate leadership learning to transform student leaders.

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