A Minimalist Model of New Faculty Mentoring: Why Asking for Less Gives More

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Abstract

We describe a research-based mentoring program for new full-time faculty at a small residential college, which emphasizes the empowerment of the new faculty themselves to identify and obtain the resources they need for success. In our model, the mentor takes on a role of primarily providing accountability, easing the burden on mentors, thereby making for a more sustainable program. Our mixed methods assessment of the program suggests that, paradoxically, these lessened expectations foster closer personal relationships between mentor and protégé than might have occurred if that were a programmatic expectation.

Keywords: accountability, diversity, faculty development, professional development

Introduction—What Is Meant by Mentoring?

Many academic institutions now provide some form of mentoring for new faculty. The extent of this varies a great deal from one institution to another: Is the program only for tenure track faculty? Is the mentor from the same, or outside the new faculty member's department? We focus specifically on mentoring programs for new faculty members that assign extra departmental mentors, and we investigate how to structure a program that is effective, inexpensive, and sustainable.

Although much of the research on mentoring comes from business or professional schools, there is still a generous literature on mentoring in the academic setting. Not surprisingly, there are many attempts to put mentoring into a conceptual framework. Herbert, Borson, Phelan, Belza, and Cochrane (2011) described the relationship as a "consultancy," whereas Wasburn (2007) referred to it as a "strategic collaboration." Jones and Corner (2012) described the pairing as a "complex adaptive system." Follman (2013) attempted to view mentoring through the lens of "information behavior theory." Smith, Calderwood, Dohm, and Lopez (2013) used the concept of a "community of practice" as a way of describing mentoring; Kochan, Searby, George, and Edge (2015) applied a sociological lens to view the mentoring relationship with a "cultural framework analysis." Finally, Bonebright (2014) referred to mentoring as "structured serendipity," which may accurately describe both common mentoring practice and its pitfalls.

At the very least, there are multiple dimensions and definitions to what we refer to as mentoring, and it is common for articles on the topic to begin with a survey of definitions of the term "mentor" (see, e.g., Mathews, 2003). Sands, Parson, and Duane (1991) laid out four typical roles: friend, career guide, information source, and intellectual guide. Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008) broke down the roles slightly differently: sponsor, coach, counselor, and role model. One can identify many of these roles within any mentoring system. But as we imagine assigning mentor–protégé pairings, do we really expect that an

assigned mentor will take on the role of "friend"? Do we have the resources to train faculty for the role of "counselor"? It is quite possible that an experienced faculty member may well be a good "role model," but it is also a risk that the mentor may take this assignment as an encouragement to turn the protégé into a clone of the mentor—with potentially disastrous results.

In their review article, Zellers et al. (2008) have identified this lack of clarity of roles as a problem, or at least an area worthy of attention in the context of a particular mentoring program. That is, a consistency of meaning and purpose does not exist in reference to mentoring, even though most faculty members will *assume* they know exactly what it means to mentor or be mentored. This is a particularly troublesome combination, as there is a high probability that the expectations of the mentor and the protégé will not overlap, and that they will be unaware of their different expectations. Virtually all descriptions of mentoring for faculty agree on this essential tenet: The expectations of the mentoring relationship must be explicit. But if there are so many different potential mentoring roles, which do we choose to include and make explicit, and which do we decide to leave out?

For an institutional mentoring program, it is important to select a mentor outside of the protégé's department. Boyle and Boice (1998) cautioned against the political complications of mentoring by a colleague who will likely have a direct role in performance evaluation. Parallel risks of self selection leading to perpetuation of homogeneity were noted by Blackburn, Chapman, and Cameron (1981) which they termed "cloning." But even beyond a lack of challenge that might be given to someone sharing the same intellectual interests or background, we have anecdotally observed that a seasoned faculty member who has not considered theories of mentoring or embraced specific expectations will sometimes expect a new colleague to adopt a similar, if not identical, approach to the way they go about their scholarly, pedagogical, or service work. Imagine a new faculty member who consistently hears the same message from senior colleagues: "But this is the way we've always done it." This type of thinking, especially coming from a senior colleague, will likely dissuade the protégé from feeling that he or she can think beyond the narrow expectations of the department. While not addressing the academic setting, Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell (2000) identified many of these negative mentoring behaviors—outcomes that occurred in roughly one third of the relationships they studied. Of course, it is valuable to also have a mentor within one's department, who can offer advice on the tenure process, the department culture, or a host of other important details. However, a mentor outside of one's department is an essential complement to this structure.

Expanding on this concept of multiple mentors, much of the conversation in the mentoring literature has turned to "networks" (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007). Rather than a single mentor, several layers and modes of mentoring—within the department and outside of the department; individual, group, online—attempt to bundle the multiple characteristics of the single great mentor (a construct that may be more mythical than actual) into a composite of multiple individuals. Even two decades ago, Tierney and Bensimon (1996) recognized the inadequacy of a single mentor in an academic setting; Chesler and Chesler (2002) were also early promoters of a network alternative model of mentoring, which they likened to a spider web. Many scholars endorse this approach under a variety of names: "constellations" (Kram, 1985), "developmental networks" (Kram & Ragins, 2008, p. 600), or even a "new paradigm" (Zellers et al., 2008, p. 563). The explicit message is that one cannot expect to gain all the different elements of mentoring from a single mentor, and therefore a new faculty member benefits from a team of mentors. The implicit message is that the institution should make the effort to provide multiple mentors to each new faculty member. Most institutions find it difficult to reliably recruit individual mentors for each new faculty member, let alone a team for each faculty member. A network approach does seem an excellent formulation for an *individual*, but appears largely unsustainable for an *institution*.

It is hard to imagine a single strong mentor is capable of providing support and guidance in the three relevant areas for faculty success: teaching, scholarship, and the politics of tenure and promotion. The network approach recognizes that a new faculty member is likely to need support in multiple areas. However, a new faculty member typically will be relatively confident and capable in some areas, and struggling in others. In its attempt to be comprehensive, networked mentoring does not substitute for a

great mentor, and in fact it does a disservice to junior faculty by not targeting mentoring to their particular needs. Assigning a new faculty member to a network of mentors is a shotgun approach that may have the benefit of multiple possible connections that might provide that critical element that will prove essential for success.

As we designed our program, we chose to start with two elements of the support puzzle: (a) what does research tell us about the kinds of skills and habits that lead to faculty success and (b) what kinds of support do faculty themselves say they need. Ideally, there will be a strong overlap between those two categories. In any event, a successful program will help faculty acquire skills in the first category, and make sure to at least discuss, if not support, areas from the second category.

What Do Faculty Need?

Using his own and others' studies, Boice (2000) consolidated observations of behaviors of successful faculty into a set of recommendations for new faculty that offer answers to this question of *what faculty need*. In his seminal work, *Advice for New Faculty Members*, Boice outlines various strategies for teaching, research, and service (which ultimately serves as socialization) that successful faculty employ as they transition to a new institution. Besides a mindful and moderate approach to teaching and research, Boice suggests that some degree of socialization—the ability to connect with multiple colleagues on a range of issues—is necessary for avoiding the snares associated with being a new faculty member, such as "social isolation," unhealthy amounts of "overpreparation of teaching materials" and overcoming the inevitable writer's block (Boice, 2000, p. 6).

Boice's initial advice as one prepares to tackle teaching and research is contained in the single word "wait" (Boice, 2000, Chapter 1). He encourages new faculty to resist the temptation to hurriedly launch themselves into these responsibilities. A patient approach to teaching, he asserts, will open space for reflection and thereby provide opportunities "to notice alternatives and simplifications in what you can say or do" (Boice, 2000, p. 7). Cultivating a habit of reflection and mindfulness should also apply to one's scholarly writing as one explores ways to work productively. When it comes to writing, Boice advises his readers to begin early (Boice, 2000, Chapter 10), work with mindful constancy and moderation (Boice, 2000, Chapter 11), let go of negative thinking (Boice, 2000, Chapter 14), and limit wasted effort (Boice, 2000, Chapter 18), among other things. And rather than relying on service alone as one third category for one's attention, Boice stresses the importance of "socialization and service" whereby we more easily see the needs of others when we "first slow down and notice our own needs" (Boice, 2000, p. 203). Boice's advice, in full, is built on the premise that new faculty need to learn *how* best to work in order to be successful in academia. Although it always helps to have a colleague who will support the work of new faculty, Boice's advice relies entirely on the individual new faculty member to adopt practices and make choices that will ensure success.

What Do Faculty Want?

In contrast to Boice's (2000) approach, the COACHE survey (Trower, 2010) asked faculty at many institutions what they believed was essential to their success. Trower (2012) synthesized data gathered from a range of COACHE surveys and identified a number of ways in which faculty need dedicated support from their institutions in order to flourish as scholars and teachers. The COACHE team then conducted on site interviews of tenure track faculty at seven highly respected research university campuses, and identified five major areas of concern. There is a generous overlap between the issues identified by faculty in the COACHE surveys, and those identified by Boice, although there are also some interesting differences. The major areas of concern for tenure track faculty are tenure clarity, work–life balance, support for teaching and research, and climate (Trower, 2012, p. 26). The first issue is expected, as a lack of clarity regarding the tenure process can make it difficult to attain tenure, which is understandably a central focus of new faculty. When it comes to balancing life and work, faculty report a desire to see the creation of more flexible policies that accommodate their scholarly and personal needs. Whether it is providing child care or developing programs to support dual careers, faculty would like their institutions to recognize and move traditional barriers that inhibit their ability to flourish (Trower, 2012,

pp. 90–92). In her discussion of campus culture and climate, Trower suggests that institutions need to do the work of socializing new faculty to the campus. This can take the form of formal orientation programs or informal social events that can foster connections between and among newer and more senior faculty members, which would go a long way to counter "the feeling of loneliness and detachment that often plagues new hires" (Trower, 2012, p. 127). Although she argues that institutions need to take on the responsibility for socializing new faculty, she does not excuse new faculty from doing some of this work themselves. She asserts that new faculty members "can reduce uncertainty in their work by actively seeking information from others. Communicating openly and often with senior faculty colleagues enables new faculty members to build relationships and solicit feedback regarding their work performance" (Trower, 2012, p. 127). Finally, when it comes to teaching and research, Trower's data reveals that faculty in the early stages of their career want their respective institutions to help them locate grant opportunities as well as provide guidance on how to write grants and opportunities to present their research to the more seasoned members of their department and to academics who are not necessarily in their field (Trower, 2012, p. 107). As for teaching, Trower (2012, p. 107) finds pretenure faculty value the resources provided by teaching and learning centers, team teaching experiences, and opportunities to improve their teaching based on class observations. With the exception of socializing themselves to a new campus environment, as noted before, Trower's data suggests that faculty rely on and expect the institution to provide the services and resources they need to support their ability to be successful scholars and teachers.

What Can Institutions Provide?

The preceding discussion suggests three possible pictures of mentoring programs to support a new faculty member. The first picture supplies an iconic mentor in various idealized roles, from friend to counselor to role model, someone with an exceptionally close personal and professional relationship with the new faculty member. Is it plausible for an institution to provide such a mentor for each new faculty member? A few individuals may naturally have the skills that make them particularly good in one of these classic roles, but can training foster the development of these skills in an average individual? Studies clearly show that mentors will self report changes in mentoring behavior (Pfund et al., 2013) and that protégés can observe some of these changes (Pfund, Pribbenow, Branchaw, Lauffer, & Handelsman, 2006), but we have not found evidence that *training* is effective at turning weak mentors into strong mentors. At least one study found statistically significant training induced improvement in the protégé's evaluation of the experience (Pfund et al., 2014) but this improvement was small; we are unaware of any studies that show a correlation between training and greater protégé success. When those exceptional mentoring relationships do occur, they appear to rely on a great deal of serendipity (Bonebright, 2014). This is not surprising, as fortuitous personal connections rest on details of personality and happenstance, and these appear to be important, if not vital, in developing a life changing sort of mentoring relationship. These details are impossible to predict with certainty, let alone to engineer. An institution can be grateful when these relationships occur, but attempts to design a program that assures their creation are likely to be inefficient, ineffective, and unsustainable. If the expectation is for this sort of powerful connection, the majority of relationships will likely fizzle, if not prove a troublesome relationship with either an overly dependent protégé or a controlling mentor. Eby et al. (2000) found in their study that 54% of their protégés experienced at least one negative mentoring relationship.

The second picture of a program is one that might be formulated after a careful reading of Boice (2000). In this view, the mentor is expert in all aspects of faculty success and institutional context—teaching, scholarship, service, and navigation of campus bureaucracy and politics. It requires an exceptionally savvy mentor familiar with all of the institutional resources, who can help with both teaching and research development issues. In a sense, this individual not only anticipates what the new faculty member will want, but beyond that, knows what the new faculty member will need but is not aware of. There are two problems with this picture. The first problem is the training issue. To fulfill such a role demands more skills than an average faculty member can be remotely expected to have, so in depth training and frequent refreshers would be essential. To be a resource and supportive critic of classroom, course design, research planning and progress, institutional tenure/promotion expectations, and so on is a mammoth assignment. And if such training was feasible, the second problem relates to time demands—who would be willing and

able to take on these responsibilities for long? This picture almost certainly leads to rapid mentor burn out. Alternatively, one could imagine these needs being met by a network of mentors—each new faculty member having several assigned mentors, each with their own area of expertise. This might lower the needed expertise from any given mentor, but could readily triple the number of mentors needed. Either approach to this second picture raises issues of the supply of qualified mentors.

The third picture is of a mentoring program designed primarily from the perspective of the new faculty member—what does that individual perceive is needed for success? There is considerable overlap between the desires expressed by new faculty and the basic areas that Boice (2000) emphasized, but, particularly in the results of the COACHE surveys of faculty one hears an urgent, almost pleading demand for more—more transparency, more support, more mentoring to enable faculty to become more productive. It is easy to imagine a program that is designed strictly based on a survey of what new faculty assert, or at least believe, they need. Such a program could readily feed on, or even amplify, the anxiety of pretenure faculty, especially those in transition. This approach will run counter to the themes in Boice's book in which judicious application of effort is the hallmark of the successful faculty member. We can easily envision that a simplistic response to the calls of Trower's book could actually lead to greater stress, less job satisfaction, and more turbulent transitions into a faculty position.

We have developed yet a fourth picture of mentoring, one that is simple, sustainable, effective, and empowering for new faculty. Our mentoring model puts the primary responsibility on the protégé for charting professional development. The mentor's role becomes one of providing accountability, acting as a sounding board, and providing external referrals. While this may seem like a retreat from the mentoring responsibility, we have found that this provides a stronger system of mentoring in at least several ways. First, it ensures a basic level of support to *all* new faculty, regardless of discipline and personal difference. Second, the lowered expectations of the mentor relieve pressure on both parties and allow a closer relationship to develop more naturally and idiosyncratically. Third, this approach develops a self sufficiency in new faculty that will outlast the initial mentoring relationship. Our program's protégé focus bears some similarity to other recent models, such as the "Mentoring Up" concept (Lee, McGee, Pfund, & Branchaw, 2015), although our program takes this concept to a higher level. In the "Mentoring Up" model, the protégé assumes the responsibility to provide greater structure in the mentoring relationship by clarifying expectations and responsibilities. Our model goes beyond this by encouraging the protégé to develop the skills of identifying needs, finding appropriate resources, and establishing an effective mentoring network.

What Have We Built?

The needs that faculty have as they transition to a new institution are not uncomplicated matters, and they require attention and support. Still, while it is important to give faculty, especially new faculty, all the tools and resources they need to be successful, we are convinced that a mentoring program in which the mentor is asked to take on the role of guru is simply not a good idea. The term "mentor" carries a lot of baggage and assumptions, places unrealistic expectations on both the mentor and the protégé, and has the tendency to sabotage any natural chemistry that might occur between the two. For example, we encountered a senior faculty member who expressed insecurity about serving as a mentor because she did not feel knowledgeable enough to help a new faculty colleague transition to the institution. At the other extreme is a mentor who thought he knew precisely what the protégé needed and used their meetings as an opportunity for both mentor and protégé to work on their respective scholarship. No one will dispute the need for actively making progress on one's scholarship, but if every meeting is used for writing, then it means the mentor did not seek opportunities to talk and therefore listen to the protégé. In both instances, the mentor's own expectations for, and attitude toward, the mentoring relationship prevents each of them from connecting to the protégé in a way that is helpful. As such, we propose that institutions should assign an individual with a much more modest job title—perhaps "guide," or "ambassador," or even "accountability agent." This individual simply listens as the new faculty member identifies the tasks of transition and growth (teaching, scholarship, service, wellness), serves as a rational sounding board, and holds the protégé accountable for progress on all of these fronts. This process allows the protégé to take

advantage of personal and institutional resources on and off campus, and in the process, maximizes the probability of finding that *real* mentor, someone who matches the expectations of the protégé in ways that they find meaningful.

To the extent that the expectations of the mentor are in fact minimal, we abandon the notion of the mentor as sage and superior. Our program emphasizes accountability, employs a network approach, and ensures a focus on the protégé. So what does all this mean? Like virtually every mentoring program that exists, we assign a tenured faculty mentor to each new faculty member employed at our institution. The mentor's role is to act as a sounding board for the protégé, and to connect the new faculty member to resources on campus. The protégé is expected to take the lead in scheduling meetings, identifying topics for discussion, and setting goals for development. Not surprisingly, we ask the mentor and protégé to focus on the key areas of teaching, scholarship, service, and wellness. We also ask them to give attention to the protégé's development of professional connections with other faculty. The mentor's main responsibility is to keep the protégé accountable for meeting specific goals within the areas noted above. We are careful to tell protégés that mentors are not expected to have expertise or advice within any given area, but more commonly make references to other support services on campus. Our mentors are given the same message to avoid any confusion about the role that each plays in the mentoring relationship. Because our mentors are not expected to be gurus, and because we give control to the protégé, we do not have to provide extensive training to our mentors to prepare them for the role. This approach alleviates any burden mentors may feel to have all the answers, and to somehow model being the "perfect" scholar, teacher, and campus citizen.

We designed our new faculty mentoring program specifically to fit the college's environment, a small, residential, highly selective liberal arts college. In a typical year, we hire about 20 new full time faculty, with roughly two thirds of them in one or two year term positions. Located in a small town, an hour away from urban areas or major universities, faculty rely heavily on one another for both professional and social connections. Previous attempts to provide selective mentoring for new faculty were only partly successful, and typically the same handful of good mentors were asked to serve repeatedly, sometimes to exhaustion of willingness.

Our program was designed from the beginning with these important goals:

1. Universality,
2. Sustainability,
3. Protégé focus, and
4. Well defined mentor expectations.

As all our new faculty interact frequently with one another, our instinct was to implement universality, to minimize class distinctions between term and tenure track faculty by including them all. We also believed that disaffected term faculty would have negative effects well beyond themselves and their immediate students. This puts considerable demands on the number of mentors we need, so we had to be cognizant of the demands on our mentors. We have developed a large pool of faculty mentors so that it is easy for faculty with other heavy demands to opt out of mentoring responsibilities any given year. Although we normally expect the intensive mentoring connections to persist only for a single year; a few pairings continue into a second year. To enable effective mentoring with modest demands on the mentor, we put a great deal of the organizational burden on the protégé. Each new faculty member is given a copy of Boice's (2000) book promptly upon arrival on campus. We reinforce the messages of balance and consistent, thoughtful work through individual meetings and our new faculty orientation. The protégés are paired with mentors outside of their departments, but the protégé is asked to take responsibility for arranging meetings. In tandem with primary responsibility placed on the protégé, we put together very limited responsibilities of the mentor. The mentor is simply expected to ensure that the protégé reports on a regular basis (typically every two weeks) in brief meetings that cover teaching, scholarship, establishment of professional relationships with colleagues, and attention to wellness. The protégé establishes goals for the next two weeks, which the mentor will ask about at the next meeting.

We follow up with both protégés and mentors frequently during the year, especially during the first semester. We reinforce the messages of Boice (2000), and remind protégés and mentors of the four reporting topics. We have a dinner for mentors only in the fall semester as a thank you for their service and an opportunity to share ideas and challenges. We also have a dinner or lunch with the protégés at the end of the spring semester so they can share their experiences of the program with us and with each other. We also encourage new faculty to take advantage of faculty development opportunities on campus, such as the weekly Faculty Development Friday (FDF) series in which faculty across campus engage in discussion of a selected topic. Besides using FDF as a learning opportunity, it also provides an avenue for new faculty to connect with other colleagues, which, as we have noted already, is an important feature of our mentoring program.

As previously described, our reading of the literature on mentor and protégé training suggests that while mentors' behaviors, and their self perceptions, are readily modified (Pfund et al., 2014), there is no convincing evidence of training giving rise to intense interpersonal connections that many people imagine when they think of a mentor. We therefore have developed a training for mentors (and protégés) that is completely centered on simple behaviors and expectations—regular accountability on the areas emphasized by Boice (2000). Beyond sharing Boice and our own summaries of the critical elements of faculty success, we provide little formal training for the mentors. Despite of this minimal training, our protégés report a high level of satisfaction with their mentors. Because our mentoring program minimizes the expectations of the assigned mentoring relationship but explicitly encourages professional conversations with a range of peers, we believe that our program encourages a wider range of informal mentoring relationships. Published studies (Bonebright, 2014; Ragins & Cotton, 1999) have documented the importance and effectiveness of these informal or serendipitous mentoring relationships, which parallel comments we heard in our interviews of protégés at Grinnell.

A final advantage to our minimal model is that its conservative use of mentoring resources allows us to meet the needs of all full time new faculty, including term or adjunct faculty who are at risk of feeling marginalized because they are not on the tenure track. As the fraction of tenure track faculty positions is dwindling across the nation, this means term faculty, and other contingent faculty are left to fill the teaching gaps on many of our campuses. Therefore, there is an obvious need to pay attention to the increasing numbers of term and contingent faculty, and a mentoring program is a great place to start, especially because contingent faculty often end up spending years serving in such a role at one institution. Faculty who serve in such roles deserve support beyond developing their teaching skills too, especially for those who attempt to find tenure track positions.

What Have We Learned?

Methods of Assessment

As approved by our Institutional Review Board, we employed several methods to assess and improve our program. Roughly midway through the first semester, we invite all of our mentors together over a lunch to allow them to share experiences, suggestions, and difficulties with one another. We also use this as an informal focus group to evaluate the overall success of the pairings and to alert us to systematic failings. At the end of the year, we use an online survey of both mentors and protégés to establish the extent to which they followed our mentoring model, and their impressions of its utility. We additionally survey the protégés to gain their self evaluation of their connection to the institution, and their success both as scholars and as teachers over the past year (we had 55% participation in the survey). Finally, we invite each protégé to participate in individual interviews to gain more details about their success, their relationship with their mentor, and their other sources of professional support; 60% of the new faculty made themselves available for these interviews. Questions used for the survey and the interviews are presented in the appendix. Coupled with the raw participation statistics, the informal comments, the survey, and the interviews provide a rich set of data from which we can establish correlations between behaviors, connections, and a successful transition.

Findings

In reviewing the literature on mentoring, one commonly encounters descriptions of fine mentoring programs which only manage to last a few years. We have not found an exceptional program that also proves to be sustainable over the long term. In response to this concern, we have analyzed the sustainability of our program based on the participation rates and the average number of new faculty.

First, we note that most mentors return to the program to serve as mentors again. We have only had a few mentors ask to be removed from our list of potential mentors. Only one of those reflected a negative experience with the program; the others were from retiring faculty who did not plan to remain on campus. The histogram in Figure 1 shows a frequency distribution reflecting the number of years faculty have served as mentors.

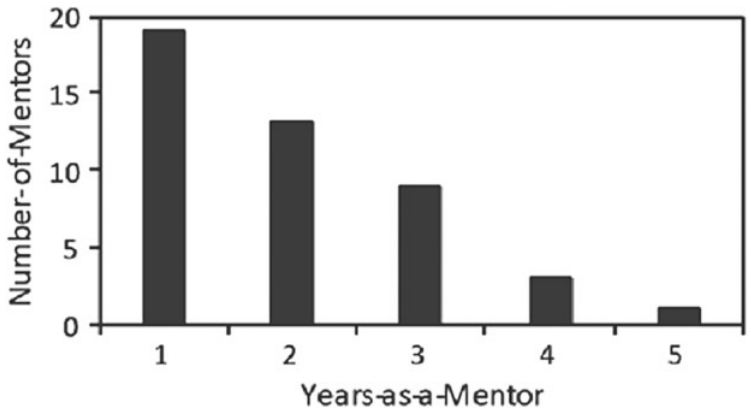

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Figure 1. Frequency of Repeat Mentoring. This Histogram Shows the Distribution of Mentors Across the Number of Years of Service as a Mentor Over the Five Years of the Program

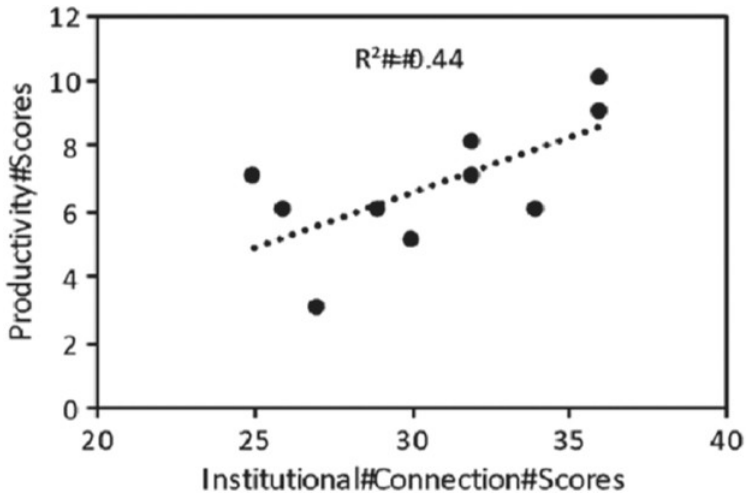
We analyzed the average likelihood that a mentor would rejoin the mentoring team; we found that 63% of our mentors have chosen to become mentors again. In any given year, the fraction of previous mentors signing on again is 37%. Over the five years of the program, we have had an average of 18 mentors active per year. The rate of loss of mentors from our mentoring pool is roughly one or two per year, which is readily balanced by the newly tenured faculty members that accept an invitation to join the group. In total, we have had 46 different faculty serve as mentors in our program.

To address the question of sustainability, we used the results from previous years to extrapolate our needs and likely supply of mentors. We assumed that we would need 18 mentors per year, and that in any given year, only one third of our mentor pool would feel available. This implies that we need a mentor pool of 54. We nearly have this large a group, with an active pool of 43 mentors. We have not had difficulty recruiting new mentors each year, and we expect that as faculty who have benefitted from our program themselves become tenured, they will be even more willing to serve as mentors themselves.

While our program appears to be sustainable, this is only of merit if the program is valuable to the new faculty members themselves. At the very least, it is critical that the program does no damage. Our minimal model particularly seeks to avoid the detrimental effect of mentors seen as ideal role models (Eby et al., 2000). Attempts to “clone” a successful faculty member (or worse yet, a not so successful one) ignore individual differences in personality, style, and abilities and generally lead to frustration on the part of both the mentor and the protégé. Mentoring of this character can stifle the protégé’s voice and inhibit their ability to feel valued in ways that will enable them to thrive at an institution; Blackburn et al. (1981) identified clear negative repercussions for protégés who did not follow the example of their mentors. Prior to developing our mentoring program, we had discussions with faculty and administrators who had observed such unsatisfying outcomes in early attempts at mentoring on our own campus. We also gleaned from these conversations that a lack of well defined goals for mentor and protégé has led to exhaustion of the energy of good mentors, and difficulty for inexperienced mentors to serve a good function.

Our assessment of the program has shown that both mentors and protégés express considerable satisfaction with the narrow definition of the mentoring role. One concern expressed by some mentors is that the definition is so narrow and mechanical that they worry they would not be able to do a good job within those confines. In fact, we have had some potential mentors decide not to participate because of these guidelines. Nevertheless, we see no evidence that our focus on accountability frustrates the development of close mentoring relationships; many of our protégés report exactly the opposite, that in fact they develop a very strong personal bond with their mentors. In our individual interviews with new faculty at the conclusion of their first year at the college, we found over 90% described their personal connection with their mentors in very positive terms, and 25% developed a friendship well outside of the mentoring relationship. While we did not have the opportunity to interview all new faculty, we are confident that well over half of the new faculty developed the sort of strong personal bond that typically characterizes an effective mentoring relationship by traditional definitions—even though we make no effort to ask for that bond. We believe that the narrow guidelines are actually liberating, and that the minimized expectation of personal connection makes it more likely that those personal connections will emerge. In any event, having simple, concrete, positive expectations that every mentoring relationship can fulfill ensures that both mentors and protégés will have a positive experience. We also see some relationships in which the mentor "knew better" than to follow our guidelines, ignored accountability issues, and the protégé ended up with a poor transition to the college. In at least one case, the protégé reported having a good rapport and good interactions with his mentor, but during the course of our interview we learned that the mentor had her own ideas, and was not interested in following the structure of our mentoring program. As such, the mentor ignored the accountability piece and made no effort to stick to the recommended times for meetings. Instead, the meeting times were less frequent and longer than recommended, and were used by the mentor to discuss her own scholarship. That is, the mentor and protégé would have working meetings where each worked on their respective scholarship. On some level, it is not terrible that the protégé could devote this time to his work, but the protégé was ultimately short changed because these times were to be used for goal setting. Not surprisingly, this particular protégé reported that although he made some gains in his teaching, he did not meet his scholarly goals for the year. In fact, he specifically stated, "I worked on a draft that didn't go anywhere." In addition, of all the protégés we interviewed, this individual had the least number of institutional connections beyond his home department. Although examples such as these are too few to generalize from, there is a strong suggestion that attention to accountability is an essential element of a strong start.

The true test of a mentoring program must be in the effects on productivity and retention of the new faculty. It is too early to obtain those results, but we can look for correlation between self assessed success (both in teaching and scholarship) and independent statements of institutional connection, as shown in Figure 2. These data come from an online survey with 6 point Likert scale responses to questions regarding connections to the institution (e.g., "I have felt at home at this college"), professional connections to colleagues (e.g., "I had substantive conversations about scholarship with other faculty"), and professional support (e.g., "I received good mentoring and support from my department"). Although the sample set is small, the results suggest that perhaps as much as one half of self perceived success is correlated with connections to the institution. These results reinforce our efforts to foster the *number* of connections to the institution, without attempting the near impossible task of engineering the *quality* of those connections.



[/t/tia/images/17063888.0037.201-00000002.jpg]

Figure 2. Institutional Connection and Productivity. This Graph Displays the Correlation Between Faculty Survey Responses That Indicate a Connection to the Institution and Their Self Assessed Professional Productivity

We must mention that our program does not give any incentive to the mentor in the form of a stipend for participation, nor any allowance for meals, coffee, and so on. Initially this simply reflected the lack of a budget for the program, but since then, we have found that this feature of the program is a true advantage. It helps us draw the right mentors, who choose to participate in the program because they appreciate the reward of doing good for a colleague. Those mentors are more likely to feel virtuous, even if their contributions are only the minimal expectations of the program. The protégés are also more likely to be grateful for the service of their mentors and respectful of their time as they recognize they are benefitting from the generosity of the mentors. Recent psychological studies bring additional light to this effect. Confounding the good work of mentoring with monetary reward changes the interpersonal dynamic in a negative way; studies in a different helping context show that even a small token compensation can induce participants to view the relationship as transactional rather than serving a social good (Heyman & Ariely, 2004). Monetary compensation also appears to reduce the inclinations toward both help seeking and helpfulness (Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006). Although we have no direct experience with compensating mentors, the proliferation of stipends for service work is becoming an expectation on our campus. Since providing stipends suggests that one is taking on additional labor, compensating mentors would surely expand the expectations of the protégé, and induce the mentor to be more independent in their approach to mentoring (similar results appear in Vohs et al., 2006), which is exactly the opposite effect we would like to encourage when a network of support has been demonstrated to be more reliable than a single mentor. Through our direct experience and consultation of the literature, we have come to appreciate the good fortune we experienced because of our limited resources.

Many mentoring programs are designed specifically to support faculty from underrepresented groups, which raises the question of mentoring across difference. Particularly for faculty of color, connections with other faculty of color are important, but for most campuses, the number of senior faculty members of color is very few, and they are typically stretched thin in the area of service responsibilities. Because our program makes minimal demands on the mentor, and emphasizes accountability, we have found this has made it easier for mentoring across difference. We have had many pairings that bridged gender or race, and have not found any overt evidence of failed relationships as a result. In our surveys, we have had protégés at times wish they had had a mentor more similar to them—in terms of academic discipline—but not in terms of gender or race.

One other issue often raised in the structuring of mentoring programs is the awkwardness of severing the mentoring relationship (Kram, 1983). We have not identified any such problems in our program, and we believe that two features of our program bypass these issues. First, because our program is explicitly designed for a one year term, both mentor and protégé expect the relationship to end. Second, our emphasis on accountability puts the burden on the protégé to establish goals, timelines, and professional

contacts. Our mentor, from the very beginning, is coaching the protégé into independence. This independence does not mean that a successful faculty member does everything alone, but rather takes the responsibility to recognize when help from others is valuable, and then reaches out to find the right individuals who can provide that support.

Conclusion

We have built a successful model for faculty mentoring that does not require our mentors to be everything to their protégés. The minimal expectations of the mentor have allowed us to address the issue of sustainability that affects many strong mentoring programs. By placing the majority of developmental expectations on the protégé, the likelihood of negative mentoring experiences is reduced, the new faculty member is encouraged to seek out and develop relationships with colleagues that often will yield robust informal mentors, and the problems of severing the mentoring relationship are minimized. The simple format allows us to extend this support to contingent faculty, an increasing fraction of the teaching workforce even on the most highly respected college campuses. The minimal expectations allow effective mentoring to occur across difference, and appear to enable the development of strong personal connections between mentor and protégé in many cases, even though this is not an explicit goal of the program.

This study has made it clear that more work relating to faculty mentoring in the small college setting is needed to better understand the idiosyncratic needs of those faculty and those institutions. For instance, the small college setting seems like an ideal place to explore the notion of mentoring across difference, where the various categories of difference such as embodied diversity, disciplinary and interdisciplinary differences, term/contingent faculty versus tenure track faculty, are particularly acute given the small size of the faculty. That is, although the small size fosters the notion of community, it also diminishes the likelihood of marginalized groups finding peer support. The decision to give the protégé more agency in terms of making connections to others who can provide advice and support, also opens an avenue for further investigating the effects of such connections on one's productivity and overall satisfaction with the institution. Finally, we have argued that our program is sustainable because of its minimal requirements and not relying on compensating mentors. This suggests the importance of investigating factors leading to sustainability at other institutions with other mentoring models.

As institutions emphasize diversity across many dimensions, faculty success, particularly at small colleges, will be enhanced by a sense of belonging within the community. We suspect that a good, comprehensive, and sustainable mentoring program will not only empower faculty to navigate the institution on their own, but can build institutional commitment on the part of every faculty member regardless of status.

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Appendix: Survey and Interview Questions

Likert Scale Survey Questions: “I strongly agree” to “I strongly disagree” (6 point scale):

1. I have felt at home at Grinnell College.
2. I contemplated leaving Grinnell College (T–T only).
3. I would welcome a tenure track position at Grinnell (term only).
4. I have a lot in common with other Grinnell College faculty.
5. I have felt productive as a scholar over the past year.
6. I felt confident as a teacher over the past year.
7. I had substantive conversations about pedagogy with other faculty.
8. I had substantive conversations about scholarship with other faculty.
9. I feel there are faculty and staff here who understand me.
10. I received good mentoring and support from my department.
11. My Faculty Mentoring Network mentor was a positive influence in my transition to Grinnell.

Interview questions:

1. Who are the top one or two people you typically communicate with about work related issues, either for advice or support?
2. Who else do you talk with on work related items—either in a professional or a social setting?
3. How well do/did you interact with your mentor?
4. How would you characterize your personal connection with your mentor?
5. In what area did you find your mentor to be the most helpful?
6. In what area did you find your mentor to be the least helpful?
7. Did you meet your scholarly goals for the past year?
8. Did you meet your teaching goals for the past year?

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