Ensuring Effective Faculty Mentoring: Tips for Chairs

BARB SILVER, PH.D.
SCHMIDT LABOR RESEARCH CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
SEPTEMBER 22, 2011
Agenda

Group Discussion: Mentoring in Your Department

Mentoring: Benefits, Models, Mechanics, and Best Practices

Your Mentor Profile

Developing a Mentor Program

Mentoring Dilemmas

“Successful mentors view the act of mentoring as an opportunity for thoughtful reflection and personal growth.”

- Enz, 1992


B. Silver, University of Rhode Island 9/22/11
What Role Does Mentoring Play in Your Department?

- What does mentoring look like in your department? What would you like it to look like?
- As a faculty member-turned-chair, how (if at all) has your thinking about faculty mentoring changed?
- How has mentoring changed since you were a new faculty member?
- What is the most important lesson you have learned as a mentor that you would like to pass on?
Facts about Faculty Mentoring

Compared to non-mentored faculty, formally mentored faculty experience:

- Higher levels of job satisfaction
- Better student evaluations
- Greater academic productivity
- More promotions
- Greater commitment to their institution and greater commitment to their profession
- Stronger likelihood of remaining at the institution
- Greater likelihood to mentor others in the future

(Johnson, 2007; Cartwright, 2008)
And yet, how does mentoring often happen?

- Sporadically – *haphazard communication*
- Informally – *little accountability or expectations*
- Inconsistently – *great mentoring → no mentoring*
- Partially – *meeting only some needs*
- Transitory – *relationships fizzle and end*
- Fuzzy expectations – *lack of ground rules*
- Unrecognized – *little formal or informal recognition*
Why is it Important?

**The Academy Today**
- Working longer hours
- Increasingly competitive scholarly climate
- Increasing expectations about teaching & service
- Changing expectations about balancing life and work
- Faculty diversity is increasing
- Focus on multi- and interdisciplinary scholarship

**Recruitment & Retention Tool**
- Important perk, especially in this economic climate
- Informal networks wield great power
- Isolation is a key contributor to attrition
Models and Types of Mentors

- One-to-one
- Multiple Mentors
- Group or Peer Mentors
- Mentor Networks
- Expert Mentor Teams
- “Synergistic” Mentoring
- E-mentors or paper mentors
Mentors Should: Be Available, Share Knowledge, Be Supportive, Provide Networks, Listen

- **Career guidance and advocacy**
  - Research, teaching, service → workload balance, priorities
  - Tenure and promotion process
  - Grants, publications
  - Access to resources
  - Establish professional networks and collaborations
  - Advocate and protect

- **Organizational**
  - Navigating university systems
  - Share “local knowledge”
  - Help settling in
  - Promote mentoring within department
  - Instill a sense of citizenship

- **Psychosocial**
  - Offer support, advice, sympathetic ear, sounding board
  - Work-life integration
  - Establish social and community networks
  - Be a role model
  - Develop trust
Some things to consider . . .

- Sociocultural assumptions
- Underrepresented or “solo” faculty
- Tokenism/generalization
- Care giving responsibilities
- Harassment and discrimination
- Status/power differences
- Diversity in scholarship, talents, styles, and career paths

Gender
Race, ethnicity
Age
Sexual orientation
Disability
Your Mentor Profile

... Or, if you prefer these categories:

- I am really skilled and comfortable with this and I can do it just fine
- I am really skilled and comfortable with this, but I have to admit I don’t think to do it enough
- I know something about this, but I could learn a little more
- This is an area I’m not really knowledgeable about
- This is an area I’m not comfortable talking about
- What other people can I suggest to help address this?
Components of a Great Mentor Program

1. Visible, overt, regular communication from leadership that good mentoring is a department priority
2. Formal program management
3. Thoughtful mentor matching at hire, and prior to arrival on campus
4. Multiple mentors, one outside department, until T&P decision
5. Provision for training of mentors
6. Provision for training of junior faculty (mentees)
7. Opportunities for junior faculty to network/meet as a group
8. Opportunities to check on success of mentoring relationships for every junior faculty, and re-assign/augment, etc., as needed
9. Evaluation of program as a whole on a regular basis
10. Provision of formal recognition, acknowledgment, awards, etc., for mentoring

B. Silver, University of Rhode Island 9/22/11
1. Be diligent about mentor assignments
   - Establish a formal policy and guidelines
   - Provide resources and incentives!!
   - Acknowledge work of mentors
   - Host social gatherings
   - Encourage departmental mentoring as a way to increase social capital
   - Foster a culture of mentoring - normalize mentoring in the department – resist the deficit model
   - Be a role model - have a mentor (peer?) yourself

Communication from leadership that mentoring is a priority.

B. Silver, University of Rhode Island 9/22/11
Mentoring is the intangible benefit
Otherwise slippage is inevitable
Designated person or committee to:
- Manage
- assign,
- check-in and re-assign
- ensure training occurs
- Plan gatherings
- acknowledge efforts of mentors
3. Thoughtful mentor matching at hire, prior to arrival.

- Automatic process – not voluntary
- Who assigns? Search committee? Chair?
- Assessing individual faculty needs – ask!
- Contact prior to arrival on campus, and immediately upon arrival

B. Silver, University of Rhode Island 9/22/11
4. Few people are a “one-man-band”
Less is not more
Cross disciplinary/department exposure is helpful
One year is NOT ENOUGH! Remember going through the tenure process?
Provision of Training for Mentors

5.

- Few people are natural mentors
- See Slide 5! (how mentoring often happens)
- Annual workshop, tutorial and/or handbook
- Occasional informal gatherings to compare notes
- Occasional informal gatherings with mentees
Learning to be a good mentee:
- Initiating behaviors (motivation to engage/disengage)
- "Coachability" (willingness to learn and use advice)
- Competencies (clarity of goals, communication style)

People don’t know what they don’t know, and may be hesitant to ask

Expectations of a mentoring relationship
7. Informal networks are extremely valuable
   Junior faculty are very busy and may tend to isolate themselves
   Shared local knowledge
   Shared challenges
   Opportunities for collaboration
Mentoring relationships should not be left on their own (see Slide 5 again!)

After first semester, and one year

Be wary of silence or quick answers

Informal, face-to-face conversations – “chats” - very important as subtle issues rise to the surface

Suggest additional mentors rather than ditching ineffective one

Stress no-fault policy – be ready to mediate or finesse
9. Accountability, Accountability, Accountability, Accountability,
Be careful of self-perception bias (differences in satisfaction in relationship between mentors and mentees)
Formal evaluation campus-wide is best
Short survey or topic at department meeting annually
10. Mentoring should not be a thankless job
- Formal service contribution
- Partial course release, stipend, etc.
- Verbal acknowledgement, pat on the back
- Elevate mentoring to a high status activity

Formal recognition, acknowledgments, awards, etc.
Mentoring Dilemmas

- Sarah
- Brian, Joe & Sarah
- David
- Geraldine
- Jeff and Cathy/Cathy and Jeff
- Jaime
Thank You.
Questions?

Barb Silver, Ph. D.
Schmidt Labor Research Center
36 Upper College Rd.
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, RI 02881
(401) 874-5289
silver@uri.edu