

Mentoring New Faculty

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Abstract:

This is a report of the process and evaluation of 12 years of mentoring new faculty in a university nursing faculty of 48 members. Each new faculty member is paired with an experienced faculty member who serves as a mentor for a year. Evaluations completed by both new faculty and mentors at the end of the year are positive.

Article:

Alleman 1 defined mentoring as "a relationship between two people in which one person with greater rank, experience, and/or expertise teaches, counsels, guides and helps the other to develop both professionally and personally."^(p1) It is important to assist new faculty in the socialization and development of the faculty role in a university. Mentoring has been a successful way of accomplishing this. The purposes of this article are to describe 12 years of mentoring new faculty and report the evaluations of both the mentors and new faculty (protégés).

Literature Review

Many studies have shown the importance of mentoring for nursing faculty's career development and success 2-6. De Young and Bliss 3 noted that today's nursing faculty shortage is related to many factors, including (1) the aging of current faculty, one-third of whom are expected to retire by 2006; (2) inadequate or noncompetitive salaries; and (3) fewer nurses prepared for or desiring to teach. When new faculty come into a school without the requisite knowledge and skills to teach and assume the faculty role, experienced faculty must teach them how to teach and assume other faculty roles. There have been no formal ways of helping faculty ascribe to the role and the transition to a new culture is difficult. Genrich and Pappas 4 found that "Faculty unanimously believed that a support system, usually in the form of a mentor, was the most valuable resource to facilitate orientation."^(p86) Brown et al 2 pointed out that "accepting responsibility for mentorship of other faculty members and students, either naturally or by appointment, moves a school toward excellence."^(p29)

Psychosocial and Career Functions of Mentoring

Reports from both Kavooosi, Elman and Mauch 7 and Short 6 noted that mentoring functions could be either psychosocial or career functions. Kavooosi et al 7 defined the psychosocial functions as "providing support including role modeling, counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and friendship."^(p419) They defined career functions as "sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments."^(p419) Psychosocial functions

affect people on a personal level, focusing on self-worth; career functions promote individuals' career advancement.⁷

Kavoosi et al ⁷ used the Alleman Mentoring Scales Questionnaire (AMSQ) to study faculty mentoring and found that faculty mentors ranked their activities (from most to least frequent) as follows: teaching the job, demonstrating trust, sponsoring, teaching politics, career helping, endorsing acts or views, counseling, giving challenging tasks, providing protection, and giving friendship. Mentors believed they had a more positive influence on the protégé's career than on the protégé's personal development (69%).⁷

Short ⁶ used Noe's Mentoring Functions Scale to study mentoring of nurse administrators in Schools of Nursing. Short found, as did Noe, that the psychosocial benefits received were significantly greater than the career benefits. Similarly, in her study of the value of mentoring for nursing administrators, Madison ⁵ found that growth in self-confidence was the most often mentioned change.

Method

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro School of Nursing has 48 faculty members who teach approximately 850 students in the sophomore through senior years of the baccalaureate program, the RN to BSN campus and off-campus programs, and the campus and off-campus MSN programs. Approximately half of the 48 faculty members are doctorally prepared, tenure-track professors who teach in both the BSN and MSN programs, while the others are all master's prepared and teach primarily in the BSN program. An average of six MSN prepared faculty are part-time each year, accounting for a third of the turnover in faculty.

During the last 12 years there have been 47 new faculty employed including doctorally prepared and master's prepared, full-time and part-time faculty. To assist new faculty in adjusting to a new environment and a new position and to develop personally and professionally, a mentoring program was started 12 years ago. Because of my special interest in mentoring, I initiated the mentoring activities and continue to facilitate the pairing of new faculty members with mentors. The School of Nursing Administrative Council members suggest current faculty as mentors for new faculty. Selected mentors have positive attitudes, relate well with others, and are assigned to teach in courses with the new faculty member or have similar research interests as the new faculty member. The suggested faculty members are asked if they would like to serve as a mentor for the new faculty member for a year. Usually, the mentor does not know the new faculty member until the person reports to work for the beginning of fall classes.

Both the mentor and protégé are given information about their partner and the mentoring process the first day they arrive in the fall. This information includes a list of the new faculty members and their mentors and the following information:

The purpose of mentoring is for an experienced faculty member (mentor) to assist a new faculty member (protégé) during the first year of employment of the protégé. The purpose of the mentoring relationship is to assist the protégé in becoming oriented, knowledgeable, and comfortable in the School of Nursing culture and environment. Mentors have volunteered to work with their protégés. The manner and type of work the two do together depends on the

people involved. Some may want to meet weekly-perhaps for lunch-for a few weeks, then monthly. This is not a formal arrangement, but instead a personal helping relationship. Mentoring seems to work best when there are mutual benefits for both the mentor and protégé. The protégé may bring new ideas for teaching or research, may become a part of the mentor's research or writing, or generally complement the mentor. Many new faculty keep a list of things they need to discuss and let their mentor know when they would like to meet to discuss the list. Some mentors have subsequently worked with former protégés in research and writing projects, becoming co-authors. The mentor/protégé pair must periodically let each other know how things are going and what is working or not working for them. Near the end of the year, each person is asked to complete a brief written evaluation of the experience.

I also meet with all new faculty as a group during the "orientation for new faculty" to explain, discuss, and answer questions about mentoring.

Findings

Throughout the year, I receive feed-back from both mentors and protégés about the helpfulness of the experience. At the end of the mentoring year, each mentor is asked to answer the following four questions: (1) List ways or activities you used to mentor your protégé and comment about how these activities were helpful, or not helpful. (2) How did the protégé help you? (3) How could the partnering relationship and the benefits derived from it been improved? (4) Should we continue mentoring for new faculty? The four questions the protégés answer at the end of the year are similar to those answered by the mentors. (1) List ways or activities your mentor used to help you and comment about how these activities were helpful. (2) How did you help your mentor? Questions three and four are the same as those for the mentors.

Of the 44 faculty members who served as mentors over the past 12 years, 33 (70%) returned their questionnaires after their year of mentoring. Occasionally a faculty member has mentored two new faculty because of mutual assignments and interest; however, those assignments are made sparingly and for good reason, like the mentor and both protégés teaching in the same course. Of the 47 new faculty (protégés), 39 (83%) returned their questionnaire after their year of being mentored. A summary of the mentors' and protégés' responses to the four questions follows.

Mentors' Responses

When mentors were asked to list activities that they used to mentor their protégé and how these activities were helpful, they listed: being available, having regular meetings (daily, weekly, monthly) to discuss questions, helping the protégé learn to prevent and handle problems, helping the protégé anticipate and prepare for "first" experiences, and helping with implementation of teaching responsibilities (classroom teaching, examinations, grading, clinical orientation and teaching, dealing with problem students, and preparing a course syllabus).

When asked how the protégé helped the mentor, mentors said they helped by doing a good job with teaching responsibilities. Most often they were team teaching. Mentors noted that protégés' knowledge, experience, and fresh insights were very beneficial and their questions required reflection to help the mentor clarify her position. All said the relationship was reciprocal. When asked how the partnering relationship and its benefits could have been improved, most respondents said that no improvement was needed. A few said they needed more time together to

discuss things, and should have scheduled a meeting at least once a month; after the first few weeks they didn't meet often. One person said the expectations for the relationship should be explicit, for example, jointly establishing one or two desired outcomes.

All mentors said mentoring for new faculty should continue. One suggestion was to assign mentors based on compatible schedules. The mentor said, "Our clinical days were different. I wasn't available to my protégé as much as I would have liked."

Protégés' Responses

When asked to list helpful mentoring activities, protégés noted that the mentors' being available, listening, and providing feedback about teaching and the protégé adjustment were most important. Protégés also mentioned help in preparing course materials, ordering books, learning to use the computer and getting the computer to interface with the computer at home, handling problem students, and completing forms. They appreciated the mentors' availability and assistance with learning many things, from getting a new faculty grant to understanding the expectations for promotion and tenure.

Protégés said they assisted mentors primarily by following their suggestions and trying not to bother them too often. One supported her mentor during a family crisis, and others contributed ideas for handling course concerns. Some protégés felt the partnering relationship and the benefits could have been improved by having more frequent meetings to discuss teaching strategies and problem solving, and having the mentor help them get to know more people. All protégés said we should continue mentoring new faculty. Suggestions included making a checklist of important basics for protégés for which mentor assistance was needed, and having mentors continue introductions for them to faculty and staff for several months. They said we should not assign new faculty members their "boss" as their mentor. One commented, "We go to the boss for certain things, but need a peer with whom to discuss the real scoop."

Discussion

All of the mentors and protégés who responded to the questionnaire after participating in the mentoring experience evaluated the experience positively. The benefits derived from the experience were both psychosocial and career benefits. The career functions primarily related to teaching, but some noted receiving assistance with grant writing and preparation for promotion and tenure.

Based on feedback from evaluations, a list of "Mentoring Points" for mentors to use as a guide in working with proteges throughout the year was developed (Fig. 1). This list is now being used and is specific to our School of Nursing. However, it is included in this article as an example of our response to feedback from both mentors and protégés in our school.

School of Nursing

Introductions: everybody's name and how he or she can help

Annual requirements: immunizations, CPR, insurance, etc.

Promotion and tenure criteria/guidelines

Faculty handbook

Building: classrooms, AV equipment, storage

Office supplies

Office computer: how to use it, including e-Mail

Mailbox

Scheduling rooms, equipment

Philosophy

Conceptual framework

Curriculum

Teaching

Clinical

Assignment

Orientation

Teaching

Making Assignments

Student written work, e.g., Care Plans, etc.

Conferences

Student Evaluations

Submission/filing of evaluations

Classroom

Course Syllabus

Teaching

AV equipment, including Powerpoint

Examinations

Scanning of exams

Grants

University

New Faculty

CT/CTEP

Mini

Research leave

Office of International Studies

Office of Research Services

Sigma Theta Tau

Ruth P. Council (Research)

Development (Workshops)

Opportunities for Service

* These points are school-specific and intended to serve as examples only.

Figure 1. Mentoring Points.

Clearly, mentoring has a positive impact on the protégé, and in general terms on the mentor. Administrators and faculty are encouraged to facilitate mentoring relations aimed at developing and nurturing new faculty both psychosocially and in their career.

Recommendations

General recommendations about how to design a mentoring program include the following:

- * Establish a School philosophy aimed at developing young/new faculty members. It is important for all faculty to "own" the philosophy of mentoring and the process by which it will be carried out. This does not need to be a part of the written philosophy, but instead, it may be an idea/process that is discussed in small groups, then with total faculty to get input and support.
- * The mentoring program must be supported by the Dean and leadership in the school. The idea for mentoring may be better received and supported if it originates with faculty, but needs to be discussed early in the idea stage with the Dean.
- * One individual needs to be "in charge" of the annual process of pairing mentors and protégés and shepherding the process from year-to-year.
- * Evaluation data for use to enhance the program needs to be gathered at the end of each year from both mentors and protégés.

Suggested strategies for the members and proteges to use to facilitate the mentoring process include the following:

- * Meet weekly for a month, then at least monthly
- * Establish goals for the relationship for the year
- * Discuss history and culture of the School
- * Discuss political environment and decision making in the School
- * Discuss the progress of the mentoring relationship, at least quarterly.

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