

Opportune Encounters: hosting extramural mentoring programmes for new scholars

By: CAROL A. MULLEN AND WILLIAM A. KEALY

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Abstract:

This article explores the new and important field of mentoring in higher education. It describes a pilot project that launched the mentoring of new scholars through an academic writing programme. In its inaugural year, this national programme attracted educators from the US, Canada, and the UK who are international members of a US-based conference. The analysis of the extramural programme uses the formative evaluations of the 48 participants (mentors (established scholars) and mentees (graduate students, recent graduates, and beginning faculty)). The questionnaire data are organised into issues highlighting preliminary insights for programmatic development at professional venues. Salient elements of the Mentoring for Academic Writing (MAW) Programme are provided to encourage the development of other mentoring opportunities for new scholars. Benefits and limitations are included. An overview of the current mentoring climate that supports new models of human relationship is given. Discussion covers the relevant literature and recommendations for programmatic improvement.

Article:

Mentoring does not have to be a long, intense experience to be of value; what I learned from this programme is that effective mentoring can also be relatively short and focused.

I was very pleased to learn that my dissertation could make a powerful contribution to teacher education. I hadn't heard that from my committee, or anyone in my department for that matter, so it was valuable to hear this from an outsider who is an esteemed scholar. (MAW Programme mentees, May 2000)

Purpose and Scope

This article attempts to take mentoring and tutoring into a new and important field—mentorship in higher education (HE). It discusses the process and results of the Mentoring for Academic Writing (MAW) Programme. In 2000, this initiative was launched at a national-level conference in the United States that attracted educators throughout parts of the global community. The participants, new scholars and established scholars from the US, Canada, and the UK, called for a continuation of the programme. These self-selecting individuals—White Americans and Europeans, Asians and Asian-Americans, and Latinos/Latinas—were matched as teams of three, months before the roundtable sessions. The participants' experiences were formally evaluated after the conference and the results are analysed herein. This discussion does not address or evaluate the successes and failures of organised mentoring programmes in general. Instead, it focuses on the MAW Programme and its salient features, and benefits and problems. We extrapolate, where possible, to a larger picture within the context of the current mentoring climate.

We share new insights with readers to encourage the development of alternative, extramural mentoring formats, like the MAW Programme, that respond to the needs and interests of new scholars. Educational leaders, such as conference sponsors, programme coordinators, lecturers, administrators, and scholars who recognise the need to formally advance the socialisation of new scholars, can make use of this study.

Working from the formative evaluations of participants in the MAW Programme, this article offers a programme assessment for new scholar development. By 'formative evaluation', we use Verma and Mallick's (1999) definition to mean the kind of assessment that is carried out (for example, at the end of a pilot phase) to study the process and to implement changes in the programme. We report the salient themes from 48 mentors and mentees who responded to the questionnaire that explores issues of programmatic development. Key elements that emerged from the data are highlighted within this context, and suggestions for improvement are included.

In the traditional relationship in which professors guide, facilitate, and transfer knowledge to graduate students and junior faculty, mentoring can become problematic. Traditional mentoring takes place when the partners are not considered equal and when a 'subject' of learning is designated. This process is undergirded by the 'presumption of status, power, and caution [that] shape the relationship', limiting the potential for mutual growth (Mullen, in press, p. 5). An unsatisfactory relationship uses an incomplete repertoire of learning that ranges from 'words of encouragement and management "tips"' to one-way help that is 'associated with weakness' (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 51).

Traditional mentoring falls short of satisfying the deeper, multiple demands required for professional development (Mullen *et al.*, 2000). These demands centre around the 'learning conversation' that Rix and Gold (2000) claim is difficult to describe. Two-way engagement around a topic of mutual interest can feed the kind of mentoring relationship that is reflective and empowering. When actualised within the MAW Programme, this opportunity enabled the participants to go beyond discussing effective writing strategies to probing deeper issues of interest to the new scholar.

Mentoring for academic writing is an innovative idea from which graduate schools of education may benefit, even if these were initially sponsored at conference venues. Novice academics need help not only with activities involving scholarly development and professional learning and networking; they also need to learn the academic culture as it concerns the publishing world, networking with editorial staff, and writing/research conventions—all essential elements on the scholarly landscape.

During the application phase of the MAW Programme, new scholars reported being motivated to participate for five reasons: (1) insufficient guidance in the writing process within graduate schools of education; (2) inadequate assistance in an area of interest that lies outside the focus of their doctoral committee; (3) lack of focus and progress on a selected topic for research; (4) poor exposure to and knowledge of established scholars; and (5) shortage of HE cohorts dedicated to writing for scholarly purposes. More structured opportunities, like the MAW Programme, are therefore needed to help prepare new scholars to write well for the academy and the field. Such mentoring-based conference activity can serve to 'jump-start' the new scholar in the direction that is needed. New scholars can use the experience to create their own satisfying maps for continued learning. For example, they can initiate scholarly writing groups that include established scholars and that may operate as electronic communities.

New scholars have got the message that writing for publication is expected and that it is highly valued in the academy. Yet, as many recent graduates have testified, they have not acquired the necessary skills to meet that expectation (Mullen, in press). Many education graduate students feel at a loss when it comes to acquiring the skills that are necessary to produce publishable research findings. As a result, many feel anxious about writing, especially for the purposes of dissemination. They enter professional fields without having mastered a skill that is essential to the development of their careers. Graduate study therefore needs to be shaped differently to socialise new scholars into the world of academic publishing. This process of reconstruction in HE will help to counter the unsatisfactory mentoring conditions that many new faculty have encountered as they essentially induct themselves into the world of scholarly publishing (Knight & Trowler, 1999; Mullen & Forbes, 2000).

While it is assumed that non-traditional (minority) students experience serious difficulty with academic writing, it has been shown that students in general face major challenges (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986). The MAW

Programme recognises that many graduate students, regardless of their 'majority' or 'minority' status, need help with academic writing and professional development. We have aligned our programme objectives with this information and the optimistic results of pedagogical interventions that have improved the writing lives of graduate students (Bolton, 1994; Mullen, in press). New scholars who benefit from writing models are enabled not only to produce a viable inquiry but also to disseminate it. HE students can learn to produce quality writing, especially when exposed to a structured process that includes feedback from peers and faculty. We have become convinced that many new scholars can be successfully mentored to write academically strong and useful material of publishable quality.

Programme Structure and Process

Selection Criteria: identification and matching

The MAW Programme fostered an alignment of academic interests between new scholars and mentors who were self-selected in that they had volunteered or accepted the invitation to participate. Because the programme was not advertised by the conference in its inaugural year, the coordinator had to actively solicit interest. The advertised call for papers facilitated a more open process for the second year.¹ As in the first year, information for the application included evidence from mentors of support for the intellectual support of new scholars; new scholars were required to express clear academic learning goals related to a work of their choice.

People were invited to participate in the MAW Programme via electronic mail, conference and university listservers, and class lists of students. Mentors and new scholars who agreed to take part committed to writing that would occur before and after the conference programme and to networking within their mentoring triads (or teams). The structure used many familiar components (e.g. support for learning and belonging) and innovative (e.g. mentoring triads at roundtable sessions) components to guide novices who wish to become scholarly writers. Mentors strove to be creative; they shared ideas with new scholars about the culture and practice of academic writing for publication while helping them to prepare their works for formal review.

Mentors and new scholars were matched from different organisations so that that they would not know one another. This strategy had the potential of assisting the new scholars (and mentors) with networking for more extensive contact in their field. Because the conference attracts members of the global community, it was an ideal venue for producing new scholarly networks that featured geographically diverse mentoring arrangements. The 32 new scholars who met 16 senior scholars were also heterogeneous in terms of their university roles and disciplines. The mentors were deans, editors of refereed journals, and directors of university centres. Their disciplines were in the areas of leadership and administration, psychology, teacher education, ethnic studies, and educational technology. The new scholars were similarly distributed, except for being more concentrated in the area of technology (instructional systems and design).

Processes Used for Programme Development

The mentoring coordinator communicated expectations and time lines to the new scholars and mentors. New scholars were asked to make contact with their mentors, to share the paper they wanted feedback on, and to clarify the arrangements for the session. New scholars were also encouraged to contact the other mentee who had been assigned to their triad so that they could respond to each other's papers as critical friends before the roundtable session. Mentors were asked to respond in a timely manner to the new scholars and to foster an academic writing relationship that would be developed before, during, and after the conference. Mentors satisfied the objectives of the programme by critiquing the papers with the writer's learning goals in mind. These relationships were fostered via e-mail, which had benefits and limitations.

Unlike graduate school, where visibility of the student is an advantage in conventional HE courses, the new scholars were accountable in a different way. E-mail correspondence constituted the bulk of the interaction between most of the mentors and mentees. This communications system relied on the dedication of each of the participants, fuelled by expectations and deadlines. The coordinator's messages focused on the need for contacting mentors, submitting papers, sharing goals for the writing and roundtable session, and preparing overview statements of the work to be shared. Within a classroom setting, the 'reminders' of work to be

accomplished are more apparent. For the MAW Programme, the intrinsic motivation of the mentees was a critical element in the entire process. Mentors relied on them to make the initial contact and to make their requests clear. This symbiosis was key to the success of the mentoring relationship that unfolded at the roundtable sessions and that has continued beyond it.

The topics used to focus conversation at the roundtables were not predetermined. Instead, these evolved from the research interests that the participants had identified: organisational change in education; teacher collaboration and networks; metacognition and human development; issues of control and equity in schooling; socialisation and learning environments; technology issues in teaching and learning; and student achievement and evaluation.

Method of Formative Evaluation

The new scholar/mentor questionnaire was developed as a formative evaluation that itemised ten open-ended questions. This instrument benefited from strategies discussed by Verma and Mallick (1999) on how to develop effective questionnaires that address programme objectives. Critical areas of feedback were featured that would promote an understanding of the mentoring process from the viewpoints of participants:

- academic background and interest in mentoring;
- positive aspects of the conference (roundtable) experience;
- organisational strengths of the programme;
- suggestions for improving the conference (roundtable) experience;
- suggestions for improving the mentoring programme;
- insights gained into mentoring;
- nature of contact with designated mentor or new scholar;
- examples of having helped or of having been helped;
- ways of providing further help or being further helped; and
- enrichment of academic/professional interests or goals.

The MAW mentors and new scholars were surveyed via e-mail following the conference. They received a brief letter and the evaluation instrument. Participants recorded their impressions of the mentoring programme so that a list of recommendations could be developed.

The first author invited the second author of this article to join her in analysing the data from the questionnaires.² The co-author was invited to partake in this activity for several reasons: (1) it is difficult to publish a formative evaluation carried out single-handedly by a programme coordinator, whose investment in the success of a project might either bias the data or be perceived as doing this; and (2), like the coordinator, the co-author's perspective was that of a mentor in the programme. Because of his more distanced but informed participation, he was able to respond to the data with a fresh eye while monitoring any biased interpretations and protective reactions on the coordinator's part.

We conducted a separate analysis of the data and compared results. The questionnaire data were individually coded and analysed by us in the search for emerging themes. We each assigned units of meaning to 'chunks' of information (e.g. response items on the questionnaire) in order to note any patterns that could be mapped for each question. Because we wanted to be guided by the participants' voices in our analysis, we used McIntyre's (1997) qualitative strategies for analysing feedback from exploratory groups. This approach requires that the researcher openly engage the viewpoints shared by the group as a whole and by individuals; also, any criticisms need to be 'put on the table' for consideration. We arrived at a consensus for each of the observations made, with the exception of instances where the first author had insider knowledge about the meaning of the respondents' feedback.³ (See Notes for two examples.)

The next section identifies issues raised by participants on the questionnaire. We explore these issues by letting the voices of the participants (mentors and mentees), including the coordinator's, be heard. We have added our

joint analysis that identifies four salient aspects of the MAW Programme: taking personal responsibility, becoming faculty-mentors, support for learning and belonging, and the use of an alternative (extramural) mentoring format. The theme of support for learning and belonging was the most prevalent, and it favours the mentees' perspectives. The four elements could together serve as lenses and strategies for developing other mentoring programmes for new scholars, depending on the purpose and context involved.

Issues Raised by Participants: an emergent analysis

Taking Personal Responsibility

One issue that emerged from the data involved personal responsibility by the participants toward each other and toward the programme as a whole. The issue of taking personal and collective responsibility to promote desirable educational reform surfaces repeatedly in the mentoring and leadership literature. 'Personal responsibility' carries the names of accountability, moral obligation, and self-regulation (Poulson, 1998), and it has been defined by Tacheny (1999) to mean that responsibility for reform should be embraced as an 'organisation-wide value'.

In our study, personal responsibility made the difference with regard to whether the mentoring pairs and even triads were viable. The responsibility of participants can be so crucial to the success of a mentoring programme and, on a larger scale, to the well-being of a professional group and the advancement of an educational institution that it can almost single-handedly determine the quality of outcomes (Mullen & Lick, 1999). Mentors have observed that mentees can lack a clear sense of their responsibility that goes beyond the 'surface structure' of their chosen profession, whether this be teaching in schools (Furlong, 2000) or in graduate schools (Mullen, in press). In turn, mentees complain they have to 'manage' their mentors to get their needs met and to make the relationship work (Maynard, 2000). Some of the MAW Programme mentees had let deadlines slip without warning. This is a potentially dangerous situation for mentees to allow themselves to enter; such actions (or lack of actions) may give the impression that they do not adequately value the time and expertise of the mentor, or that they do not give the goal of publishing the proper weight in their academic goals.

A few of the mentors described how unfulfilled obligations on the part of their teammates had hurt the mentoring process at the roundtables. One mentor had managed to stay positive: 'I did not hear from one of my assigned students and with the other I received the paper close to the end date, so the only mentoring that went on was the day of the Conference. Regardless, I am certain this programme will get off the ground because it's so important and valuable.' One mentor made the point directly: 'The new scholars need to forward their papers in advance so the mentors have time to read and comment on them.' Another mentor wrote, 'The concept of mentoring as a relationship that is built up over time needs to be honoured', suggesting that personal integrity must infuse a relationship if it is to develop in a meaningful way.

Mentees who had failed to meet deadlines placed their mentors in difficult situations at the roundtables. They later realised the consequences of their actions: 'I should have worked on my paper sooner!' and 'I might have provided further help by having a better written draft to comment on'. A few of the mentors who recognised the consequences of their own passivity ironically reinforced this passivity by asking for even more reminders:

Unfortunately, it was my own fault that I was unable to take full advantage of the opportunity by submitting the paper to the mentor earlier in the process. Next time I will start much sooner! But, I might have been helped by even more reminders (nagging).

Obviously, if new scholars are to derive the maximum benefit from mentoring they must fulfil their own obligations and in a timely manner. For Year 2 of the programme, the new scholars must notify the coordinator as to the date of the paper submission and forward her a copy. In order to avoid a less-than-successful roundtable session, new scholars have been notified that late submission of their papers could result in their being replaced. Although a penalising approach is not conducive to the spirit of the programme, new scholars who do not fulfil their obligations waste precious resources. Academics who are willing to serve as mentors are

usually actively searching for like-minded colleagues. Of course, deadlines are not always cut in stone and can be renegotiated, but that communication needs to occur as a problem emerges.

Becoming Faculty-mentors

A second issue that emerged from the data indicates that the mentors and mentees shared the same goal, one that is arguably not recognised in general by HE institutions for either party, especially new scholars. The participants expressed the desire to either be or to become an effective faculty-mentor, depending on where they were at in their career. This image of professional success amplifies the importance of personal responsibility for mentees (already discussed). The desire of new scholars to become faculty-mentors has been documented only where socialisation itself is the agenda of a scholarly network (e.g. Mullen *et al.*, 2000).

In the MAW Programme, new scholars described how they wanted to 'learn how to be a good mentor to my own students'. This aspiration fits with their current teaching roles as graduate teaching assistants in HE and as teachers in school systems. Several mentees who have functioned as teacher-mentors commented to the effect:

My interest lies in someday becoming a mentor as a professor. I have been a teacher-mentor in elementary school and still to this day it is one of the most powerful relationships that I have formed with anyone. I would not be here today if it were not for those mentors in school systems who had guided me along this journey.

Hoping to someday model the constructive feedback she received in the MAW Programme, another mentee offered:

I can say that if I ever become a faculty-mentor, I feel that I have a good role model for providing others with positive and constructive comments on manuscripts. I was always impressed with my mentor's 'availability' in spite of the fact that she has an extremely busy research agenda and that she lives an ocean away.

Most of the participants similarly echoed: 'I have developed a much better sense of mentoring and how I can take better advantage of it to become a successful mentor in the future.'

The new scholars who aim to become faculty-mentors underscored the value of teaching others how to acclimate to the academic culture. Most aspired to 'want to be the kind of faculty member whose first concern is the successful orientation of graduate students with the 'particular mindset' and challenges of graduate school'. Many new scholars believe that a primary responsibility of scholars is to mentor partly by extending worthwhile opportunities to others.

In accord with Mullen and Forbes' (2000) study of transitional issues for new faculty, another mentee powerfully expressed how mentoring is (or should be) an important issue of adjustment not only for the sake of the individual but also for the health of the profession:

I strongly believe that mentoring allows for the successful transition into professional status for emerging researchers. The more capable we enter the field, the richer and more diverse and intriguing is the exchange. I will always consider mentoring as a process that must be implemented for the sake of the profession and my own development, regardless of what side of the table I would sit at.

The inspiration to mentor others was a pleasant and unexpected outcome of the roundtable experience for mentees: 'For me as a new scholar, this experience not only strengthened my resolve to help students of my own but also encouraged me to keep trying!' This aspiration was unexpected because it had not been included as a learning goal by the mentees in their application. The desire to become a faculty-mentor fits with the new learning of the mentees and with their journey of new scholar development. As a potentially significant byproduct of the mentoring relationship, new scholars reported having learned something about the process of becoming an effective faculty-mentor:

This kind of intensive help gave me ideas for being a good mentor myself and convinced me that mentors must make their knowledge relevant, as mine did, to new scholars and at their level of experience and expectation. The context for the sharing of information (mentor's knowledge) is as important as any insights or advice that can be passed along.

The experience in the MAW programme has offered the mentees evidence that established scholars are willing to proactively mentor others—even individuals previously unknown to them, ones not located at their institutions or even necessarily within their own fields.

The mentors who participated had not simply 'discovered' how the programme might fit with their goals after having stumbled into its mentoring arena. To the contrary, they expected that the experience of mentoring afforded by the intervention would complement and extend their lives as faculty-mentors: 'It was tied in with my commitment to help new scholars enter the field.' The established scholars all strongly value the role of mentoring in their profession, having been steeped in its practice in their teaching ('It seemed very similar to what I do with my graduate students') and research ('It's part of my practice to mentor teachers to publish their writings—independent from me'). The mentors proactively search for opportunities to 'interact with students in an intellectually stimulating way'. These comments validate the fact that the scholars' ways of working with students made them natural choices as mentors.

In our own university roles as faculty-mentors, we think that mentoring new scholars should not be a 'one-way street' of responsibility. Rather, it is the shared responsibility of new and established scholars to make this complex, synergistic relationship happen. Regardless, the yearning for proactive assistance by the mentees in the programme can be read as a call for action to HE faculty to become a community of scholars. This theme has appeared in studies of mentoring that share the perspectives of new faculty and their concerns of isolation, power, and work overload (Mullen & Forbes, 2000; Sorcinelli, 1994; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

Support for Learning and Belonging

Support for learning and belonging was the prevalent theme that emerged from our data analysis of the MAW Programme. This feature has a parallel in the mentoring literature where the strong value new scholars have for emotional belonging in their places of study and work shines through (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Maynard, 2000; Rix & Gold, 2000).

At the roundtable sessions, the new scholars appeared to have had a positive experience interacting with their mentors. They received helpful, focused feedback as well as encouragement and respect for their work, ideas, and goals. Two typical comments to this effect are:

I really liked the feedback that my mentor gave me. He took his job very seriously and gave constructive suggestions to me and the other new scholar. He was very courteous, kind, and helpful in his feedback and approach to our work and to us.

My mentor, a journal editor from the UK, was most helpful. She was positive and encouraging while giving me some excellent ideas for turning my manuscript into a publishable piece. She also shared information about journals where I can send my work.

New scholars also expressed positive regard for the knowledge, experience, and insight of their mentors. They communicated a high level of respect toward the scholars:

My mentor was an excellent match with what I was doing, and she provided careful feedback and constant encouragement. She anticipated my questions and was supportive beyond what I expected. She not only addressed my learning goals but her wisdom prompted me to further reflect upon a personal lifelong question I have been exploring.

I appreciated the caring attitude of my mentor who gave me invaluable feedback about ways to improve my writing. It was great to have a chance to discuss the themes and difficulties of organising the manuscript with my mentor and to get input from the conference folks who dropped by our table. It was a dynamic experience of learning.

All of the mentees reported having gained writing and editing feedback as well as publishing ideas, satisfying the main objective of the MAW Programme: 'My mentor gave me valuable feedback on the paper and encouraged me to submit the revised version soon for review with a journal.' Additionally, 'The mentor's comments were focused and relevant, and I was able to return home with good ideas for expanding my paper for publication.'

The new scholars were also specific about ways that their writing and inquiry had been critiqued in helpful ways. Two such examples highlight issues involving the voice of the author and the development of concepts, both posing challenges for many novice writers:

I learned that I was citing others too much and not writing in my own words enough. I was given some suggestions to make my paper more appropriate for publication.

My mentor pointed out significant gaps in the text and important clarifications that I need to make to key concepts. I appreciate the balance in critique and the encouraging comments about those areas of the manuscript that had worked really well for my mentor.

Learning strategic approaches to writing had clear benefits beyond the purposes of improving the text for many of the mentees who had experienced increased confidence (and decreased stress):

My mentor has advised me to quit rewriting my paper and to send it out to a journal. That strategy helps me not only with this one potential publication but also with freeing up time to write other papers. Also, this approach is helping to decrease my stress level (very important) and it gives me more confidence to submit the paper for review.

Mentees, then, gained confidence through the support they experienced for learning and belonging: 'I came to understand how absolutely essential having good, caring people around is to helping a student gain confidence.'

Most of the new scholars are continuing to work toward a professional publication. As their comments show, mentors had directly contributed to their learning by helping them to meet the goals of stronger academic writing and successful dissemination. A typical response from the mentors was, 'The students indicated that the discussion of publications and of ways to reorganise their papers for multiple purposes was very useful. I hope so!'

New scholars were also helped beyond the immediate academic writing goal of the roundtables through the experience of having networked with established scholars:

Of course, I received specific feedback on my manuscript, but beyond that having the opportunity to network with a professional that I admire was helpful. We talked about career and professional development as well as the manuscript itself. It was also interesting for me to receive feedback on research that is so clearly embedded within a particular culture. My mentor did not relate to the plight of African American athletes in the US but rather in her own cultural milieu, which has helped me to re-see my research as somewhat culturally specific. I need to address this issue somehow in my writing.

This White American developed insight into issues of cultural specificity and the limits of generalisability in her work. With her writing team, she will be able to tackle the ethnocentric elements in her research. Others were

reassured that their 'theoretical frameworks were appropriate'. The mentees appreciated the encouraging feedback, which some seemed to crave:

I was very pleased to learn that my dissertation could make a powerful contribution to teacher education. I hadn't heard that from my committee, or anyone in my department for that matter, so it was valuable to hear this from an outsider who is an esteemed scholar.

As another example of support, new scholars from outside the US experienced a personal connection at the conference and, symbolically, to North America:

My mentor introduced me to the experience of the conference and a peer-reviewed journal that has had a profound impression on me. I feel closer to American educators and researchers now; the process of learning in North America could not have been developed as significantly through another process for me.

The mentees considered the benefits of learning and belonging to be significant at a number of levels (e.g. personal affirmation, legitimisation of ideas, significant writing focus, ability to converse with esteemed scholars). A powerful comment along these multiple lines was:

The mentoring was one of the best things I've participated in as a student! Informative, guided, sincere, and a very much-needed confirmation that my ideas and writing are important. I've feared that the way I write my observations are too unwieldy. But, my mentor helped me to get closer to believing in my ideas and myself. The programme helped me to approach esteemed others with less caution, more openness.

Where relevant to new scholars, they expressed delight that the mentoring relationship has continued beyond the conference, which has probably enhanced their feeling of belonging: 'My mentor has even contacted me since the conference and has volunteered to do further peer readings for me.' Additionally, 'I am one of two new scholars whom our mentor set up to become very involved in preparing each other's paper for publication in an edited book. We began this work at the mentoring roundtable.' The experience of subsequent networking, clarified goal-setting, and accomplishment of refined work by new scholars holds promise.

It is still early in the post-contact stage, but a preliminary observation is that mentees want to continue working not only with their mentor but also with the other new scholar, finding this team configuration promising: 'Our mentor asked us to share our studies with one another beforehand so we could also give each other feedback. We did this at the conference and now we are all focused on developing deeper interpretations, with input from the mentor on e-mail.'

The new scholars gained insights into mentoring as an outgrowth of having received support for learning and belonging over the months. They all validated the roundtable experience as a worthwhile endeavour that furthered personal learning and goals:

This was my first experience with 'true' mentoring. Because it was such a positive experience, it has made even more obvious the importance of mentoring to graduate students. Although we should all know by now that one must ultimately depend on one's own efforts, the objective comments of a mentor are invaluable.

Some of the mentees shared insights into the theory and practice of mentoring itself: 'I gained new knowledge into mentoring as a very real form of professional development. If I had to describe an ideal mentor, I would probably use my guide as an example.' Another speculated that mentoring is effective when learning and discovery are shared between people:

Mentoring is a deep concept. I am only beginning to grasp its complexity through having been greatly helped by a mentor who commented in detail on my manuscript and places where it can be reviewed. I have gained new

mentoring insights into the value and process of learning as a kind of shared discovery. I feel excited and inspired!

Use of an Alternative Mentoring Format

All of the participants affirmed the use of the alternative (or extramural) mentoring format—the conference venue featuring roundtable sessions. Mentors valued the innovation of the programme itself: ‘The concept of matching scholars and students through a global university construct is a very important thing to do, and I have learned a great deal from observing how this innovation was established and then experienced by us.’ The new scholars especially liked the unique feature of the triad groupings that promoted a kind of tension—co-learning within the peer-expert structure: ‘What I liked the most about the organisation of the mentoring programme was being put with others who have similar research interests but who were from different places and sometimes from different disciplines.’ Another mentee concurred:

The roundtable session offered a special space where I was able to get excellent feedback from my mentor. I also gained a lot from listening to my mentor give feedback to the other new scholar. So, having the mentor with two new scholars was a great idea.

Because the roundtables operated as an open session, the tables were occupied with listeners; this provided an additional learning element for the new scholars: ‘The format permitted a balance between the intimacy of an intellectual exchange with a taste of the public; conference folks joined the tables and the organisers listened in.’

As an important related point and criticism, one new scholar advised, ‘Make sure mentors give feedback equally to all students—don’t waste too much time on one study unless the comments are valuable for both mentees.’ Several others had also felt that the use of time by mentors had been somewhat mismanaged at the roundtables. Talk ahead of time on e-mail had established that the mentoring triads would need to be vigilant about balance. To help with this issue, the organiser had proposed a variety of strategies for mentors.

With this issue in mind, involving the enhanced use of the 40-minute slot, one mentee thought that the mentoring triads would have benefited from having used outlines of the papers to be discussed. Only a few of the participants had prepared overview statements and not everyone brought copies of their work. It could be that the limited time of the roundtable slot may not have been the issue as much as how the actual time was anticipated and used. The use of outlines and summaries would have maximised the focus on quality feedback while reducing the stress of the fleeting minutes. As a secondary point, prepared updates by new scholars indicating any new developments of the paper would have also been of service. These suggestions will be forwarded to the next group of participants as ‘lessons learned’. Because roundtables are limited to 40 minutes at this conference, this issue will need to be resolved through negotiations with the sponsor and with members of each mentoring triad.

As another aspect of the programme, new scholars had been asked to develop learning goals for the session and to share them with their assigned mentor beforehand:

I worked on my specific learning goals a couple of months ahead of time but gave myself too little time to reflect on the mentoring process and what I could learn, what questions to anticipate from the discussion, and what I could do to help myself and others.

Evidence suggests that this was the ‘best case’ scenario for those who had actually revisited their learning goals and thus taken responsibility for enhancing the value of their experience. They had been asked to include their learning goals as part of their papers both for the session and for their academic work more generally. This innovative aspect of the programme was communicated via e-mail and then left to the reflective efforts of the new scholars to strategise.

Another issue that resulted from the pilot sessions involved ill-fitting matches for two mentors that they responded to very differently. The person with a serious criticism had this to say:

The mentoring discussions would have been more valuable had my new scholars been better matched to my own research interests. I know this is a difficult goal to achieve and we will inevitably end up with students and scholars whose interests do not match particularly well with anybody else in our pool. But, I do think this process of mentoring would work much better if we made a concerted effort to only match students with scholars who hold shared interests. This is a radical idea, especially given the inclusive goal of your programme, but we may need to turn away some scholars and students.

The other mentor who had experienced an ill-fitting match offered a perspective that was at odds with this one. The experience at the conference had sparked memories with his friend from graduate school in which inquiry itself had shaped their conversations, despite the fact that one studied human behaviour and the other, marine biology. He reasoned that the PhD does not mean 'discipline-specific' but rather 'doctor of philosophy' and that although differences exist in the kinds of inquiry disciplines foster, we must create bridges. At the roundtable, he found that the task of mentoring people outside his discipline had facilitated his own professional growth. He was thus challenged to stretch beyond the content of research to engage the foundations of research that he believes are common to all disciplines. Finally, he noted that it was:

Reassuring to have been able to mentor somebody where the process was not tied up with my own discipline-based skill—my session therefore wasn't focused on craft but on inquiry and scholarship, which was the goal of the mentoring programme. We had to work harder to hear each other and to be understood, which made for a strong connection. We were all surprised to have come out of the situation with a high degree of satisfaction.

Two mentees had similarly felt enriched by having had an effective mentor from a discipline other than their own: 'I especially liked the feedback from the mentor that reviewed my paper. Even though she was from a different discipline, the feedback was immensely helpful and it will improve the content of my paper. I found this experience to be extremely valuable.' And, 'The most important thing I learned about mentoring is that you can have a mentor who is *not* in the same field of interest yet whose experiences may be similar, a combination that adds depth and significance to the student's research topic.' Based on this inconclusive evidence, it appears that mentoring teams can coincide across disciplines, which means that the success of a programme is not necessarily dependent on conversations held by those within the same field.

Nevertheless, the criticism about the unsuccessful matching was treated seriously. Not all future participants will necessarily be receptive to the mixed-disciplinarian method that was used for some of the roundtables. The change that has been implemented for Year 2 makes acceptance conditional—matches now require the approval of the assigned mentors and mentees.

Other suggestions for improving the MAW Programme did not embrace a change of the roundtable format. Instead, new scholars (and a few mentors) focused on the need to structure more time with mentors. A social event was recommended as an ideal vehicle for this purpose:

I would have liked more time both in casual and formal settings. After the mentoring session and even today, it seems as if I imagined the whole experience with a well-known academic who had spent personal time with *me*.

It would have been nice to have some more one-on-one, 'face-to-face' time. The only time I actually interacted with my mentor in person was during the roundtable session. I am not faulting her or the programme. We were both very busy during the conference.

Why did so many participants want a social event? They asked for it because they were learning about networking, and social events at conferences are where so much networking takes place. They were telling the organisers that they did not get to experience something that they felt they needed as part of a programme that

focused on mentoring. The recommendation of an informal but organised social event proved invaluable; furthermore, it spurred the decision of the sponsor to allocate the time of an administrative assistant for Year 2 of the programme.

Another suggestion by two mentees underscored the responsibility of mentors and the need for them to 'acknowledge receipt of our papers after they receive them'. The organiser had included this item at the outset in the list of procedures for mentors: however, individuals were self-monitoring. The coordinator intervened in the two situations. However, this had not become a programme issue: the mentors were otherwise considerate in responding within a reasonable time.

Mentees also indicated that 'new scholars could suggest a few names of possible mentors and these people could be contacted'. This recommendation was also incorporated into Year 2 of the programme to attract established scholars who have been 'endorsed' by new scholars.

Last, with the approval of a call for proposals for Year 2 we have met this programme goal while acting on the advice of a mentee, 'Get the word out to other potential new scholars. I wish this had been available when I was a graduate student instead of as first-year faculty.' This certainly hints that the earlier the intervention in fostering effective mentoring, the better.

Discussion

The idea of 'co-mentoring' between mentors and new scholars operated as a strong possibility during the planning of the MAW Programme. But it was thought that the alternative format of the roundtable structure itself would present sufficient challenge, especially in the first year. The mentors' profiles suggested a range in the styles of traditional and progressive mentoring used with students. It was decided that where co-mentoring would occur, this would happen naturally, as it did. However, co-mentoring was encouraged as a way to initiate peer learning between the mentees. For those who exchanged papers as critical friends, this strategy enhanced the conversation at the roundtables and it laid the foundation for ongoing contact.

Inclusiveness framed this programme and its processes. Everyone who qualified was welcome. A drawback of this approach was that a few of the matches were forced. It had been discovered during the matching process that the new scholars' academic interests were somewhat more conservative than the mentors'. As previously indicated, just as more new scholars were interested in issues of technology, more mentors were committed to issues of critical pedagogy and equity. This particular gap in matching raised the question: Are new scholars generally more conservative in their research interests than established scholars and, if so, how will the MAW Programme respond creatively to this situation? Alternatively, might it be that the pilot year of the programme was merely a fluke in this sense? A larger and more open sampling of the mentor—mentee pool will help to illuminate this issue in the future.

As another unresolved issue, we speculate that because the mentoring roundtable was an experimental format there may have been a novelty effect with this first-time experience. Newer, untested formats may be 'back-burner' compared with traditional formats, which may get higher priority in the work of a novice academic. Even with the explanation of the experimental design that many participants found understandable, they may still have been less clear about their responsibilities than a traditional format would have afforded them. The perceived pay-off for traditional and alternative formats may differ. In the traditional session, the goal is often to present a paper and elicit feedback on a work for publication. However, there were probably unanswered questions for the MAW participants, such as: Was the programme going to feed their specific interests and goals? Were they going to experience value at the roundtable sessions? Importantly, would the experience inform scholarly mentoring practices at their universities?

Except for the last question, the others were resolved. The majority of new scholars derived value from having participated in a focused exchange about their work with an established scholar who offered helpful feedback aimed at their learning goals. The mentees also learned from the other new scholar and visitors at their table.

New scholars emerged from the MAW 'training' better prepared to face the academic world and its challenges. They not only gained conceptual and technical knowledge about their own scholarly niche, they also learned about the kinds of mentoring and networking that lead to success. Thus, new scholars in the MAW Programme have had an excellent introduction to what Engstrom (1999) calls the 'norms, expectations, attitudes, and practices of the scholarly community' (p. 265).

The mentors also derived value. They had the opportunity to contribute to a mentoring practice that they considered worthwhile and timely and to the development of new scholars who took their feedback seriously. They also gained by making a pilot mentoring programme that relied on their expertise and generosity an overall success. This effort, in turn, enabled an alternative format within the traditional structures of this major, annual conference to be made available to both new and experienced members. Also, all participants benefited from having received credit in the conference programme for a formal presentation.

The feedback on the questionnaire proved invaluable. The participants identified benefits and problems of the MAW Programme worthy of attention and change. Notably, the new scholars called for a social event focused exclusively on the programme, which is being planned for the 2001 conference. The general membership was invited to the social event in the inaugural year of the programme so that we could make the initiative visible and hence viable.

The data also enabled us to discover four salient themes of new scholar socialisation that could inform either the development or assessment of other mentoring programmes. The implications for the generalisability of our findings need to account for the caveat that the issues we identified were based on available studies (which exclude conference-based, HE mentoring programmes) and on the size of the participant pool.

Recommendations for Programmatic Improvement

Proactive mentoring for new scholars is needed more than ever. The Carnegie Foundation has staked its claim: effective mentoring offers the best preparation for new faculty (Glassick *et al.*, 1997) and, we assume, for those who want to become faculty. In addition to developing mentoring programmes for new scholars in HE institutions, we recommend that extramural settings also be used. The academy does not have a successful track record at formalising mentoring programmes that work well for new scholars who need to 'learn the ropes' of research and inquiry (Mullen & Forbes, 2000; Sorcinelli, 1994). Professional meeting places where academics gather have outlets and resources that can be channelled for this purpose.

We end with a summary of the eight key perspectives obtained from this formative evaluation of a programme that brought together new and established scholars at a conference:

1. Mentoring assistance is needed for new scholars (graduate students and beginning faculty) who lack experience with scholarly inquiry and publication or dissemination of their works.
2. Mentoring can be usefully formalised through extramural venues. This strategy should not serve as a substitute for healthy mentoring in HE institutions; rather, it should function as a form of support that enables neophytes to develop and, ideally, for mentors to derive value.
3. Inclusive reviews of proposals (see points 4 and 5) offer a useful alternative to the competitive review practice that characterises conferences. New scholars generally strain to compete with more experienced scholars for presentation slots through this difficult practice.
4. Good mentor—mentee matches arise from the applicants' profiles that specify research interests (and, for scholars, mentoring experiences), and from verification checks with all participants.
5. The organisational value of inclusiveness must be balanced with practical issues. Aiming for the best mentor—mentee matches possible may not permit everyone a spot in the programme. This qualifier on acceptance must be stipulated early, preferably in a call for proposals.
6. The investment of top leaders who act as sponsors is essential. Innovative programmes need institutional support in order to continue beyond the pilot stage and to grow strong.

7. The participants' experiences should be assessed within the context of the programme objectives. Seek feedback and recommendations for improvement. Share the results with interested leaders (e.g. sponsors) who can assist with the changes and resources needed.
8. Mentoring programmes that support new scholars can serve to redress larger problems involving graduation, employment, retention, and contribution.

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Notes

- [1] The call for papers for Year 2 of the academic mentoring roundtables appeared in a national-level educational journal, on the web site of the organisation, and in the newsletter of the sponsoring division (2000). The requirements for proposal submission by new scholars continue to follow a non-traditional format: name, title, and contact information, type of document, a statement clarifying the intention for the work (e.g. publication and in which field), list of key words describing the work, a three-paragraph description and, for the first time, names of possible mentors (to be used for matching other mentees with mentors).
- [2] We, the authors, founded a special interest group focused on mentoring theory and practice. From 1997±99 we co-chaired this organisation that continues to operate within the auspices of the conference that sponsored the MAW Programme. We have published research on mentoring-based innovative programming within school±university collaboratives and HE contexts. The MAW Programme is a natural extension of our commitment to make new scholar development an explicit focus of organisational reform in HE.
- [3] One instance of the coordinator's insider knowledge involved the feedback of two MAW mentees who claimed that they needed reminders to submit their papers on time to their mentors. In addition to the original message containing the time line with due dates, more reminders had followed. Through the evaluative feedback from the mentors, it was discovered that these two individuals had not forwarded their papers on time (one not at all).
A second instance involved the feedback by a high number of new scholars about their desire for more in-person exposure to their mentors. They felt that the programme would have been enhanced by a social event held at the conference for participants only. The need for social interaction was, in fact, anticipated. A formal presentation had been organised that contained a social component, but the entire conference membership was invited to this panel-luncheon event; it functioned as an open forum for scholarly networks to be formed. Some of the participants overlooked this opportunity, but then it may not have been directly enough aligned with the personal needs for contact that had emerged for them.

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