

MENTORING OUR STUDENTS AND FACULTY

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ABSTRACT

There is a widely held belief in business and academia that most who are successful, and virtually all who are extraordinarily successful, achieved that success with the aid of at least one mentor. Someone took a personal interest and guided, sponsored, advised, encouraged, challenged, or in other meaningful ways facilitated their success. As educators we are all in a position to mentor. Students and junior faculty both need and desire personal attention. Though most faculty have had mentors, many do not know exactly what it means to be a mentor and may not recognize or make the most of opportunities to engage in mentoring activities.

Many models of mentoring exist in business and academia, ranging from informal to highly structured, short-term to continuing, issue-focused to general, and points between (Chao et al. 1992; Gunn 1995). Some involve spontaneous relationships while others are arranged through formal matching programs. Though traditional views emphasize ongoing relationships, much fruitful mentoring also occurs within relationships that are shorter-term. While faculty to student mentoring is traditionally envisioned as occurring outside the classroom, many faculty engage in mentoring activities within their classrooms. Further, those teaching large numbers of students, though unable to mentor most in the traditional sense, nevertheless may activate a mentoring mindset and serve as a mentor through caring and committed, though brief, interactions.

However we chose to define mentoring, a mentor helps someone learn things he or she would have learned less well, more slowly, or not at all if left alone. The need for mentoring clearly exists. AACSB requires faculty development programs, and mentoring is a viable means of socializing junior faculty. Students faced with selecting majors, performing academically, and launching careers are almost always in need of guidance. Further, many face challenges coming from economically or socially disadvantaged

backgrounds, as first-generation college students, or as members of underrepresented groups. Whatever the specific situations, students and junior faculty face unfamiliar and uncomfortable expectations within which they fervently hope to succeed. It is during such times that mentoring can play a key role.

As well as benefiting the protégé, mentoring benefits the mentor (Bell 2000). While the mentor offers the protégé the benefit of his or her experiences, perspectives, and specialized knowledge, mentored students and junior faculty bring with them fresh ideas, creativity, initiative, current knowledge and skills, and a passion to succeed that offers renewal to the mentor. Thus, mentoring benefits both parties by offering a reciprocal transfer of skills and experience (Gunn 1995; Kaye and Scheef 2000).

Barbara Gross discussed mentoring undergraduate students and related pedagogy issues. Deborah Cours described her perspective on the needs of junior faculty. Shirley Stretch-Stephenson focused on how senior faculty can mentor junior faculty and students. Hal Kassarjian discussed how researchers are mentored through thesis supervision, the editorial review process, and the recruiting process for their first academic position. Rika Houston discussed issues of diversity impacting minority students and junior faculty.

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