

MENTORING PROGRAMS IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines mentoring programs in business schools. A national sample of 154 universities and colleges were surveyed by phone between April and June 1996 to determine the proportion of schools with mentoring programs, and the structure of such programs. Forty-one states, including the District of Columbia, are represented in the study. The sample includes both public and private, as well as AACSB accredited and unaccredited colleges and universities.

In spite of the attention the subject of mentorship has received in business and academic circles, less than half (41%) of the colleges and universities contacted indicated their university program had mentoring programs for business students. Another 7% of the schools contacted indicated they intended to develop a mentoring program in the next year or they had informal mentoring programs. The proportion of colleges and universities with mentoring programs in the West was lower than the national average. In all the schools contacted, the mentoring program was organized by the career development center, rather than the business school.

Business faculty are usually not involved in mentoring programs. In fact, only 28% of the colleges and universities surveyed indicated they had some faculty involved in their mentoring programs. It is noteworthy that among the schools indicating faculty participation in such programs, only 11% compensated faculty either in terms of load reduction or payment.

Most mentors are alumni or business leaders who volunteer their services. The activities of mentors are significant. They range from providing career advice, having students shadow them in the workplace, having lunch or dinner with the student, to having the

student stay at their home for a weekend or longer. Most schools (83%), however, provide no real training for mentors, other than a basic description of the program. Similarly, the majority of schools (57%) did not evaluate either the mentors or the mentees, while another 11% of the schools only had informal evaluations filled out by the students and/or the mentors.

This research raises some important questions for business faculty. If a mentoring program is not available at a college or university, who should take the initiative to develop such a program? What should be the involvement of business faculty in such programs given that most universities do not compensate or reward faculty for being mentors? Finally, if one's college or university does not offer a mentoring program, what can individual marketing faculty do to enhance the professional development of their students without expending large amounts of time and effort? The paper includes some recommendations for using outside resources to aid in the professional development of marketing students.