Formal Mentor Models

The following briefly addresses common questions on formal mentoring, describes existing mentor models, and provides suggestions for choosing a model to use. For more detailed information, contact ADAPP-ADVANCE at 353-8818 or www.adapp-advance.msu.edu.

Q: What is formal mentoring?
A: Formal mentoring is when one or more mentors are intentionally assigned to a mentee and assume responsibility for facilitating the professional development of the mentee through activities such as providing information, advice, encouragement, and connections to other mentors, colleagues and professional networks. It is voluntary and can lead to a two-way, mutually beneficial relationship. No one mentor can fulfill all of a mentee’s needs. Mentees have a responsibility to maximize, build on and supplement the mentor/mentee relationship with other mentors and career development activities.

Q: Isn’t having a robust informal mentor network sufficient?
A: Informal mentoring is critically important to career satisfaction and success. Formal mentoring is not meant to replace informal mentoring but to supplement and strengthen it. Evidence clearly indicates that formal mentoring makes a positive difference in achieving career success. It differs from informal mentoring in several important ways: it is intentional; participants are held accountable; it is based on best practices to promote a high-quality, productive relationship; and it is available to all faculty so that bias and unequal access, whether intended or unintended, is minimized.

Q: What is the best model of mentoring to use?
A: The traditional model is the mentor/mentee dyad with the mentor being either from within or outside the unit. However, current wisdom suggests that it is much more productive to have multiple mentors. Even if there is one primary formal mentor, mentors and mentees are both encouraged to build on and supplement this relationship with other mentors and career development activities. The model chosen depends on the needs and resources of the individual faculty member, unit and college. The first step is to conduct an assessment of existing needs, resources, and challenges at the unit or mentor/mentee level. The ADAPP-Advance team and the Office of Faculty & Organizational Development can provide guidance and tools on how to go through this process. In addition, each college has a college-appointed Faculty Excellence Advocate (FEA). The FEAs are available as a resource for information related to the ADAPP-Advance goals including mentoring.

Examples of Formal Mentor Models
Once an assessment has been completed, a mentor model can be chosen or developed that meets the needs of a specific unit or individual. The list below includes traditional approaches as well as models developed by other institutions that pulled strategies from multiple sources to create a model appropriate to their needs and context. Some models
use different terms such as protégée versus mentee and may distinguish mentoring from specific roles such as advising. However, all of these models share the goal of facilitating the professional development of mentees.

**Intentional “Informal Mentoring”**

Intentional “Informal Mentoring” involves overtly recognizing and supporting ways in which colleagues within a unit or professional network can serve as unassigned mentors [individually or collectively] and facilitate personal and professional development of its members. It recognizes that mentors are important and play different, critical roles at different times including that of communicator, advisor, coach, broker, advocate, and often a combination of each of these.

**Mentor/Mentee Dyad**

This traditional top-down model involves assigning a single senior faculty member to mentor an early career faculty member. The mentor may be from within or outside the unit. If the mentor is from within, serious attention should be paid to the issue of confidentiality and potential for conflict of interest. Ideally, mentors would not serve on a mentee’s review committee. If it is unavoidable, the mentee should be clearly informed of the mentor’s dual role. The extent to which the mentor will be reporting to the committee should be explicitly stated at the first meeting. This will guide the nature of the mentor/mentee relationship. As multiple mentors are now recommended, both mentors and mentees should proactively promote supplementing the dyad with additional career development activities and by establishing a “mentor network” of other mentors [formal and informal] and drawing upon the different strengths of each.

**One-to-One Mentoring** – Brown University

This model differs slightly from the one-on-one mentor/mentee dyad. It links new tenure system faculty with tenured faculty mentors from within the same division/area but outside the mentee’s department. This policy of cross-departmental matches was developed specifically to avoid potential conflicts of interest and allows early career faculty to speak more candidly with advisors who are not directly involved in their tenure review process. For more information on Brown’s model and resources, visit [http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Provost/Advance/mentoring_guide.pdf](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Provost/Advance/mentoring_guide.pdf)

**Multiple Mentors**

If possible, it is recommended that a mentee have multiple formal mentors for different roles, with at least one that doesn’t serve on the review committee. One mentor may be external to the department, college, even university and would therefore not have a conflict of interest. One may be assigned to help advance teaching skills, another for research skills. Mentees should build upon their formal mentor(s), establish a “mentoring network” and draw upon the different strengths of each.

**“Mentoring Networks”**

This concept is similar to multiple mentors but implies that consideration is given to strategically establishing a diverse network of mentors [formal and informal] who may be drawn from many places [internal and external] and who serve in different roles so that multiple needs are met. It is sometimes referred to as a “constellation of mentors”.

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**Mutual Mentoring** – University of Massachusetts-Amherst

The mutual mentoring model is distinct in that it encourages the development of a broader, more flexible network of support to meet the needs of early- and mid-career faculty. It is based on the belief that all members of the academic community have something to teach and learn from each other. Faculty are encouraged to build a network of support consisting of a variety of mentoring “partners” including peers, near-peers, tenured faculty, chairs, administrators, external mentors, librarians, writing coaches and so forth. It is faculty driven with each faculty member mapping out their own individual plan that accommodates personal needs and preferences for types of contacts [one-on-one, small group, team or several types to meet different needs]. The faculty member is the primary agent of their own career development. Mentor networks are supplemented by campus wide programs and workshops, networking events, and micro and team grants. Examples of different types of networks that faculty members have developed as well as guidelines, to-do lists, and other resources are available at [http://www.umass.edu/ofd/mentoring/index.html](http://www.umass.edu/ofd/mentoring/index.html)

**Career Advising** – University of Michigan

The term “career advising” is used instead of mentoring to avoid confusion with the mentoring model used in graduate school that typically involves a one-on-one advisor/advisee relationship. However, the goals and strategies are consistent with the concept of faculty mentoring. Career advising focuses on facilitating career success: obtaining tenure and career advancement and promotion through achievements in scholarship, external funding, teaching, and/or service. It rests on the premise that no one advisor can meet all of a faculty member’s needs and advising can take many different forms and involve many kinds of interactions and relationships including with peers. It should be geared to the developmental needs of the individual faculty member. Examples of types of career advising include the traditional one-on-one model and group, zone, or peer advising. For details on each of these models, visit [http://www.advance.rackham.umich.edu/career%20advising.pdf](http://www.advance.rackham.umich.edu/career%20advising.pdf)

**Peer Mentoring**

Peer mentoring is generally done across departments, units and disciplines. The value of this strategy includes building relationships among diverse faculty members, creating opportunities for collaboration on research projects, and developing camaraderie among members that might not otherwise exist. It can be done one-on-one between experienced and new faculty, within groups, or through electronic communication. The following link is to a student peer mentoring program but the structure and strategies are equally relevant to faculty. [http://www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/peermentoring.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/peermentoring.pdf). Another resource is at [http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/ctl/support/peermentoring.html](http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/ctl/support/peermentoring.html).

**Create Your Own Model and Call it What You Want**

Consider the different strategies used in existing models. Pull out those that are most relevant to a specific unit or individual. Create a hybrid model that is a good fit with identified needs, challenges, and available resources. Pilot it and evaluate its impact on agreed upon measures of productivity and satisfaction.
Virtual Mentoring or E-Mentoring

Virtual mentoring relationships are developed and/or maintained through online mediums. For example, they may be developed in person and then maintained through email as in the case of meeting a national expert at a conference who agrees to provide continued advising via email. Others relationships may begin with email or Facebook exchanges that eventually lead to meeting in person. The mentoring may exist entirely through electronic communication. Advantages to e-mentoring include making it possible to connect nationally and internationally with field experts, senior faculty, and peers. It multiplies the number and diversity of mentors available to the mentee. A major online service for locating mentors and developing one-on-one guided mentoring relationships is the MentorNet, a free, membership network for women in Engineering and Science that matches students, post-docs, and early-career researchers across universities and within industry - [http://mentornet.net/](http://mentornet.net/). Another e-network worth checking out is Peer Resources - [http://www.peer.ca/peer.html](http://www.peer.ca/peer.html). It is a fee-based membership network but if joining is not an option, significant information is still available to non-members from their home-page. Tele-Mentoring over the Net is an e-network that is sponsored by the International Education and Resource Network. Although this site is aimed at students, teachers, and pre-service teachers in the schools, many links and examples of tele-mentoring projects can have applications in higher education - [http://www.iearn.org/circles/mentors.html](http://www.iearn.org/circles/mentors.html). The Society for the Teaching of Psychology Mentoring Service is an e-mentorship site with names, schools, telephone numbers, and email addresses of several dozen psychology faculty willing to communicate with colleagues over topics, methods, issues, and specific courses in Psychology - [http://teachpsych.org/otrp/mentoring/index.php](http://teachpsych.org/otrp/mentoring/index.php).

Peer Resources: A Comprehensive List of Mentor Programs

This is a list of thousands of mentor programs with brief descriptions of their mentor model. Even scanning the list can provide a good sense of the range of mentor models that exist and ideas for models that may be a good fit with a unit’s needs. The list is available to non-members and is continually updated. Specific contact information is available only to members but may be found through internet research. The listings are organized by setting and can be searched by geographic location or key words. There is a college/university section but programs in other categories may be useful as well. [http://www.mentors.ca/mentorprograms.html](http://www.mentors.ca/mentorprograms.html)