Formal Mentor Programs in Academic Settings
Best Practices for Leaders

The “best” formal mentoring program is one that is designed to meet the needs of an individual college or unit. Different models exist and deciding which model is best requires aligning the unit’s particular needs, goals and available resources. However, there is general agreement in the literature that successful formal mentor programs share the following key attributes:

- **Top-level Sponsorship**
  - College-level expectations and leadership through strategic plan, resources, and communications
  - College-level person appointed to oversee and facilitate mentor related programming
  - College-level support in form of centralized services for efficiency, e.g. arrange orientations, organize workshops that all units can utilize, locate mentors
  - Chair/director level support and leadership at unit-level through integrating mentoring activities into strategic plan so that it becomes part of the way in which the unit does business, budget, dedicated resources, approval of time necessary to participate in the program, e.g. meet with mentor/mentee, attend workshops, etc.
  - Unit-level person appointed to coordinate and champion program as part of job description

- A formal program designed by the individual college/unit, based on determination of needs, preferred model (or variations), and unit strengths and constraints. Multiple mentors ideal.

- Clearly identified and communicated program policies, goals, and expectations that clarify role of mentors/mentees, role of mentor in RPT, duration of match (e.g., one year that can be renewed if mentor/mentee agrees), mentoring program model, confidentiality, mentor selection process, process for changing mentors, etc.
  - Expectation for ongoing, regular meetings [mentoring won’t happen if people aren’t meeting]

- Clear and effective process for identifying and matching Mentors and Mentees
  - Program inclusiveness

- Training and Orientation for Mentors/Mentees to clarify program goals, expectations and policies

- Recognition for active participants, both Mentors and Mentees

“ADAPP-ADVANCE TIP” topics. For more information, please visit the ADAPP-ADVANCE Project website, [www.adapp-advance.msu.edu](http://www.adapp-advance.msu.edu), or contact us via e-mail: adapp@msu.edu. ADAPP-ADVANCE is supported, in part, by the National Science Foundation (Award 0811205). *Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.*
- Luncheons, recognition dinner, monetary awards, small gifts or gift certificates, story in newsletter, feature spot on unit/college website, etc.
- Recognition for mentors, e.g. service to the department

- Evaluation plan to assess attainment of goals, effectiveness of processes, and measurable outcomes consisting of both formative and summative evaluations