Mentoring

The only thing worse than no mentoring is bad mentoring

There is a literature on this, all of which is available from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). Select foundational works include:

- W. Brad Johnson. 2016. *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, 2d Ed. Rutledge.
  - Fairly comprehensive. Emphasizes the "how to" of mentoring and includes a focus on mentoring within and across different groups and identities.
- Sorcinelli and Yun:
  - "Finding a Mentor",
  - "From Mentoring to Mentoring Networks", and
  - "When Mentoring is the Medium"
    - Quick and easy, with an emphasis on high-impact mentoring strategies that move beyond the binary.

What works, what doesn't
What works: well-designed programs and well-trained mentors.
What doesn't: basic binaries without structure, intentionality, chemistry, and feedback.

How CETL can help
- *The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has vast experience in designing and developing successful mentoring programs at the individual, departmental, college, and university levels.*
- *This experience reflects and supports original research on mentoring, communities of practice for academic leaders, and learning communities for faculty.*
- *CETL's Director provides 1:1 and group mentoring for faculty and administrators seeking to enhance the quality of mentoring within and across differences.*

Mentoring Toolkit

Good mentoring: The Basics
- The burden should not be on the junior faculty member.
- Mentoring works best when:
    - It is intentional --when time is taken to develop, implement, and refine practices;
    - There is buy-in –not only on the value of mentoring but on the practice itself;
    - It innovates on and beyond traditional practices (ie, the "junior-senior" model);
    - It is plural –consider more than one mentor;
    - It is customizable –one size does not fit all;
    - Faculty (mentors and mentees) who might not typically interact have an opportunity to do so;
        - For examples: methods mentors, teaching mentors, identity mentors;
    - It has a game plan for academic success –a path to tenure, for example— and other factors affecting "success";
    - It challenges and inspires;
    - It blends formal and informal practices and interactions;
    - Mentors learn how to mentor and serve as peer mentors to one another.

Formal and Informal Dynamics:
- **Formal mentoring**:
    - *At its best,* it provides a path to success, helps remove or navigate obstacles, marshals knowledge and experience of policies and practices to advance a mentee's career, provides clear feedback and follow-through.
    - *At its worst*, it features the heroic journey and tends to be hierarchical and so technical and goal-oriented that it is mechanistic, not humanistic –it forgets that there is a person involved.
- **Informal mentoring:**
    - *At its best*, there is a bond, trust, a "safe place", knowledge of the person, not necessarily office-bound.
    - *At its worst*, it's "the buddy system", more of a friend than a mentor, lack of vision, lack of preparation and feedback, inability to advocate, perception of preferential treatment, impotent.
- Good mentoring balances formal and informal relationships with an explicit acknowledgment of differences including (but not limited to) discipline, rank, race, ethnicity, gender, and identity.

Mentoring Across Differences

Mentoring across differences requires an explicit acknowledgment of difference, of operative assumptions, of "the other side".

- When mentoring across differences, mentors should:
    - **Examine** assumptions and how they may influence the mentoring relationships;
    - **Consider** identity-based similarities and differences in the context of the mentor-mentee relationship;
    - **Discuss** identity assumptions and dimensions up-front and often.
        - Don't quietly assume; discuss.

To mentor effectively, mentors should:

- Have a strong command of departmental, college, and university policies;
- Have continuing faculty development support (see CETL and the VP for Faculty);
    - This not only advances a culture on campus but the growth, development, and enrichment of the mentors themselves;
- Have an opportunity to work with a wide and diverse variety of mentees;
- Provide clear and meaningful feedback and advice;
- Collaborate with action plans and new behaviors
    - This should be a joint endeavor, mutually agreed upon by the mentor, mentee, and potentially the department chairperson;
        - Remember: when experiments are undertaken, the stakes are high;
- Model behavior appropriate to formal and informal sessions;
- Provide guidance and advocacy;
- Know the limits of their knowledge and influence;
- Look for signs of a failed relationship and seek to solve them immediately and collaboratively.

Abide by Best Practices:

1. *Be aware of your assumptions...and theirs*
2. *Discuss them*
3. *Be mindful of the lives, identities, experiences, and career goals of mentees*
4. *Address differences openly and appropriately*
5. *Be organized and on-task*
6. *Provide meaningful feedback*

Confidentiality

A lot of mentoring is highly confidential –know the risks and think about assumptions involving:

- Closed doors
- Off campus meeting
- Informal relationships
- Perceptions
- The quality and context of your advice

Effective Feedback

- Make feedback an integral part of the mentoring relationship.
- Remember: feedback is a loop --you give, you get, and you do something with it.
- Informal feedback is important but hard to track; formal feedback –with the expectation of a response—is more helpful.
- Be positive but honest.
- Include data when possible.
- Provide feedback regularly and frequently –and keep a record of it.
- Make sure both parties are on the same page of the script regarding feedback and action plans.
- Develop and then assess option maps and academic/career "growth charts".

Successful Models are:

- Consensual
- Developmental
- Inclusive
- Based on trust
- Goal-oriented
- Flexible
- Mutually beneficial/enriching
- Sustainable
- Often plural
- Not always hierarchical

Options Include:

- Near-peer mentoring
- Mutual mentoring
- Constellation mentoring
- Topical/skills- and goals-based mentoring

CETL is here to help you develop and implement successful mentoring programs, especially for "mentoring across difference"