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When Mentoring is the Medium: Lessons Learned from a Faculty Development Initiative

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Chapter 19

When Mentoring Is the Medium

Lessons Learned from a Faculty Development Initiative

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Campuses across the country are investing considerable time, effort, and expense to replenish their faculty ranks with a new generation of scholars. How can mentoring help these new faculty juggle the many demands of surviving and thriving in academia? And how can institutions frame mentoring as a broader faculty development initiative in which faculty at all stages of the academic career can teach and learn from each other? This chapter addresses these questions by sharing the goals, design, and lessons learned from the Mutual Mentoring Initiative at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Efforts to build, diversify, and better prepare the future professoriate have increased significantly during the past two decades. Programs for talented undergraduate and graduate students, such as the Institute for the Recruitment of Teachers, the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program, the Leadership Alliance, the National Science Foundation's Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate, and the Preparing Future Faculty program, have greatly enriched and diversified the pool of candidates electing graduate studies and careers in academia.

Despite these advances, however, the success of individual candidates as new faculty depends largely on the level of support they receive at their hiring institutions, which can vary dramatically (Ashburn, 2007). Since the mid-1980s, research on new faculty has been conducted across a variety of disciplines and institutional types, using a range of methodological approaches (Boice, 1992; Fink, 1984; Menges, 1999; Olsen & Crawford, 1998; Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992; Reynolds, 1992; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000; Solem & Foote, 2004; Sorcinelli, 1988; Tierney and Bensimon, 1996; Trower, 2005; Whitt, 1991). Findings consistently indicate that many new faculty members (commonly defined in the literature as faculty in their pre-tenure years) experience a number of significant stressors as they seek to establish themselves. Women and faculty of color, in particular, encounter many barriers that can negatively affect their productivity and career advancement. These barriers include managing expectations for performance, particularly the tenure process, finding collegiality and community, and creating balance between professional roles, particularly teaching and research, and also between work and family life.

Like many institutions of higher education, the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass Amherst) is actively recruiting new and underrepresented faculty with the goal of enlarging its faculty ranks to better meet the needs of its growing student population. In 2006, the provost and senior vice chancellor of academic affairs charged our unit—the Office of Faculty Development (OFD)—with creating a campuswide mentoring program to better support, develop, and retain these new hires. This chapter describes what we experienced and learned during the needs assessment and pilot phase of this program and how it came to evolve into a broader faculty development initiative.

The Needs Assessment

In response to the provost's charge, we decided to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment in order to better understand "the state of mentoring" on our campus. The goals of this needs analysis were threefold:

1. To build a knowledge database of the campus's existing mentoring activities and programs

2. To solicit feedback on the challenges experienced by our new and underrepresented faculty from individuals in a wide variety of departmental, school or college, interdisciplinary, and administrative contexts
3. To encourage faculty, administrators, and staff to imagine the "ideal" features of a campuswide mentoring program designed to help address these challenges

During the six-month needs assessment period, we conducted one-on-one, small-group, and focus-group interviews of over 150 new and underrepresented faculty, mid- to senior-career faculty, department chairs, deans, campus service providers, and all major councils and committees of the Faculty Senate and faculty union. We also conducted an online survey of pre-tenure faculty, which yielded responses from 177 participants (for a return rate of approximately 73 percent). One of the key things that we learned from the needs assessment was that our pre-tenure faculty—with minimal variances across gender, race or ethnicity, and discipline—experienced a number of common challenges, which fell into the following categories:

1. *Getting started:* understanding the academic culture of departments, schools or colleges, and the institution; identifying resources to support research and teaching; creating a trusted network of junior and senior colleagues
2. *Excelling at teaching and research:* learning about best practices and resources for course design, assignments, grading, technology, and teaching strategies; finding support for developing a research and writing plan; identifying sources of internal and external funding; soliciting feedback on manuscripts and grant proposals
3. *Navigating the tenure track:* developing a better understanding of the specific steps of the tenure process; learning about the criteria for evaluating research and teaching performance; finding support for developing the tenure dossier; soliciting feedback from department chairs and other relevant administrators on the quality and quantity of work through the annual faculty review
4. *Creating work-life balance:* prioritizing and balancing teaching, research, and service; finding support for goal setting;

developing time management skills; attending to quality-of-life issues such as dual careers, child care, and affordable housing

5. *Developing professional networks:* establishing substantive, career-enhancing relationships with faculty who share similar interests in research and teaching, both on campus and off

Given the range of challenges experienced by our new and underrepresented faculty, which closely mirrored those found in the literature, we knew that the structure of our program, as well as the form of mentoring that it encouraged, had to be flexible, responsive, and faculty-driven in order to accommodate the many unique cultural and disciplinary differences among our university's sixty-one departments and ten schools and colleges.

The Pilot Phase

From our research, we were aware that mentoring had long been acknowledged as one of the few common characteristics of a successful faculty career, particularly for women and faculty of color. Yet the most common form of mentoring that we discovered in the literature was a "traditional model," which was defined by a top-down, one-on-one relationship between an experienced faculty member who guided and supported the career development of a new or underrepresented faculty member (see Figure 19.1).

**Figure 19.1. Traditional Mentoring Model**
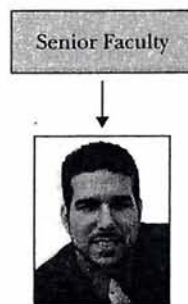
New and underrepresented faculty

Recent literature, however, documents the emergence of new, more flexible approaches to mentoring in which new and early-career faculty worked with "multiple mentors" (de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004), "constellations" of mentors (van Emmerik, 2004), "networks" of mentors (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005), or a "portfolio" of mentors who addressed a variety of career competencies (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Higgins & Kram, 2001). We opted for, and optimized, a network-based model of support titled Mutual Mentoring, which encourages new and underrepresented faculty to develop networks of "mentoring partners" in nonhierarchical, collaborative, and cross-cultural partnerships. The Mutual Mentoring model features five key characteristics (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007; Yun & Sorcinelli, 2007):

1. Mentoring partnerships with a wide variety of individuals, including peers, near peers, tenured faculty, chairs, administrators, librarians, and students
2. Mentoring approaches that accommodate the partners' personal, cultural, and professional preferences for contact (for example, one-on-one, small group, group, or online)
3. Partnerships that focus on specific areas(s) of experience and expertise, rather than generalized, "one-size-fits-all" knowledge
4. Benefits to not only the person traditionally known as the "protégé" or "mentee" but also the person traditionally known as the "mentor" (as the bi-directional arrows in Figure 19.2 illustrate)
5. Perhaps most important, a sense of empowerment in which new and underrepresented faculty are not seen or treated solely as the recipients of mentoring but as agents in their own career development

Having arrived at this model and its key characteristics in consultation with our needs assessment participants, our challenge was to determine a programmatic structure that would encourage its adoption across the campus. Given our concern that mentoring based on hierarchies would not meet the needs of our diverse faculty, it seemed incongruous to impose Mutual Mentoring "from above." Therefore, we turned to the idea of

Figure 19.2. Mutual Mentoring Model
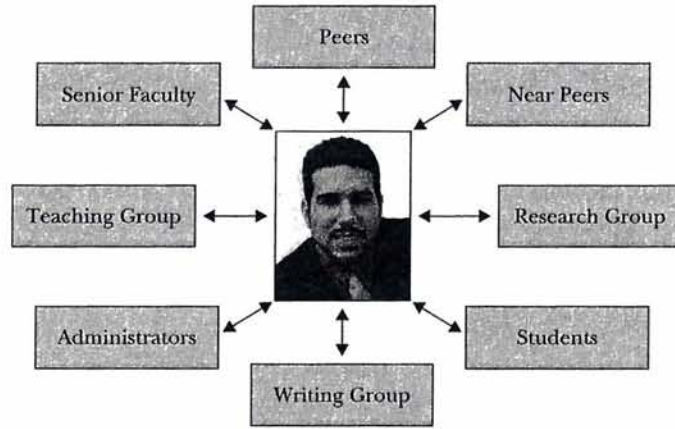
competitively awarding mentoring grants to encourage faculty to develop Mutual Mentoring-based projects that addressed their unique departmental, interdisciplinary, or school-college contexts. In doing so, we were "mentored" by colleagues from the Center for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Southern California, who had created a mentoring grant program two years earlier for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. We also drew on our own experiences in planning and implementing departmental and interdisciplinary faculty development programs (List & Sorcinelli, 2007; Ouellett & Sorcinelli, 1995; Shih and Sorcinelli, 2007; Sorcinelli, 2004).

During the nine-month pilot phase, we awarded five Mutual Mentoring pilot grants to the following departmental and interdisciplinary teams: the Anthropology Department, "Blacklist" (a self-named interdisciplinary network for female faculty of color), the History Department, the Psychology Department, and the Women's Studies Department. The members of these pilot grant teams designed their own Mutual Mentoring-based projects to address specific areas of interest and concern for their new and underrepresented faculty. Seventy-three faculty members participated in these projects (60 percent faculty of color and 82 percent women), and the range of structures, priorities, and topics addressed, as outlined next and in Table 19.1, attests to the flexibility of the Mutual Mentoring model.

Table 19.1. Summary of Mutual Mentoring Pilot Grant Projects

Department or Pilot Project Name	Pilot Project Leader(s)	Key Highlights of the Pilot Project	Funds Primarily Spent on	Number of Participants	Number of Faculty of Color Participants	Number of Female Participants
Anthropology Department	Department Chair	One-on-one mentoring with department chair; group mentoring (including Five Colleges) organized by junior faculty; alumnae and alumni mentoring initiative at professional association conference	Travel grants for junior faculty to attend national conference, reception costs, regular meetings throughout the semester	8	2	4
Blacklist	1 Assistant Professor & 1 Associate Professor	Interdisciplinary mentoring among female faculty of color at various stages of the academic career, including faculty from UMass Amherst and the Five Colleges	Regular meetings throughout the semester, travel grants to present research, post-conference debriefing meetings to discuss effective techniques for professional	26	26	26

Table 19.1. Summary of Mutual Mentoring Pilot Grant Projects (*Continued*)

Department or Pilot Project Name	Pilot Project Leader(s)	Key Highlights of the Pilot Project	Funds Primarily Spent on	Number of Participants	Number of Faculty of Color Participants	Number of Female Participants
History Department	Department Chair	Group mentoring initiative featuring two specialization field-based mentoring partners for each new faculty member (one in the same field, the other with similar research methods) plus one "go-to" person for issues not covered by the field-based partners	Regular meetings throughout the semester, modest stipends for mentoring partners	17	3	10
Psychology Department	Tenured Faculty Member/ Associate Dean of the College	Group mentoring initiative featuring two mentoring partners at different stages of the academic career for each new faculty member (one early career and one tenured)	Regular meetings throughout the semester, stipends for mentoring partners to meet independently and in small mentoring groups	10	2	8
Women's Studies Department at UMass Amherst & Bennett College	Department Chairs (2)	Cross-institutional mentoring initiative focused on creating shared research and teaching projects between the Women's Studies Departments at UMass Amherst and Bennett College	Travel to/from Washington, D.C. and accommodations for planning conference participants; long-distance communication during the semester (postage, telephone)	12	9	11
			Totals:	73	42 (58%)	59 (81%)

Anthropology Department

The Anthropology Department assigned one formal mentoring partner to each of its new faculty members. These partners met one-on-one on an as-needed basis. In addition, the new faculty came together as a peer cohort five times a year for discussion-based lunch meetings, the topics of which were chosen by the new faculty. The department also used its pilot grant to offset a portion of the travel costs for the new faculty to attend the national conference of the American Anthropological Association, where they hosted a Mutual Mentoring reception for all alums of the department, thereby establishing important mentoring partnerships with alumnae and alumni anthropologists in related fields.

Blacklist

The members of Blacklist organized themselves as an interdisciplinary mentoring network for female faculty of color at a variety of career levels (assistant, associate, and full professors). The goal of this group was to support and retain female faculty of color through regular meetings of the network. The members brainstormed ways to overcome challenges in and outside of the classroom, created a travel grant program for members to present their scholarly work at conferences and return to the group to discuss tips and strategies for networking, and served as an important source of professional and social support for each other.

History Department

The History Department assigned two mentoring partners to all pre-tenure faculty (one mentoring partner in a similar geographical or subject field and another with a similar methodological or theoretical research approach). The mentoring partners met four times over the course of the pilot period in meetings organized around issues of orientation, research, teaching, and preparing for tenure. The department provided modest stipends for the mentoring partners and also conducted two needs assessments to ensure that the mentoring efforts were responsive to the needs and concerns of early career faculty.

Psychology Department

The Psychology Department implemented a Group Mentoring Initiative (GMI) in which all new psychology faculty were paired with two mentoring partners, one at the early or midcareer stage and one at a later career stage. The GMI met formally six times over the course of the pilot period in facilitated, topically driven group meetings on issues of research, teaching, and tenure. In addition, the new faculty met individually or in small groups with their mentoring partners to discuss issues of specialized interest and were provided with modest stipends to offset the costs of getting together.

Women's Studies Department

The Department of Women's Studies created an inter-institutional Mutual Mentoring project with the Department of Africana Women's Studies at Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina. The purpose of doing so was to create a supportive and productive alliance between an established women's studies program at a large public university in the Northeast and a new program at a small, religiously affiliated historically black college in the South. The departments organized a planning conference in Washington, D.C., where they developed teaching modules and team-taught courses and other programs to help build on the teaching and research strengths of their respective faculty.

Mentoring as Faculty Development

At the outset of the pilot phase, our intent was to develop a single program that competitively awarded grants to support faculty-driven mentoring projects based on the Mutual Mentoring model. However, based on the many lessons learned from our faculty, pilot phase participants, and external consultants, what evolved was a significantly broader faculty development initiative, characterized by a multitiered, multiprogram framework with self-selected points of entry at four key levels (individual, department/school/college/interdisciplinary, campuswide, and inter-institutional). With a three-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and additional support from our provost's

office, this initiative (now known as the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative) formally launched in the fall of 2007. It is now made up of the following:

The Mellon Mutual Mentoring (M³) Grant Program

Similar to the grants that we distributed during the pilot phase, M³ Grants are *team mentoring grants* that support faculty-driven, context-sensitive Mutual Mentoring projects based at the departmental, school-college, or interdisciplinary levels. In recognition of the many new and underrepresented faculty who mentored us about the areas in which they most needed support, we designated their top five categories of challenges as Priority Mentoring Areas. All applications for the M³ Grant Program must clearly indicate how the proposed project will help new and underrepresented faculty address one or more Priority Mentoring Areas, which include 1) getting started, 2) excelling in research and teaching, 3) preparing for tenure, 4) balancing work-life, and 5) building professional networks.

In addition to the types of mentoring projects developed during the pilot phase, other examples of M³ Grant-eligible activities include creating an interdisciplinary mentoring network within a particular school or college, establishing a research mentoring program that connects new and early career faculty with peers or senior faculty off-campus as mentoring partners, building a special interest roundtable of faculty across the Five Colleges, and organizing a work-life mentoring series for dual-career couples. Currently, the OFD awards up to ten M³ Grants per academic year.

The Mellon Mutual Mentoring Micro-Grant (M⁴) Program

M⁴ Grants are *individual mentoring grants*, designed to encourage new and underrepresented faculty to identify desirable areas for professional growth and opportunity, and to develop the necessary mentoring relationships to make such changes possible.

Initially, we did not envision creating a program of small seed grants awarded directly to individual faculty; however, during the needs assessment and pilot phase, the only consistently negative

feedback that we received about the team grant program was that it might "shut out" faculty who wished to develop a mentoring network, but whose departments, schools or colleges, or interdisciplinary groups did not apply for or receive a grant. This was particularly troubling feedback, as it related to women and faculty of color, especially those who belonged to departments or schools or colleges that did not recognize a need for mentoring.

The M⁴ Program encourages new and underrepresented pretenure faculty members to build mentoring networks around self-selected topics of interest, such as teaching, research, tenure, or work-life balance. Examples of M⁴ Grant-eligible activities include organizing on-campus meetings of faculty to come together around a particular issue, such as research interests, effective teaching, tenure prep, work-life balance; creating a faculty writing group to peer review manuscripts or tenure dossier components; sharing travel expenses to copresent with a mentoring partner (or partners) at a professional conference; and developing faculty colloquia on or off campus.

One of our key considerations in designing this micro-grant program was to encourage new and underrepresented faculty to be proactive and intentional about their professional development—two factors that research has proven to be necessary to achieve successful faculty mentoring (Haring, 2006). The M⁴ Program also eliminated the department or school or college as the only point of entry to a Mutual Mentoring grant. Currently, the OFD awards up to fifteen M⁴ Grants per academic year.

The Mellon Five College (M⁵) Network

UMass Amherst is part of a local consortium of colleges and universities called the Five Colleges, which includes Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, and Smith College. Given the physical proximity of these institutions, as well as our faculty's desire to network with their peers at nearby campuses, we created a vehicle for bringing them together socially, as well as around shared topics of professional interest. This proved to be particularly important for new and underrepresented faculty from departments at UMass Amherst who lacked peers at the

same career stage or peers with similar disciplinary specialization or research methods.

The M⁵ Network now hosts several Five College-wide events to encourage the development of social connections, scholarly networks, and Mutual Mentoring partnerships among faculty across the Five Colleges, especially new and underrepresented faculty and joint appointees, who teach at two or more participating schools within the consortium. Networking events include an autumn welcoming reception for new faculty from the five campuses, as well as workshops on topics of interest across campuses, such as time management for pre-tenure faculty.

Mutual Mentoring-Based Programs Sponsored by the Office of Faculty Development

The needs assessment indicated that most of our faculty had very clear opinions about mentoring. The majority of pre-tenure respondents to our online survey believed that mentoring others was an important part of their responsibility as a faculty member (approximately 64 percent of the respondents "agreed strongly" with this statement). Furthermore, approximately 43 percent "agreed strongly" with the idea that being mentored was integral to their future success as a faculty member. However, when asked to characterize their previous experiences as recipients of mentoring in graduate school, nearly 44 percent of the respondents described their experiences as "negative" or "neutral," thus indicating a possible reticence to engage in such activities again.

Given these figures, we recognized a need to give faculty a variety of low-risk, self-selected, and topically driven entry points into mentoring activities that best suited their unique personalities, schedules, departmental cultures, and preferences. One of the most logical ways for us to do so was to restructure the OFD's campuswide programming as Mutual Mentoring-based events. This required us to reexamine all of our existing programs and move away from anything resembling a top-down exchange, "talking head" or "lecture" that simply communicated information rather than encouraged faculty to create knowledge interactively. An equally valuable step was to expand our own network of support by inviting a wide range of campus partners to serve as cosponsors

or contributors to our programs (for example, the Center for Teaching, UMass Amherst Libraries, Office of Information Technology, Office of Research Affairs, Provost's Office, and the Writing Program).

Our office now sponsors nine programs per year, all of which have been reorganized around the Mutual Mentoring model and serve as regular reminders of the value of bringing together faculty at all career stages to share their experiences and expertise. These programs, which rely on a wide variety of dialogue-driven formats such as panels, roundtables, and peer or near-peer advisory groups, include the following:

1. New Faculty Orientation
2. Welcoming Reception for New Faculty and Their Families
3. Tenure Preparation Seminar
4. Time Management Workshops
5. Monthly Mini-Retreats for Writing
6. Annual Faculty Writing Retreat
7. Local Writing Coach and Editor Program
8. Online Summer Writing Group
9. In-Person Summer Writing Group

Preliminary Assessment

Prior to releasing funds to our pilot grant recipients, we stressed the importance of collecting evaluation data to assess each project in relation to its stated goals. We also provided informational materials on key performance indicators and evaluation rubrics. However, due to the differences in project design and subjects addressed, we initially did not require project teams to use a standardized assessment instrument. Late in the pilot phase, after consulting with grant recipients who were having difficulties creating their own assessment instruments, we decided to intervene and assist. This proved to be an important decision because the variability among the projects, as well as certain disciplinary preferences for qualitative or quantitative data, would have resulted in data that could not be compared with each other, or with data from grant-funded projects in subsequent years. After consulting with our Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (OAPA),

we distributed a standardized assessment to all members of the five pilot teams.

Although it is too early to evaluate whether the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative will have an impact on our ability to retain our new and underrepresented faculty over the long term, we are encouraged by several promising early indicators. Approximately 78 percent of the participants in the pilot projects described their Mutual Mentoring experiences as "excellent" or "very good." Open-ended feedback also indicated that the participants appreciated how the pilot grants allowed them to "create a project that really worked for US. This definitely wasn't mentoring as dictated from above. It was 'grass roots,' ground-up mentoring around the issues that hit closest to home for those of us trying to succeed in this department."

To date, our faculty have created twenty-four unique Mutual Mentoring projects (five pilot projects in 2006–07, nine team projects in 2007–08, and ten micro-grant projects in 2007–08). Over two hundred faculty at all career stages have participated in or are currently participating in these projects, which represents approximately 20 percent of the total number of pre-tenure and tenured faculty on our campus. Of this figure, approximately 68 percent are women and 44 percent are faculty of color, and these mentoring networks are growing every day.

In addition, every OFD program based on the Mutual Mentoring model has received a minimum satisfaction rating of 4.5 (out of 5.0). Qualitative feedback indicates that faculty participants appreciate the way these programs are structured because "Mutual Mentoring emphasizes faculty at all career stages coming together and talking *with* each other, instead of younger faculty coming to be talked *to*." Also, faculty participants describe Mutual Mentoring as "such a commonsense approach to learning . . . it mirrors the academic mission itself in that it encourages discourse and values the experiences of everyone in the room, no matter their rank."

Although these early indicators are very positive and encouraging, there are other areas where additional work and refinement will be necessary as the initiative moves forward. For example, the pilot phase projects demonstrated an excellent range of faculty participants (23 percent chairs and full professors, 19 percent

associate professors, and 51 percent assistant professors). However, only 7 percent of the pilot project participants were nonfaculty (librarians, students, and campuswide administrators). In addition, only two of the five projects featured interdisciplinary or inter-institutional mentoring (such as mentoring projects that included faculty from one or more of the Five Colleges).

Currently, we are exploring ways in which faculty can more easily engage in mentoring partnerships with academic leaders, professional staff, and students, all of whom bring different types of valuable expertise and experience to the table. To better inform future grant applicants about the wide range of mentoring partners and possibilities available to them, we have developed a list of exemplars from the pilot phase, outlining the various types of mentoring that occurred in each project, as well as the range of mentoring partners involved. This list is now available online at www.umass.edu/ofd/initiative.htm.

A final note on assessment: to ensure that future data from every grant-funded project will not only be consistently collected but comparable enough to see the "big picture" of the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative, we have continued our collaboration with OAPA to determine key indicators of success, as well as the most appropriate methods of collecting regular, consistent, and comparable formative and summative data. All M^3 and M^4 Grant recipients are now required to complete both standardized midterm and end-of-year assessments designed by staff from OAPA and OFD.

Conclusion

The Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative is currently in its first year of full implementation. What began as a single campuswide program that promoted mentoring as the medium to support new and underrepresented faculty has since grown into a broad-based faculty development initiative. The guiding principles of the initiative mirror many of the evidence-based "good practices" for creating and sustaining faculty development programs, which include building stakeholders by listening to all perspectives, ensuring effective program leadership, emphasizing faculty ownership, cultivating administrative commitment, developing clear

goals and assessment procedures, offering a range of opportunities and multiple points of entry, encouraging collegiality and community, creating collaborations with campus partners, and providing measures of recognition and rewards (Sorcinelli, 2002).

Perhaps what distinguishes the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative most is its organic evolution from a single program into a multicomponent, multitiered offering of faculty development opportunities at the individual, department/school/college/inter-disciplinary, campuswide, and inter-institutional levels. Much like our visual model of Mutual Mentoring, the initiative's guiding principles, structure, and programs are all designed to create opportunities for faculty and other constituencies to connect, network, teach, and learn from each other. Equally important is the active role played by new and underrepresented faculty, senior faculty, chairs and academic leaders in the design and implementation of the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Initiative, which contributes to a strong sense of campuswide ownership in the past, present, and future of faculty mentoring at UMass Amherst.

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Chapter 20

Preparing Advocates for Faculty Development

Expanding the Meaning of "Growing Our Own"

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Discussions about preparing newcomers for faculty development focus almost exclusively on the staffing needs of teaching centers. Unfortunately, this emphasis significantly narrows what it means to prepare people for the field. Instead, we suggest that successful preparation has two elements: preparation of knowledgeable advocates for formal positions in the field and preparation of talented individuals for formal positions in the field and preparation of knowledgeable advocates or allies. As evidence, we present results from a survey of our center's graduate teaching consultants, documenting how their work shaped their future connections to faculty development. Our results challenge centers to consider how their programming can "grow" both professionals in and advocates for faculty development.

Since the early 1990s, POD members have discussed how best to attract and prepare newcomers for work in faculty development (Chism 1998, 2007; Chism, Palmer, & Stanley, 2006; Gillespie, 2001; Sell & Chism, 1991; Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, & Beach, 2006). This conversation has focused almost exclusively on the staffing needs of administrative units devoted to faculty development. Unfortunately, this emphasis significantly narrows what it means to attract people to and prepare them for work in the field.