UNL Mentor Resource Guide

Executive Summary

This framework serves as a comprehensive guide for departments, centers, schools, and colleges at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) to develop, implement, and sustain effective faculty mentoring programs. Acknowledging that each unit has distinct cultures, missions, and resources, the framework offers a flexible framework that can be tailored to fit specific needs while promoting mentoring excellence across campus.

Purpose and Utility

The primary aim of this guide is to support units in creating mentoring programs that contribute to faculty development, satisfaction, and retention. It is designed for use by Associate Deans, Department Executive Officers (DEOs), and other academic leaders as they consider the best structures and strategies for mentoring within their respective units.

The framework provides:

- A variety of mentoring models with detailed descriptions.
- Guidance on choosing a model or combination of models appropriate for the unit.
- Comparative analysis of pros and cons to aid in administrative decision-making.
- Implementation examples that illustrate best practices from across disciplines and institutions.
- Evaluation tools and recognition strategies to assess and reward mentoring success.

Mentoring Models and Matrix

This framework is meant to help departments, centers, schools, and colleges in developing mentoring programs that benefit their faculty. No one unit is the same as another. They each have unique needs, resources, and identities. This framework provides multiple options that can be adapted to fit the individual needs of units, whether department, center, school or college.

The table below lists the various Mentoring Models, their structure, the type of unit that should consider the model, information on resources, and key advantages and challenges. This matrix is designed to support Associate Deans and Department Executive Officers (DEOs) in selecting mentoring structures best suited to their unit's size, goals, and faculty composition. It provides a side-by-side comparison of models to assist in planning.

Model	Structure	Best For	Mentor Selection	Administrative Effort	Resource Needs	Key Advantages	Challenges
Dyadic (One-on-One)	One mentee, one mentor	Units with sufficient senior faculty; disciplines needing	Assigned or self-selected	Medium	Low to Medium	Personalized guidance; deeper relationships; clearer	Mentor availability; potential mismatch;

		personalized guidance				accountability	limited perspectives
Peer Mentoring	Small group of similar-rank faculty	Departments with few senior faculty; fostering collegiality	Self-formed or facilitated	Low	Low	Shared experiences; natural camaraderie; low cost	Lack of senior perspective; inconsistent structure
Mentoring Circles / Networks	Multiple mentees with multiple mentors	Medium-to-large units; interdepartmental or cross-disciplinary collaboration	Assigned or open-invitation	High	Medium to High	Broad input; community-building; flexible participation	Scheduling challenges; requires facilitation; lower personalization
Multi-Mentor Networks	Mentee selects multiple mentors for different goals	Faculty with complex goals; interdisciplinary or specialized mentoring needs	Self-selected or guided	Medium	Medium to High	Mentee agency; targeted feedback; external networking	Needs structured support; requires tracking and incentives
Informal Mentoring	Unstructured, organic	Supplement to formal mentoring; all unit types	Emergent from shared interests	Low	Low	Adaptive; trust-based; complements formal models	Uneven access; relies on proactive individuals; lacks accountability
Hybrid Models (e.g., Group → Dyadic)	Group starts → mentee chooses mentor	Units wanting structured start with personalized long-term mentorship	Initial group assigned, then mentee-driven	Medium to High	Medium	Combines structure with choice; more informed pairings	Requires coordination; may delay mentor match

UNL Mentoring Model Comparison Matrix

Implementation Guidance

Recognizing that no single model fits all units, the framework emphasizes adaptability. It encourages units to:

- Consider career stage needs (e.g., early-career, mid-career, late-career faculty).
- Reflect on cultural alignment and faculty preferences.
- Leverage both formal and informal mentoring systems.
- Establish clear goals and expectations for mentoring relationships.

Checklists and examples are provided to guide program planning, launch, and ongoing support.

Evaluation and Recognition

The framework underscores the importance of evaluating mentoring program effectiveness and recognizing faculty who serve as mentors. Suggested strategies include:

- Surveys and feedback forms for mentors and mentees.
- Metrics to assess participation, satisfaction, and outcomes.
- Awards, stipends, or public recognition to incentivize high-quality mentoring.

These practices aim to ensure accountability and foster a culture that values mentorship as a key dimension of faculty life and institutional success.

Ultimately, this framework is a resource for fostering meaningful, well-supported, and sustainable faculty mentoring programs across UNL. It provides units with the tools, models, and strategic guidance to adapt best practices in ways that align with their unique identities and goals. By doing so, it contributes to a university-wide culture of collegiality, development, and excellence.

Mentoring Models

Choosing the right mentoring model is crucial to the success of your unit's mentoring efforts. Departments and colleges differ in size, faculty composition, disciplinary culture, and mentoring capacity, making a one-size-fits-all approach ineffective. A well-matched model enhances new faculty integration, supports career development, and improves retention.

Several models have emerged to address the diverse and evolving needs of mentees and mentors. These include traditional dyadic mentoring, peer mentoring, mentoring circles, group mentoring, and multi-mentor networks. Each model offers distinct benefits and trade-offs, depending on the structure, goals, and culture of the unit.

While informal or "organic" mentoring relationships are often praised for their longevity and authenticity, structured programs can offer clarity, equity, and alignment with institutional goals. As Shane Desselle et al. (2011) note in their literature review, "Formal mentoring programs have been associated with faculty member job satisfaction, commitment, reductions in turnover, and productivity… Further, the existence of formal mentoring programs and the inevitable informal mentoring that occurs among colleagues are not mutually exclusive."

In recent years, institutions have increasingly moved beyond dyadic models toward more networked or group-based formats, reflecting a broader understanding of mentoring as a shared, evolving, and context-sensitive process. The following models represent a spectrum of mentoring strategies, each suited to different unit profiles and faculty needs.

A. Dyadic Models

In a traditional dyadic mentoring program, a single mentor is paired with a single mentee, either by assignment or mutual selection, for a defined period. These relationships are typically mentor-driven, with the mentor providing guidance to help the mentee achieve professional and developmental goals. Dyadic mentoring often involves regular, structured interactions and can extend over multiple years, sometimes evolving into enduring professional connections. This model works best when a department has a sufficient number of experienced faculty and when personalized, one-on-one support is a priority. It offers depth and continuity, though its success depends heavily on the availability, commitment, and compatibility of individual mentors.

Dyadic mentoring can take both **formal** and **informal** forms. In formal programs, mentors are typically assigned by administrators, which can enhance institutional support and create clear accountability. However, this structure may limit mentee autonomy and, in cases of mismatch or insufficient mentor availability, reduce engagement or effectiveness. Informal dyadic mentoring, on the other hand, emerges organically, often through professional associations, conferences, or shared research interests. These relationships tend to offer more flexibility and agency for the mentee and may result in stronger personal rapport and satisfaction (Sands, Parson, & Duane, 1991). While neither format is inherently superior, understanding the trade-offs between formality and flexibility can help departments align dyadic mentoring strategies with their faculty composition and goals.

Table 1. Pros and Cons of Dyadic Models

Pros	Cons

• Develops a strong relationship with mentor • Develops a sense of being cared for and valued by the institution	• Mentor drives the relationship, may not always provide for the needs of the mentee (Moreau-Johnson, et al. 2023) • Lack of willing mentors with time for the commitment • More opportunity for exploitative relationships. (Horton, K. 2023)

Best for: Units with sufficient late-career faculty; disciplines needing personalized guidance.

B. Group Mentoring

Group mentoring encompasses a range of structures in which multiple mentees and/or mentors engage together in a shared mentoring environment. This model is particularly useful for orienting new faculty, promoting cross-disciplinary dialogue, and fostering a sense of community within or across departments. Sessions may be topic-driven or developmental in nature, and the dynamic allows mentees to learn not only from mentors but also from each other. Group mentoring can reduce the burden on individual mentors and enhance mentoring equity by providing access to multiple perspectives.

Group mentoring can take various forms, including peer mentoring, mentoring circles/networks, or multi-mentor networks. These formats may be formally organized by unit leadership or emerge more informally. Group mentoring is especially effective in units where there are few late-career faculty or where community-building is a priority. However, it may lack the personalization of one-on-one models and requires careful facilitation to ensure that all voices are heard and mentees' diverse needs are addressed.

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring involves faculty members of similar rank and experience supporting one another through mutual exchange, reflection, and shared learning. It is particularly well-suited for departments with a large number of early-career faculty or where the number of senior faculty available for traditional mentoring is limited. Peer mentoring promotes a sense of collegiality, reduces isolation, and can lead to the development of long-lasting professional networks (Lumpkin, 2011).

Peer mentoring may occur informally through ad hoc conversations or more formally in structured peer cohorts, learning communities, or scheduled discussion groups. While it may lack the depth of experience a more seasoned mentor provides, it offers a safe space for exploring challenges and building confidence. Units should support peer mentoring by offering meeting spaces, modest programming support, or periodic facilitation to ensure that interactions are productive and inclusive.

Table 2. Pros and Cons of Peer Mentoring

Pros	Cons
• *Shared Experiences:* Peer mentoring enables faculty members with similar backgrounds to share experiences and challenges. • *Natural Relationship Development:* Peer mentoring fosters genuine connections and camaraderie through shared experiences.	• *Limited Perspective:* Homogenous groups may exclude diverse viewpoints, restricting the range of insights available. • *Lack of Structure:* Informal peer mentoring can lack consistency and guidelines for effective interactions.

Best for: Units with insufficient late-career faculty; fostering collegiality

Mentoring Circles/Networks

Mentoring circles and networks expand upon the group mentoring format by structuring interactions among multiple mentors and mentees, often across departments or colleges. These models emphasize distributed expertise, peer learning, and the development of supportive professional networks. Mentees benefit from exposure to a range of mentoring styles, institutional knowledge, and disciplinary perspectives. Circles can be organized around shared goals, identities, or career stages, and they are especially valuable for increasing inclusivity and building community.

Circles are often scheduled with recurring themes or shared discussion topics, either facilitated or collaboratively shaped. Because mentoring responsibilities are shared across several mentors, the model reduces reliance on individual faculty and helps address mentor shortages. However, successful mentoring circles require consistent participation, clear communication norms, and administrative support. Without these elements, meetings may lose focus or fail to meet participants' needs.

Table 3. Pros and Cons of Mentoring Circles/Networks

Pros	Cons
• *Group size:* Minimum of 8, maximum of 13. (Darwin and Palmer, 2009) • *Inter-departmental:* Due to the external perspective provided by inter-departmental relationships the mentee may benefit from the broader view that cross-discipline peers and mentors provide	• Meeting frequency can be difficult to maintain; once a month is the most convenient schedule (Darwin & Palmer, 2009). • Requires incentives, especially when mentees are required to join the program. This can be monetary (Yun et al., 2016) or tied to other aspects of the job e.g., promotion, grant applications (Darwin & Palmer, 2009).

- Mentees control the relationship (Moreau-Johnson, et al. 2023)
- More effective in helping mentees identify university resources and gives mentees more access to 'key individuals' in the organization. (Darwin and Palmer, 2009)
- Mentees receive a solid introduction to the university and develop a sense of community and belonging (Moreau-Johnson, et al. 2023).
- Relationships not tied to one individual senior faculty member are less hierarchal.
- Supports a competency-based approach to mentoring (Moreau-Johnson, et al. 2023).

- Without guidance, groups can become unproductive, failing to address topics.
- Likely less personalization, thus mentees may not receive mentoring that addresses their specific needs.

Best for: Medium-to-large units; interdepartmental or cross-disciplinary collaboration

Multi-Mentor Networks

Multi-mentor network models, such as the Mutual Mentoring approach (see below), empower mentees to build a constellation of mentors who address different aspects of their academic development. Rather than relying on a single late-career mentor, faculty members curate their own networks that may include peers, external experts, or mentors focused on specific areas like research, teaching, or service.

This model is particularly effective for supporting interdisciplinary work, addressing identity-specific concerns, and customizing mentoring to match faculty goals and contexts. It also promotes agency and resilience in mentees by recognizing that no single mentor can meet all developmental needs. Administrative support is typically required to provide structure, resources, and sometimes small grants to encourage participation. The flexibility and breadth of this model make it well-suited for units with diverse faculty roles, though it may require more coordination and tracking to evaluate outcomes effectively

Example Model based on Mutual Mentoring Model. (Yun, et al. 2016)

In this study a flexible, network-based mentoring approach was used to support early career faculty. In this model, each mentee engages with several mentors, each offering expertise in specific areas. Mentors are incentivized through two tiers of small grants to form their own context-sensitive mentoring groups. These grants support the development of

group projects that align with university mentoring guidelines and policies. Project proposals are reviewed by a faculty grant committee and must address one or more of the university's priority mentoring areas.

Table 4. Pros and Cons of Multi-Mentor Networks

Pros	Cons
• Mentee develops career-enhancing relationships • Mentee has greater agency in the selection and the relationship at every stage of the experience. They are able to customize their experience to their needs. • Not limited to local mentors • Mentees can produce concrete products of the mentor relationship – book publications, conference presentations, grant applications • Mutually beneficial to mentees and mentors • University and tenured faculty involvement system involvement is central to the model • Mentee receives more relevant, frequent feedback	• Mentees sometimes need help selecting mentors • Requires incentives especially when mentees are required to join the program. This can be monetary (Yun et al., 2016) or tied to other aspects of the job e.g., promotion, grant applications (Dawin & Palmer, 2009) • Requires at least three evaluation activities

Best for: units with faculty who have complex goals; interdisciplinary or specialized mentoring needs

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring refers to mentoring relationships that develop organically through mutual interest, proximity, or shared scholarly activity, rather than through structured assignments. These relationships often form within departments, research teams, or professional communities and are grounded in trust, reciprocity, and voluntary engagement.

Informal mentoring can be especially meaningful and durable, as it arises from authentic connection rather than institutional assignment. It allows mentees to seek guidance on an as-needed basis and provides mentors with a low-barrier opportunity to support colleagues. However, informal mentoring may also reflect existing inequities in access and visibility, i.e. faculty from underrepresented backgrounds or those new to the institution may face greater challenges in forming these connections. To address this, units can encourage informal mentoring by fostering inclusive climates, organizing networking events, and signaling that informal mentoring is a valued complement to formal structures.

Table 5. Pros and Cons of Informal Mentoring

Pros	Cons
• Mentoring develops naturally through shared interests, leading to stronger trust and connection. • Faculty can engage without formal scheduling, documentation, or administrative processes. • Guidance is often timelier and situation-specific, tailored to the mentee's immediate context. • Involves mentors who may not be available for structured programs but are willing to offer informal advice. • Reinforces institutional culture of collegiality and ongoing professional support.	• Uneven access: Faculty from underrepresented groups or new to the institution may struggle to identify potential mentors. • Lack of accountability: Informal relationships are less likely to be evaluated, recognized, or supported institutionally. • Invisibility to leadership: Mentoring contributions and benefits may go undocumented in annual reviews or workload reporting. • Dependence on initiative: Relies heavily on the proactive efforts of mentees and mentors to build and sustain the relationship. • May reinforce existing social networks, limiting mentoring diversity and inclusivity.

Best for: units with strong collegial cultures, departments with limited administrative capacity for formal programs, or units seeking to supplement formal mentoring with organic, trust-based relationships. Especially effective when paired with intentional networking opportunities or affinity-based communities.

Hybrid Model

The hybrid mentoring model combines multiple mentoring structures, most commonly beginning with group or network-based mentoring and transitioning to individualized dyadic mentoring as faculty needs become more defined. It integrates the strengths of both structured and informal models to provide comprehensive, flexible, and staged support.

Typically, new faculty may start in a mentoring circle or multi-mentor network upon arrival, gaining broad institutional knowledge, support, and peer connections. Over time (e.g., after the first semester or year), mentees identify individual

needs and may be paired with a primary mentor for more focused, one-on-one support. The model may include scheduled transitions, such as a group mentoring phase that culminates in a mentor-mentee agreement based on shared interests or reflection exercises (e.g., mentoring maps).

Table 6. Pros and Cons of a Hybrid Model

Pros	Cons
• Group mentoring builds early community and helps new faculty orient; dyadic mentoring fosters deeper career planning. • Early exposure to several mentors allows mentees to make better-informed choices when selecting a primary mentor. • Can be adapted to different unit sizes and faculty ratios. • New faculty build multiple support relationships before committing to one primary mentor, reducing mismatches and fostering inclusion.	• Requires coordination and administrative oversight, particularly in managing transitions. • May need training for both phases, as group facilitation and individual mentoring require different skill sets. • Potential for uneven implementation across departments without central guidance or templates.

Best for: units seeking to combine the early benefits of community-building and broad support with the long-term advantages of individualized mentoring. Ideal for units onboarding multiple new faculty at once, or units that want to allow mentees to make informed choices before entering a one-on-one mentoring relationship.

Mentoring Specific Populations

Models can be adapted to address the needs of faculty with similar experiences, e.g., women, underrepresented faculty, late-career faculty, early-career faculty, etc. The option of combining an internal formal mentoring program with informal external mentoring opportunities has been an effective approach for African American female faculty (Horton, K., 2023). This provides the faculty with relationship building and networking opportunities within the institution, while making space for additional support and mentoring that is unique to their experiences as minority faculty. The peer mentoring in affinity groups, or learning communities (Jones et al., 2020), has also been proven to be effective in supporting faculty with similar experiences (see Mentoring Circles/Networks).

One area where traditional dyadic mentoring has proven to be very effective is career mentoring. Emeriti faculty have been involved in mentoring underrepresent faculty in engineering in the NSF IMPACT mentoring program. The program recruited retired mentors from R1 institutions and matched them with mentees from the Academic and Research Leadership Network (ARLN) database based on shared expertise. This has the advantage of providing the mentees with researchers outside their institutions for neutral opinions and networking opportunities, increases the mentee's

network and involvement within prestigious profession organization and is highly beneficial to the emeriti faculty who report feeling more connected to their profession after retirement. (Mendez et al., 2019).

Building a Comprehensive Mentoring Framework: Integrating Diverse Mentoring Models

Successful faculty mentoring programs, irrespective of their specific models, share common characteristics. These include robust support from top-level administrators, integration within a broader faculty development strategy, voluntary participation policies, participant involvement in the pairing process, provision of resources to facilitate mentorship relationships (such as orientation sessions), and the establishment of clear goals and expectations for the mentoring relationship (Hanover Research, 2014).

A co-authored white paper on Mentoring by NCFDD and Harvard University's Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) indicates that while department level mentoring programs are very important and needed, there are additional and increasing benefits to institutional mentoring opportunities and external mentoring opportunities (Watson & Benson, 2025). As units decide which mentoring model best suits their faculty, keep in mind that UNL offers additional opportunities and resources that can enhance and complement your unit's mentoring program.

Campus Mentoring Opportunities

- New Faculty Development Program
- Faculty Professional Development Workshops
- Faculty TipSheets
- Faculty-led Inquiry into Reflective and Scholarly Teaching (FIRST)
- Faculty Leadership in Academia from Inspiration to Reality (FLAIR)

External Mentoring Opportunities

- UNL External Mentoring Program
- NCFDD membership
- NCFDD Writing Challenges
- NCFDD Faculty Success Program
- Subscriptions to Inside Higher Education and the Chronicle of Higher Education
- Discipline Specific Professional Organization Meetings
- Association for Women in Science

Integrating diverse mentoring models into faculty mentoring programs involves creating a cohesive approach that leverages the strengths of various models and opportunities. This enhances their effectiveness in meeting the specific needs of participants and provides a comprehensive support system for the mentee. Group mentoring might be ideal for general orientation, while a multi-mentor network may be more effective in supporting a specific career goal by providing more peer support and networking. Cross-training mentors across diverse models further enhances their ability to support mentees effectively. By adopting an integrated approach, units can establish a dynamic and inclusive mentoring framework that optimizes the benefits of mentorship for faculty development and success.

Implementation Frameworks: Creating a Departmental Mentoring Program

Formal Mentoring Programs

A formal mentoring program is a structured process that establishes developmental relationships between mentor and mentee, outlines implementation guidelines, and sets evaluation criteria. It is a program developed by a unit to achieve a specific goal and fit a specified timeframe, which is what sets it apart from an informal mentoring model. Formal mentoring relationships have traditionally taken on dyadic relationships, with the hierarchical, face-to-face, one mentor and one mentee approach. However, more varieties of mentoring relationships are emerging such as those described in the previous section. Irrespective of the specific mentoring relationship, it is important to establish a structured framework that guides the mentorship process.

One common theme among formal mentoring programs is that they usually take on a top-down approach and are initiated through an organizational program. However, it is understood that the structure of such programs can differ greatly in "nature, focus, and outcomes" (Enrich, Hansford & Tennet, 2004) and are not transferable as they are usually "specific to the population of interest" (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). A literature review supports the idea that no common framework of formal mentorship has yet to be established (Dawson, 2014). Kajs's (2002) 'Situational Mentoring Framework' references four systematic and interrelated aspects; mentor selection, professional development for mentors and novice teachers, support team, and accountability.

Initial efforts to create a successful and sustainable mentorship model should take into consideration: (1) the interest and commitment of mentors and mentees to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship, (2) the existing infrastructure at all levels of the organization to support the mentoring model, and (3) creating a dynamic model that can accommodate evolving contextual and situational changes.

Informal Mentoring Program

Mentoring should be of high quality, reliably accessible to all, yet flexible to meet the needs of mentees. Informal mentoring opportunities are a way to complement formal mentoring. Informal mentoring should be viewed as an essential complement to any mentoring program offered by the unit. For many, informal mentoring guidance provides exponential value to the career of the mentor and the mentee as part of an inclusive community.

Synergy between Formal and Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring has a long history in academia. Relationships within departments, individual campuses, and academic disciplines have been built by ongoing conversations and scholarly debates. Recent attempts to establish mentoring programs require academic leaders to identify and describe the specific elements of the support that create thriving spaces for academics. In doing so, mentoring research has delineated a distinction between formal and informal mentoring. References to informal mentoring attempt to distinguish institutional programs from more informal mentoring relationships which have a long history of forming organically within departments, campuses, and disciplines. Specifically, the term mentoring has been defined as "a natural component of relationship that occurs…in a relationship between two people where one gains, insight, knowledge, wisdom, friendship and support from the other." (Inzer and Crawford)

The NCFDD organization has developed webinars, programs, and tools for effective faculty mentoring. One of their tools, the NCFDD Mentor Map, clearly illustrates the synergies between formal and informal mentoring objectives

(NCFDD.org). The developers of this mentoring map introduce this tool by stating: "Centralizing on your needs as an academic, our mentoring map offers an opportunity for you to map your current mentoring network, identify your unmet needs, and plan how to expand your existing network to meet your current needs." Understandably the context of support will vary, and the measured outcomes of mentoring are usually associated with an increased sense of belonging (Misra, Kanelee, & Mickey). Often, informal mentoring relationships will arise due to proximity, affinities, or team assignments within an institution. The unit's formal mentoring program must recognize the intrinsic value of informal mentoring and ensure that all members participate. While networking is widely seen as the main structure for connecting with effective mentors, it can be problematic for connecting within one's affinity group due to historic and systemic racism, sexism, classism, and ableist implicit biases.

Unit Considerations for Effective Informal Mentoring

There are different challenges for different faculty across academia. Regarding their work, some faculty members have a higher apportionment in teaching, others are solely researchers, some faculty members focus more on undergraduate advising and others work within professional degree programs with graduate students and some faculty members advise students at all levels in higher education.

Hopefully, with an increasingly diverse faculty who represent innumerable intersectional identities, historical obstacles will be removed so that developing equitable mentoring relationships within one's department, college and institution become commonplace. Where microaggressions and presumptions of incompetence are experienced by some, creating and sustaining a culture of mentoring will not be possible.[1] To be equity-minded and inclusive of all faculty, institutions must take steps so that scholars of color, a wide range of (non-binary) gender identities, and first-generation college graduates do not encounter obstacles to establishing effective mentoring for all aspects of their academic work. By centering the inclusive objectives of the informal mentoring relationship, institutions can thoughtfully implement alternative mechanisms to eliminate remnants of racism, sexism, classism, ablism remaining in our academic structures. For example, offering financial resources for individuals to network outside their institutions, work with coaches or with groups of scholars who might provide role models and emotional support during the tenure process can be vitally important.

Perhaps another major challenge for the development of an informal mentoring relationship is time. Time will be a significant challenge for both the mentor and the mentee. While formal mentoring is more likely to take place in scheduled meetings, the informal mentoring sessions may be viewed as additional obligations for faculty members on both sides of the relationship. Accordingly, scheduling times within the unit for initial interactions lowers the barrier to participation. Similarly, when all faculty members are proactively engaged with mentoring, the unit's culture will be more likely to be welcoming and inclusive.

[1] See generally, Lorgia Garcia Pena, Community as Rebellion (2022) (contrasting the experience in academia for those encountering racism or sexism and those who found a sense of belonging); Yolanda Flores Niemann, Gabriella Guierrez y Muhs, and Carmen G. Gonzalez, Presumed Incompetent II (2020) (a collection of essays by women in academia about race, class, power and resistance).

Step-by-Step Guide to Establishing a Mentoring Program

Creating a departmental mentoring program requires careful planning, alignment with institutional values, and sustained support. While mentoring models may vary in structure—from dyadic to group to hybrid and from formal to informal—successful implementation follows a set of foundational steps that ensure effectiveness, adaptability, and equity. Departments should consider their size, faculty demographics, and existing support infrastructure when designing a mentoring framework.

Define Purpose and Goals

Clarify the program's objectives. Common goals include onboarding new faculty, supporting faculty retention and success, improving clarity around promotion and tenure expectations, and fostering a more inclusive and collegial departmental culture. Ensure that goals align with college and university expectations. (see Toolkit for Suggested Mentoring Program Goals)

Choose a Mentoring Model

Select a mentoring structure appropriate for your unit's size and capacity. Smaller units may use cross-unit or informal mentoring; larger units may support hybrid, multi-mentor, or mentoring circle models. (Refer to the "Mentoring Models" section for comparisons.)

Designate a Program Coordinator

Assign a faculty or staff coordinator (e.g., DEO, associate chair, or mentoring liaison) to oversee the mentoring process. Responsibilities may include mentor recruitment, training coordination, conflict resolution, and program evaluation.

Recruit and Train Mentors

Identify potential mentors—ideally a mix of mid-career and late-career faculty. Require participation in UNL Mentor training on inclusive practices, communication, and conflict management, and provide orientation to unit mentoring expectations. Consider incentives such as service credit, professional development support, or public recognition.

Match Mentors and Mentees

Use a structured yet flexible approach for pairing. This may involve initial group mentoring, reflection activities (e.g., mentoring maps, interest forms, or SWOT analyses) within the first semester. It is recommended that an initial temporary unit mentor be assigned for the first semester to assist the faculty in basic needs and orientation to unit culture (a late-career faculty member or a member of the new faculty's search committee). Then, in the second semester a mentee-driven selection of a primary mentor (a mid- or late-career faculty member) should be completed. Consider research area, rank, teaching load, and communication style during the matching process. Refer to the Toolkit at the end of this framework for additional information on mentor-mentee selection.

Establish a Mentoring Agreement

Encourage each mentoring pair or group to develop a mentoring agreement that outlines goals, expectations, confidentiality, meeting frequency, and duration of meetings. This agreement should be revisited annually by the mentor, mentee, and mentoring coordinator.

Support and Monitor Progress

Schedule regular check-ins with mentors and mentees and offer guidance throughout the year. Units may organize cohort meetings, peer discussions, or interdisciplinary mentoring events. Encourage documentation of mentoring activities and reflective conversations. Most importantly, value mentoring activities by both the mentor and mentee in annual evaluations.

Evaluate and Adapt

Use surveys, mentoring logs, and tools such as those listed in the Mentoring Toolkit at the end of this framework. Review both mentor and mentee experiences annually to inform program adjustments. Establish clear, confidential processes for resolving unproductive or mismatched pairings.

Key Elements of a Strong Mentoring Program

- **Start Early:** Ideally, plans should begin as soon as faculty are hired and continue throughout their first year.
- **Be Inclusive and Equitable:** Address barriers faced by underrepresented faculty, international hires, and first-generation academics. Ensure all new faculty are included.
- **Adapt by Unit Size and Structure:** Use hybrid or mentoring circle approaches in larger units; small units may share mentors across units or colleges.
- **Integrate Campus Resources:** Connect mentees with university-level support systems, such as the Center for Transformative Teaching, Office of Research and Innovation, and faculty development programs such as the New Faculty Development Program, NCFDD, the NCFDD Faculty Success Program, and UNL Faculty Affairs Professional development resources.
- **Recognize and Reward Mentorship:** Include mentoring in annual evaluations, offer certificates or awards, and celebrate successful mentoring relationships.

Example: A Hybrid Formal Mentoring Program

A unit may launch mentoring with a group-based model where new faculty are paired with at least two mentors (e.g., one early-career and one late-career faculty member). Over the first semester, mentees engage in structured discussions, complete a reflection tool (such as a SWOT analysis), and explore unit culture, resources, and expectations. Based on this experience, the mentee may select a primary mentor and develop a personalized mentoring plan. In addition, faculty will be encouraged to participate in the UNL External Mentoring Program and the NCFDD Faculty Success Program.

This approach encourages early connections, diverse input, and thoughtful mentor matching. In smaller units, this model can be adapted by incorporating cross-unit mentors or relying more heavily on informal relationships supported by intentional networking.

In all cases, the unit should support mentors by requiring training, providing logistical help (e.g., scheduling, templates), and ensuring a non-punitive process for modifying mentor-mentee pairings if necessary.

Example: An Informal Mentoring Program

An informal mentoring program can be especially effective in smaller units with limited administrative resources. Rather than formal assignments, the unit creates structures that foster organic mentoring relationships. For example, the unit may host monthly brown-bag lunches or topical roundtables where early- and late-career faculty engage in open

discussion. These regular, low-pressure gatherings allow faculty to naturally identify mentors who share similar interests or values.

To support informal mentoring while encouraging access and equity, the department can provide conversation prompts, mentorship tip sheets (see Toolkit), and event themes aligned with faculty development needs. Units might also maintain a voluntary "mentoring roster" where faculty list areas in which they are open to being approached as a resource.

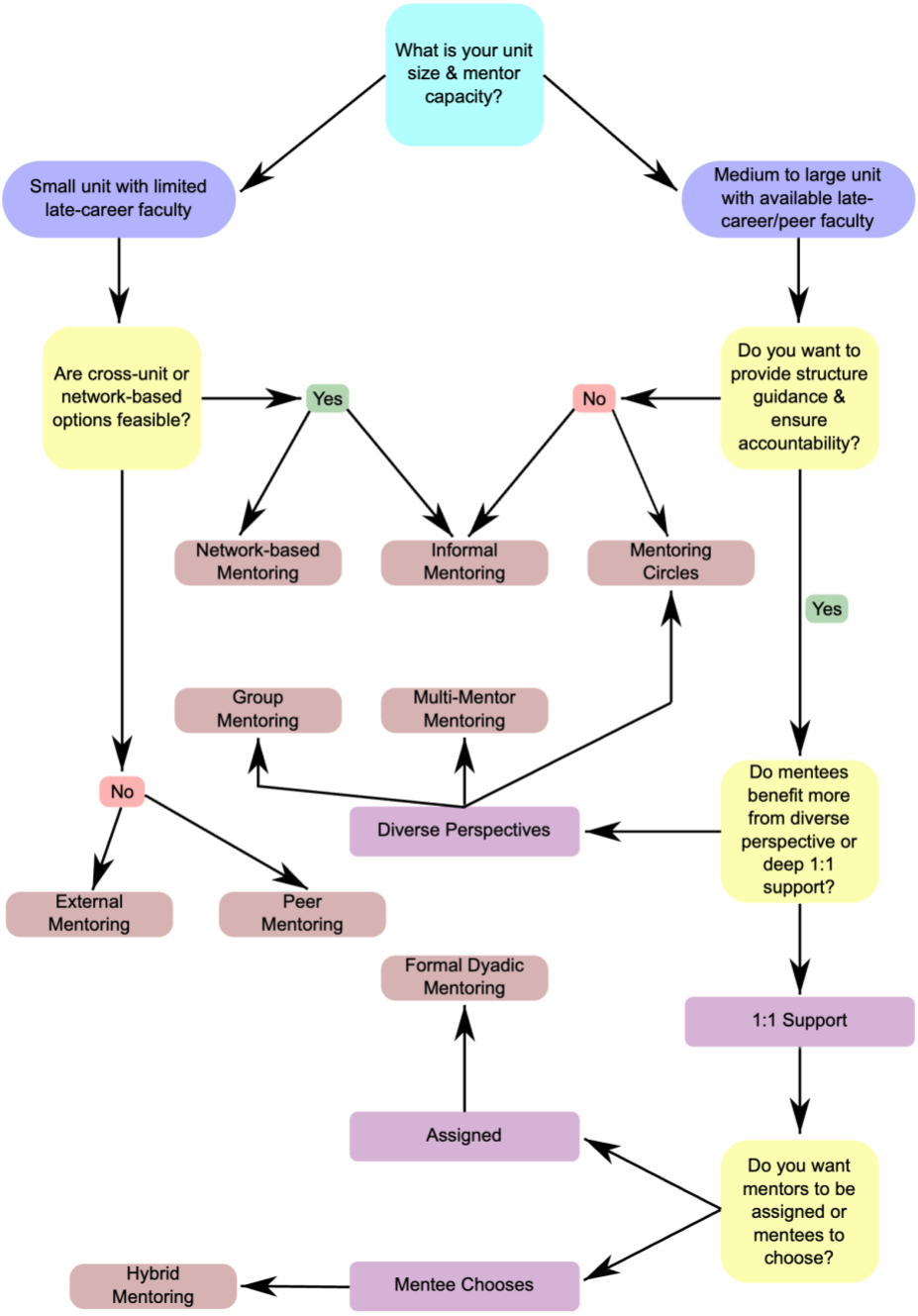
Though less structured, these programs benefit from occasional check-ins by the DEO or coordinator to identify any gaps in access and to ensure that newer faculty are making connections. Recognition of informal mentoring efforts through annual evaluations or informal acknowledgments helps reinforce a culture of collegial support.

By following these steps and adapting to local context, units can design mentoring programs that support early-career faculty success, strengthen unit climate, and reinforce institutional goals for inclusion, development, and retention.

Mentor Training

All mentors should be required to take periodic training aimed at equipping them with the skills and tools to facilitate meaningful interactions and ensure a positive and constructive experience. Training may focus on best practices of mentoring, interpersonal skills, navigating challenges and managing conflicts, building trust, promoting diversity and inclusion. Units will be encouraged to provide mentors with assistance in attending workshops (internal and external to UNL), and appropriate relief from other obligations. In addition, for outstanding mentors, it may be appropriate to provide additional recognition at the unit or higher level. See "Additional Resources for Mentors" for more information.

Mentor Program Decision Tree



Mentoring Toolkit

This Toolkit is meant to serve as a reference for units to either use as presented or create their own resources, etc. based upon this toolkit. These are recommendations only.

- Mentor and Mentee Responsibilities
- Resources for Mentors and Mentees
    - Sample Mentoring Agreements
    - Sample First Mentoring Meeting Checklist
    - Sample Mentoring Session Self-Reflection
    - NCFDD Mentoring Map
    - Additional Resources for Mentors
- Resources for Administrators – Matching Mentors and Mentees
    - Sample Mentor Pre-mentoring Self-assessment
    - Sample Mentee Strengths Assessment
    - Sample Mentor Pre-mentoring Self-assessment
    - Strategies for Networking and Finding Mentors
- Resources for Administrators – Evaluating Mentoring
    - Sample Evaluation Tools
    - Recognizing Mentoring
- General Mentoring Resources

Mentor and Mentee Roles and Responsibilities

As experts in their fields and profession, seasoned academics have both a personal and professional responsibility to mentor their faculty colleagues. Cultural and institutional knowledge are passed down from mentor to mentee, both of which have great impact on professional success. Therefore, it is important to understand what it means to be a mentor or a mentee, the characteristics of successful mentors and mentees and the responsibilities involved in being a mentor or mentee so that each can contribute to the success of the institution, its stakeholders, and, ultimately, the society it serves.

Sponsoring vs. Mentoring

People unfamiliar with mentoring practices often mistakenly view sponsorship relationships as mentorship. *Mentoring* is more about sharing knowledge and providing career guidance, whereas *sponsorship* by a person or organization advocates for the early career faculty member to take advantage of specific activities/programs that help the mentee's career. *Mentors* are often peers who have experience and share advice and guidance for advancing the mentee in their career path. *Sponsors* tend to be people of advanced rank in relationship to the mentee. Sponsorship is more of an advanced phase of mentoring in which the mentor sees growth and self-sufficiency from the mentee. This advanced relationship may allow the mentor to advocate or sponsor the mentee who is now a protégé.

Mentors

There is no universally accepted definition of a mentor, but most faculty mentoring research describes a successful mentor as a combination of a role model, a sounding board, a "door opener," and a career coach or counselor (Hale-Tolar, 2012). Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008, p. 555) provide the following description of mentorship which encompasses these roles:

"Mentoring is a reciprocal learning relationship characterized by trust, respect, and commitment, in which a mentor supports the professional and personal development of another by sharing his or her life experiences, influence, and expertise."

Historically, the faculty mentoring role focused mainly on career development, but more recently increases in mentoring effectiveness have been associated with psychosocial and interpersonal support. Psychosocial support recognizes the influence of social factors on an individual's mental health and behavior. Dawson et al. (2015) find that psychosocial support is key for women faculty in STEM fields and contributes to greater resilience and career satisfaction. Psychosocial support from mentors may also help historically marginalized and underrepresented faculty mentees, and result in higher faculty retention and less burn-out.

Mentors may be late-career faculty who know the institutional landscape and have been successful in navigating both professional and cultural hurdles throughout their careers. Mentors may also be early- or mid-career faculty who may give advice on the current landscape and offer different perspectives that may widen the vision of the early-career faculty mentee. **Regardless, mentors must not hold supervisory roles over their mentees**.

Characteristics of Effective Mentors

No two mentors are alike, and they are as diverse as people are naturally in society. A successful mentor may have some or all of these qualities:

1. **Ethical Colleague:** Mentors are honest in what they say and do, and they work for the good of the mentee. They do not take advantage of the mentoring situation, and they can give an honest assessment of the mentor-mentee relationship, specifically what the mentee is doing well or could improve upon. Mentors recognize and acknowledge progress made by mentees. They also provide constructive feedback and advice. Striking the right balance between guidance, constructive feedback, and praise is a learned art, but a challenge that is easily achievable when the mentor is focused on the mentee's success.
2. **Unbiased Guide:** Effective mentors need to be aware of their own biases. Particularly when mentoring relationships cross lines of difference (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, class, race), mentors should discuss bias with the mentee and together make a plan to mitigate the effect of bias in the mentoring relationship.
3. **Good Listener:** Mentors may not be experts in the mentee's specific research area, but there are common avenues that lead to successes and learning and growth opportunities in many professions. Good mentors take the time to understand their mentees' situations before offering advice. In many instances, mentees just need to talk through a situation with a mentor who actively listens and asks clarifying questions. Often mentees will arrive at a solution themselves during these active listening sessions.
4. **Good/knowledgeable Role Model:** A good mentor is an all-around successful individual, but especially in the area of the mentorship focus. They show effective professional practices whether deliberately taught or practiced. Good mentors are professionally knowledgeable but also unafraid to admit there is a limit to their own knowledge.
5. **Effective Facilitator:** Mentors who can guide and provide resources beyond their own knowledge base are valuable for early-career faculty. Mentors are not expected to provide fulfill all the mentee's needs. However, a good mentor can provide resources and connect the mentee to others who can assist in solving problems.
6. **Consistent Partner:** A good mentor is available for the mentee on a regular and consistent basis. Checking in at regularly scheduled intervals and just being there when something urgent comes up is valuable for the mentee.
7. **Altruistic Supporter:** An effective mentor should have the best interests of the mentee at heart and create a sense of "team" with the mentee. The mentor should be approachable and take a genuine interest in the mentee's ideas and activities. A good mentor should also be accepting and understanding of the mentee's decisions or chosen paths, even if they are somewhat contrary to the advice given.

Adapted from J. Nakamura, D. Sheronoff, and C. Hooker (2009) and the UNL Faculty TipSheet: How to be a Successful Mentor

Responsibilities of the Faculty Mentor

Early-career faculty often come from different organizations with different organizational structures and cultures. It may be confusing to navigate the UNL organizational chart or know all that the university, college and department offer to early-career faculty. Early-career faculty need to know the "methodology" of success to maximize their potential.

Here is a list of suggested responsibilities for the faculty mentor(s) adapted from Cornell University's best practices in mentoring. Note that not all items on this list are appropriate for every mentor:

1. Assist the mentee in understanding the academic culture of the department, the college and the institution. This includes providing the mentee with information and guidance that is in accordance with ***current*** department, college, campus, and university guidelines/bylaws and requirements.
2. Provide advice on developing a successful research agenda
3. Help the mentee to set career aspirations and goals.

4. Help the mentee to identify grants and other internal and external funding mechanisms and provide advice on how to successfully compete for funding.
5. Assist the mentee with finding support for teaching, including pedagogical methods, technologies, and course development.
6. Provide advice on actions addressing specific problems the mentee encounters.
7. Assist the mentee with understanding the tenure and evaluation process, including specific departmental criteria and expectations.
8. Assist the mentee in the development of social and professional networks and facilitate connections with senior/influential colleagues.
9. Help the mentee to navigate work-life demands, including identifying information about policies and support for work-life balance.
10. Provide information and guidance on departmental and college criteria for evaluating research, service, and teaching post-tenure.

While there are many different approaches to successful mentorship, adhering to the following guidelines can improve mentoring effectiveness:

1. **Know your boundaries and clarify expectations.** Be clear on what you can offer to the mentee and don't be afraid to point to other resources if you cannot assist in a particular area.
2. **Develop and adhere to a meeting schedule.** In partnership with the mentee specify how frequently you meet with him/her. If face-to-face meetings are not possible, be open to alternatives such as Zoom, telephone, etc.
3. **Be welcoming and enthusiastic.** By being positive in both words and gestures you can help the mentee adapt to the departmental and college social structures. Body language speaks loud and clear, even when no words are spoken.
4. **Be mindful of boundaries when collaborating.** A good mentor is deeply committed to supporting their mentee's success and may, at times, see opportunities where collaboration could be mutually beneficial. However, it is equally important to maintain clear boundaries: the mentoring relationship should never create pressure for a mentee to include their mentor as a co-author. Co-authorship should arise only from genuine, substantive contributions, ensuring that both mentor and mentee can engage in the relationship with trust, respect, and clarity.
5. **Provide specific information about as many topics as you can.** There are often informal rules of the profession and navigating the department, college and institution that when followed lead to success. Help early-career faculty find support they will need and make them aware of career-enhancing opportunities and associated timelines (e.g., internal and external grant and award deadlines, submission deadlines for key conferences, high-impact/visibility professional service). Guidance on balancing their research, teaching and service obligations can be very helpful for early career faculty. Also, guidance on when to say "no" and "yes" to service activities may also be helpful to protect their time as pre-tenured faculty.
6. **Share your own experience and what lessons you learned.** Hearing about your challenges and successes can be helpful for early career faculty and more seasoned faculty. Over time, circumstances and policies change, so for high-stakes guidance such as tenure expectations, it is important to provide mentees with information consistent with current college and department policies. Mentors should keep in mind that departmental circumstances and contractual conditions evolve over time. New faculty may negotiate or receive opportunities and resources (such as course buyouts or start-up packages) that differ from what the mentor experienced or currently has. Recognizing these differences with understanding can help foster a positive and productive mentoring relationship.
7. **Provide opportunities that mentees do not know about.** Suggest their names for national and international societies and meetings to widen their visibility to the world. Help them establish and maintain a network of colleagues.

8. **Create an individual development plan with the early career faculty member.** Having a plan with short- and long-term goals is crucial to an early career faculty member's success. Review this plan with the mentee at least annually and make changes when needed.
9. **Give constructive feedback and praise when deserved.** Always present feedback in a private and non-threatening context with specific suggestions for improvement. Focus on the future optimistically and do not dwell on past mistakes.
10. **Be specific on expectations.** Explain the specific expectations for getting tenure and/or promotion to the mentee and construct a roadmap with the mentee to achieve those expectations. For example, if publication in high-impact journals is necessary, explain which those journals are and create a roadmap with the mentee that will achieve that expectation.
11. **Communicate effectively.** This is key and is often best to do in-person rather than by email. Problems should be discussed as soon as possible and not left to fester.

Mentees

A mentee is someone who participates in a dynamic and reciprocal relationship with their mentor, focusing on mutual growth and development. The mentee benefits from the mentor's experience, advice, and network, which are critical for navigating career paths and overcoming professional challenges.

Characteristics of Effective Mentees

Just like mentors, each mentee will be different. A successful mentee may have some or all of these qualities:

1. **Appreciative:** An appreciative mentee recognizes that their mentor is taking time out of their schedule to help them develop and grow. They show their mentor they appreciate their time by preparing for meetings, and coming with questions, comments or articles to share. They ask themselves, what do I need from this meeting? They define goals for meetings ahead of time by knowing what they want to discuss and accomplish during their meeting. When requesting feedback, they give their mentor enough time to review their work.
2. **Self-disciplined**: A self-disciplined mentee is capable of regulating their actions, emotions, and impulses to stay focused on their goals. They consistently prioritize their long-term objectives over short-term distractions, ensuring they meet deadlines and fulfill commitments. This quality helps them stay organized and maintain a steady progress towards their goals.
3. **Diligent**: A diligent mentee shows a consistent and earnest effort in their work. They are thorough, attentive to details, and willing to put in the necessary time and energy to complete tasks to the best of their ability. Their hard work and dedication reflect their commitment to growth and learning.
4. **Courteous**: Courteous mentees demonstrate respect and consideration for their mentors and peers. They communicate politely, listen actively, and show appreciation for the time and effort their mentors invest in them. This respectful behavior fosters a positive and productive mentoring relationship.
5. **Responsible**: A responsible mentee takes ownership of their actions and decisions. They are reliable, meet their obligations, and are accountable for their progress. This includes being prepared for meetings, following through on assignments, and being honest about their challenges and successes.
6. **Collaborative**: Collaborative mentees work well with others and value teamwork. They actively participate in group discussions, share ideas, and seek input from their mentors and peers. Their willingness to engage in cooperative efforts helps create a supportive learning environment.
7. **Consistent**: Consistency in a mentee means they show a steady and reliable approach to their work and interactions. They maintain regular communication with their mentors, follow through on commitments, and show sustained effort in their endeavors. This reliability helps build trust and ensures ongoing progress.

8. **Persistent**: Persistent mentees do not give up easily, even when faced with obstacles or setbacks. They demonstrate resilience and strong determination to achieve their goals. Their ability to persevere through challenges and continue striving for improvement is crucial for long-term success.

These qualities contribute to a mentee's ability to effectively engage with their mentor, take advantage of learning opportunities, and achieve their personal and professional goals.

Adapted from Gurnani, B., Kaur, K., Bhandari, S., Gireesh, P., & Sisodia, P. (2022/09//) and the UNL Faculty TipSheet: How to be a Successful Mentee

Responsibilities of the Mentee

Being mentored as a student is very different from being mentored by a colleague, especially when that colleague may vote on your tenure or promotion. We want to forge the best relationship possible so we can get the guidance, support, advocacy, and expertise we need. Therefore, as a mentee, we have responsibilities to the mentor-mentee relationship to help that relationship be as productive and beneficial as possible.

1. **Remember your mentor is a volunteer.** Your mentor is taking time out of their schedule to help you develop and grow. Show your mentor you appreciate their time by preparing for your meetings, and come with questions, comments or articles to share. Ask yourself, what do I need from this meeting? Define goals for meetings ahead of time by knowing what you want to discuss and accomplish during your meeting. When requesting feedback, give your mentor enough time to review your work. Remember, we are all busy.
2. **Be open about your needs and communicate them.** Tell your mentor exactly what you need from them. Be honest if you need something to change and let them know if you don't understand something. Give them a specific goal that you need help to accomplish.
3. **Take action.** Put the new skills you've worked on with them to use in your everyday work. If you've asked for help writing a document, have a draft ready for them to look over. If they've given you something to work on, make sure you do that in time for your next session. If they've opened doors for you, make sure you walk through them!
4. **Ask questions.** Ask thought provoking questions that lead to discussions, questions that only your mentor can answer about their careers and experiences at the university.
5. **Be open to receiving feedback.** Your mentor is there to help you, and it is their job to provide honest, sometimes critical feedback. Be ready to receive their feedback, and then decide whether or not you want to take it. If you disagree with them, examine your attitude. Your reluctance may have more to do with a fear of leaving your comfort zone or an unwillingness to change than the quality of their advice. If their suggestions don't fit your larger goal, let them know.

From the UNL Faculty TipSheet – How to be A Good Mentee.

Resources for Mentors and Mentees

Sample Mentoring Agreement 1

Consider using this sample mentoring agreement, or an original one that you, as mentor and mentee, create together. Your mentoring relationship will be strengthened if you believe that your mentoring relationship will be strengthened by having a written, mutual agreement of your responsibilities, roles, and expectations.

Introduction

As mentor and mentee, we are voluntarily entering into a mentoring relationship from which we expect mutual benefits and investment. We want this to be a rewarding, rich experience with our time together focused on the professional/personal/academic development of the mentee and the growth of our relationship. With this goal in mind, we have agreed upon the terms and conditions of our relationship as outlined in this agreement.

Goals

We hope to achieve...	**To accomplish this we will...**

Privacy

Mentors and mentees will keep information shared through the mentoring relationship private. However, mentors or mentees who are university academic or administrative officers (AAOs) have reporting obligations related to information disclosed about sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, or any protected class discrimination. Information disclosed about these issues will be shared with the Office of Institutional Equity.

Frequency of Meetings

We will attempt to meet at least _____ time(s) a week / every other week / per month for _____

hour(s). If we cannot attend a scheduled meeting, we agree to notify one another in advance.

Duration of Relationship

We have determined that our mentoring relationship will continue as long as we both feel comfortable or until: _____

No-Fault Termination

We are committed to frequent, open, and honest communication in our relationship. We will discuss and attempt to resolve any conflicts as they arise. If, however, one of us needs to terminate the relationship for any reason, we agree to abide by one another's decision.

In case of changing commitments, incompatibility, or where the mentoring relationship is no longer constructive, either the mentee or mentor should seek confidential advice to end the relationship from the unit leader. The unit leader should make changes and assign a new pairing without prejudice or fault as soon as possible.

Mentor Printed Name _____

Mentor Signature _____

Date _____

Mentee Printed Name _____

Mentee Signature _____

Date _____

Adapted from the University of Nebraska and the University of Iowa.

Sample Mentoring Agreement 2

Introduction

Mentoring is a cornerstone of professional growth and academic success. A values-based mentoring relationship is grounded in mutual respect, trust, and a shared commitment to fostering personal and professional development. This agreement serves as a framework to guide mentoring partners in clarifying expectations, setting goals, and establishing shared values that will shape the mentoring experience.

This is not a contract, but rather a flexible tool to support meaningful dialogue and alignment between mentors and mentees. It can be revisited and revised as needs and goals evolve. Effective mentoring relationships prioritize open communication, mutual learning, confidentiality, and accountability. This agreement should reflect the unique priorities and values of the individuals involved, while promoting a supportive and inclusive mentoring culture.

Values Matrix

Complete together with your mentor.

Mentor's Values	
Mentee's Values	
Unit Values	
Shared Values	Agreed upon values for a successful and mutually beneficial partnership
Values Understanding	Where do our individual, shared and organization values intersect, where do they not? What is there to learn from this understanding of the values of each?
Ground Rules & Expectations	Behaviors and guidelines for your partnership
Goals	Mentee Goals – what does the mentee hope to get from this relationship? Mentor Goals – what the does the mentor hope to get from this relationship?

Communication and Meeting Preference	Schedule Meetings (F2F/Zoom if necessary) What communication method is preferred outside of meeting times (i.e. email, Teams, text, phone, etc)?

Frequency of Meetings

Meeting #	Dates (8 required, 12 preferred)	Meeting #	Dates (8 required, 12 preferred)
1		7	
2		8	
3		9	
4		10	
5		11	
6		12	

Confidentiality

I agree to keep conversation confidential unless all parties agree to do otherwise, or in cases where mandatory reporting is required.

Mentor Signature_____Date_____

Mentee Signature_____Date_____

Adopted from mentoring materials shared by Nebraska and Ohio State University Extension Divisions

Sample First Meeting Checklist for Mentors

It will be the responsibility of your prospective mentee to set up a first meeting and steer the conversation, but keep these topics in mind as you move through your initial discussion with them to ensure you are both on the same page about the mentoring relationship, potential timelines, and other important topics.

☐ Read through relevant materials on the mentoring relationship, your role, and establishing goals

☐ Actively listen as your mentee explains their goals for meeting and what they hope to gain from the relationship

☐ Discuss and record your mentee's short-term and long-term goals

☐ Review your mentee's current progress towards their goals

☐ Explore useful academic, professional, and/or personal developmental experiences in relation to your mentee's goals

☐ Discuss and record options for completing these SMART goals and target dates for completion

☐ Amend the mentoring goals as needed to focus on your mentee's growth over time

☐ Discuss and record with your mentee the boundaries of your relationship

☐ Discuss and record any issues that may impact your mentoring relationship, such as time, lack of confidence, newness to the role, academic or professional deadlines, etc.

☐ Arrange a consistent meeting schedule for check-ins with your mentee and discuss preferred methods of communication outside of meetings (email, phone, etc.)

☐ Encourage your mentee to exchange feedback with you on a regular basis and determine a consistent schedule for these conversations

☐ Record topics discussed and feedback given at each meeting

☐ Request that all meeting records be kept private and in a safe place for future reference

☐ Complete the Mentoring Session Self-Reflection worksheet and save it with your other mentoring records

Adapted from the University of Nebraska and the University of Iowa.

Sample Mentoring Session Self-Reflection Log (Mentors/Mentees)

Name: _____ Role: Mentor / Mentee Date: _____

What was discussed during the session?

What did I learn or take away?

What went well?

What would I do differently next time?

Next steps or action items:

Adapted from the University of Nebraska and the University of Iowa.

Additional Resources for Mentors

Books on Mentoring Available at UNL

Lunsford, L. G. (2021). *The mentor's guide: Five steps to build a successful mentor program* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Starr, J. (2014). *The mentoring manual: Your step by step guide to being a better mentor*. Pearson Education.

Starr, J. (2021). *The coaching manual* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.

Zachary, L. J., & Fain, L. Z. (2022). *The mentor's guide: Facilitating effective learning relationships* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Web Resources on Mentoring

Appreciative Inquiry Questions – PositivePsychology.com
A comprehensive guide featuring over 100 Appreciative Inquiry (AI) questions designed to foster positive change and growth within organizations and individuals.
Access the resource

Appreciative Inquiry Process – PositivePsychology.com
An in-depth explanation of the AI process, detailing the four stages: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny, aimed at facilitating positive organizational change.
Explore the process

Appreciative Inquiry Resources – Coaching Leaders
A collection of tools and materials for leaders and coaches to implement AI practices effectively within their teams and organizations.
Visit the resource

Center for Mentoring Excellence
An organization dedicated to promoting effective mentoring practices through workshops, resources, and expert guidance.
Learn more

Mentoring Resources – Center for Mentoring Excellence
A selection of books and articles offering insights into building and sustaining successful mentoring relationships.
Browse the resources

Resources for Administrators - Matching Mentors and Mentees

Sample Pre-Mentoring Reflection for Mentees

Before engaging with a mentor, use this worksheet to think about what you would like to gain from your mentoring relationship and if this person is the right fit to be your mentor. By clarifying your own expectations, you will be able to have more productive discussions about your needs and goals with your mentor. This worksheet is a jumping off point, so keep thinking about questions you find important and add additional items as needed.

The reasons I want a mentor are to:

_____ Receive encouragement and support

_____ Increase my confidence when dealing with professionals

_____ Challenge myself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives I may not have considered

_____ Gain a realistic perspective of the workplace

_____ Get advice on how to balance work and other responsibilities and set priorities

_____ Receive affirmation towards my social identity with regards to my discipline or career path

_____ Gain knowledge of “dos and don’ts”

_____ Learn how to operate in a network of talented peers

_____ Get critical feedback on my work and progress as I move through a project

Other _____

I hope my mentor and I will:

_____ Tour my mentor’s workplace/explore various teaching or work sites

_____ Go to formal mentoring events together

_____ Meet over coffee, lunch, or dinner

_____ Go to educational/professional development events such as lectures, conferences, or talks

_____ Go to local, regional, and national professional meetings together

Other _____

I hope my mentor and I will discuss:

_____ Academic subjects that will benefit my future career

_____ Academic or professional projects relevant to my continued growth

_____ Career options and job preparation

_____ The realities of the department, program, or career I am interested in

_____ My mentor's work

_____ How to network/be interviewed

_____ Writing resumes, CVs, cover letters, and/or personal statements

_____ Potential connections that would benefit my future scholarship or career

_____ How to manage work and family life

_____ Personal dreams and life circumstances

_____ Other _____

The things I feel are off limits in my mentoring relationship include:

_____ Disclosing our conversations to others

_____ Meeting in non-public places

_____ Sharing intimate aspects of our lives

_____ Meeting behind closed doors

_____ Other _____

The amount of time that I can spend with my mentor is likely to be, on average (circle one):

1 2 3 4 hours each week / every other week / per month

Other Time _____

Adapted from the University of Nebraska and the University of Iowa.

Sample Mentee Personal Strengths Evaluation

Before you begin a new mentoring relationship, take a step back and ask yourself honestly where you are and how you are doing right now. Thinking deeply about the present will help you better envision your plan for the future. You can share the information you gain from this simple SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) reflection with your mentor during your first meeting as you start to plan goals and develop strategies to maximize your mentoring experience.

What do you want your career to look like in next 3-5 years?

What are my top three strengths – three things I feel good about and am proud of?

1.

2.

3.

Imagine that you are exactly where you want to be in your career in three- or five-years, what are the three biggest things you've accomplished between now and then?

1.

2.

3.

What are the three most important things I can **do** over the next three to six months to grow toward my those accomplishments?

1.

2.

3.

Adapted from the University of Nebraska and the University of Iowa.

Sample Pre-mentoring Reflection for Mentors

Before engaging with a mentee, use this worksheet to take some time and reflect back on your own experiences with mentoring and how much time you can currently invest into a relationship. By clarifying your own strengths, experiences, and practical approaches, you will be able to communicate more effectively with mentees. This worksheet is a jumping off point, so keep thinking about questions you find important.

Reflection Questions:

- What kind(s) of mentoring did you have as a student or professional?

- What did you enjoy about your mentoring experiences?

- What did you dislike about your mentoring experiences?

- What could have made those relationships and experiences a better form of support for you?

- How well did your mentor(s) help you accomplish your professional/academic/personal goals?

- How well did your mentor(s) prepare you for your academic or professional career?

- What do you wish your mentor(s) had done that they didn't do?

- How are you engaging with diversity, equity, and inclusion in your unit, classrooms, and communities so that you can be a more effective and understanding mentor?

- What kind of mentor would you like to be?

- What kind of mentoring relationship would you prefer? Formal or informal?The things I feel are off limits in my mentoring relationship include:

_____ Disclosing our conversations to others

_____ Meeting in non-public places

_____ Sharing intimate aspects of our lives

_____ Meeting behind closed doors

_____ Other _

The amount of time that I can spend with my mentee is likely to be, on average (circle one):

1 2 3 4 hours each week / every other week / per month

Other Time:

Adapted from the University of Nebraska and the University of Iowa.

Strategies for Networking and Finding Mentors

The importance of informal mentoring must be recognized within the structured formal mentoring program. Formal recognition of the relationship between these two forms of mentoring places responsibility on the campus to ensure the candidate, in fact, has informal mentors. If the units and university pride themselves on the value informal mentoring offers, they must take steps to ensure that it is indeed taking place. Responsibility for developing a breadth of mentors should be shared between the individuals, both mentor and mentees, and the organization. Accordingly, many tools can be used to develop a network of mentors.

Ensuring accountability for informal mentoring varies on the objective. When the focus is on professional development, the shared responsibility could be shaped to include some of the following elements.

- Formal mentors must affirmatively inquire about the ability to establish mentors during conversations. Even casual conversation about an individual's acclamation to the unit will provide signals about the success of identifying individuals who might serve as informal mentors.
- Early in the year, the unit leader or their designee could offer funds or campus gathering ideas for mentor/mentee pairings to meet informally. This early and proactive message, along with periodic reminders, to engage on matters oftentimes expected to be discussed in formal settings, will help establish a strong positive mentoring unit culture. For example, units can design regular social (e.g., Faculty Mixers) and professional opportunities (e.g., interdisciplinary collaboration events) for connecting faculty members within and across their disciplines to widen their professional networks. Within such groups informal mentoring relationships can naturally evolve as faculty members become better acquainted with each other.
- The annual report for all faculty members should include a question seeking information about the mentoring activities undertaken by the faculty member. Mid- and Late-career Faculty should also report on mentoring related activities including mentoring they have received, efforts to build their mentoring skills, and their mentoring engagement with the early and mid-career faculty members in the unit. In particular, the report should elicit information about efforts to guide or provide connections on matters as listed on the NCFDD mentoring map. Early-career faculty members should also state whether they have been able to discuss their progress on the mentoring map with their formal mentor(s).

In contrast, when the objective of the mentoring relationship relates to leadership or the creation of a safe space, an apprenticeship model could be employed. Using an apprenticeship model can potentially be a powerful mentoring structure, particularly to create pathways for long-term growth as a campuswide or unit leader. A few examples of current campus relationships that lend themselves naturally to the apprenticeship model include:

- **Committee Service:** If a faculty member serves on a committee for three years, they could first serve as a committee member, then as vice-chair, and then finally as the committee chair. In this way, the faculty member can first learn about the purpose of the committee and how it functions and then experience each of the roles they fulfill.
- **Academic Leadership:** Whenever a faculty member is selected or elected to a position of leadership, they may shadow the individual who has (most) recently served in that capacity or meet regularly for peer coaching and/or consultation until they have transitioned comfortably into the role.
- **Affinity groups**: The campus could use the apprenticeship model as new faculty members join the organization and others are promoted within the organization. Likewise, as interdisciplinary scholarship increases the structure of problem-solving academic investigative teams can also provide opportunities for informal mentoring and new opportunities to strengthen research and teaching.

Evaluating Mentoring

Effective mentoring programs include opportunities for evaluation and feedback by the mentors and mentees. This evaluation and feedback can include regular self-reflections, or more formal rubrics used to document the effectiveness of mentoring activities and reward effective mentors through the faculty evaluation process or recognition awards.

Who will evaluate mentoring?

Your plan must make clear who will evaluate mentoring and who will coordinate mentor evaluations. Possible responsible parties for evaluation may include Deans (and/or designated mentoring coordinators), Department Executive Officers (and/or designated mentoring coordinators), or Unit Mentoring Committees.

Commitment and Apportionment Considerations

Pathways for mentor evaluation require clear expectations in the form of commitment and apportionment. The Fountain and Newcomer review points to numerous previous studies identifying that "mentors need the capacity and time to mentor effectively…". They also noted that the mentor trait rated most important (by mentees) in facilitating effective mentoring is mentor capacity (i.e., a mentor's available time). (Fountain & Newcomer)

Time Commitment

Mentoring is one of the most meaningful forms of service, offering long-term benefits to both the individual and the academic community. The time required for mentoring will vary significantly based upon the mentoring model and will vary as the relationship develops. For example, dyadic mentoring or group mentoring multiple mentees will require more time and effort than collective (networked) mentoring of a single mentee.

Apportionment

The unit in charge of the mentoring program will need to decide if formal service credit is provided for mentoring activities beyond a simple listing of the activity as part of an annual update. An appropriate allocation of apportionment should be set by the mentoring program and the participating unit. Such an appropriate apportionment might look like five percent (5%) effort equating to approximately 8-9 hours/month which has been explored by at least one UNL unit. It is recommended that four hours/month or approximately 2.5% effort would be a reasonable estimate of minimum time required for a one-to-one mentoring relationship, whether that ratio reflects dyadic or collective mentoring. However, a unit may choose a different, lower or higher, minimum time requirement. Whatever value is chosen by a unit, that value should be fair to the mentor(s), should be cognizant of the challenge of recruiting mentors, and should match the expectations for mentoring. In particular, understanding of the time commitment required for the mentoring model will enable the evaluating unit to fairly weigh the mentoring contributions.

Evaluation Support

Resources, primarily time, will be required to conduct and implement evaluations. In fact, evaluation of mentoring could be a significant duty within a service or administrative assignment. The model selected must be feasible to implement on the scope required by the mentoring unit or group.

Evaluation Timeline

Some survey or assessment should be conducted pre-mentoring and post-mentoring. Optimally, there would be opportunity for formative assessment and feedback early in the mentoring experience. Potential evaluation models can be found later in this section under *Example Mentoring Evaluation Tools*.

Given that the evaluation of the mentors will be considered as part of annual evaluations (and perhaps as part of reappointments and other evaluations), the evaluation must be submitted in time for inclusion in the mentor's annual update (understanding that this may need to be adjusted depending upon the appointing unit).

Finally, those coordinating the mentoring program must commit to inspecting mentor evaluations and determining if particular mentor/mentee pairings are working.

Evaluation Structure

There are several possible inputs listed below for mentoring evaluation and some validated instruments have been reported (Gansky, et., al.).

- Observation of mentoring sessions.
- Surveys (of mentor, mentee, and other stakeholders); note that some standard evaluation tools have been described (Berk, et. al.).
- Self-reflection from participants (University of Wisconsin).
- Interviews with mentors: activities; time commitment; evidence of efficacy.
- Interviews with mentees: (value of the mentoring)
- Focus groups (for example, groups of mentees or mentors).

Adapted from University of North Carolina

Evaluation Guide

Regardless of the approach, there should be some overall guide to illustrate expectations for evaluation. It is not necessary to have a formal rubric, but the guide should set out areas of expectation, what might be used to evaluate effort and achievement within each area. Note that this guide will also be an important component in mentor training.

The evaluation should consider the nature of the mentoring program. If the program is externally structured in terms of design, then evaluation is based upon the judgment of the mentor's participation in required training and mentoring activities. If mentoring is dyadic, then evaluation will need to consider mentor design and organization of activities.

In any case when evaluation of the mentor is being conducted by a person or body distinct from the group conducting the campus review (annual merit, promotion, reappointment, or tenure), then the evaluator's written recommendation must be submitted to the appropriate evaluating unit.

Precautions Associated with Evaluations

Those coordinating and evaluating mentoring must be cognizant of the power imbalance that will likely exist between mentors, typically between well-established faculty, and mentees who are nearly always less experienced faculty. If evaluation suggests significant concerns about the mentor/mentee dynamic or if the evaluation is likely to be strongly

critical of mentor activities, the evaluator must consult with the person in charge of the mentoring program or a unit leader, as needed.

Sample Mentoring Evaluation Tools

Observation of Mentoring Sessions – Sample Checklist

Observer: _____ Date: _____
Mentor: _____ Mentee: _____

Criteria	Observed (Y/N)	Comments
Clear goals set for the session		
Active listening by mentor		
Respectful, professional communication		
Mentor provides actionable feedback		
Mentee actively engaged in discussion		
Evidence of trust and openness		
Use of inclusive and affirming language		
Session ends with next steps or follow-up plan		

Sample Mentor Self-Assessment of Mentoring Skills

(University of Wisconsin-Madison)

The University of Wisconsin-Madison has developed a self-reflection rubric called the Mentoring Competency Assessment (MCA). This rubric can be completed by mentors to assess improvement in their mentoring skills. A sub-set of the dimensions covered by this self-assessment could be included in a rubric completed annually by both the mentor and the mentee. The results of this rubric, along with documentation of specific mentoring activities completed during a calendar year, could be used as evidence of the mentor's dedication and excellence in the guidance of the mentee. The assessment of mentoring effectiveness should also attempt to capture the impact of mentoring activities on the mentee's professional career.

Rate how skilled you feel you are in each of the following areas: Think about your skill generally, with all your mentees. Only choose 'not applicable' (NA) when a skill cannot be applied to any of your mentees.

	Not at all skilled			**Moderately skilled**			**Extremely skilled**	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A
1. Active listening								
2. Providing constructive feedback								
3. Establishing a relationship based on trust								
4. Identifying and accommodating different communication styles								
5. Employing strategies to improve communication with mentees								

	Not at all skilled			Moderately skilled			Extremely skilled	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A
6.Coordinating effectively with your mentees' other mentors								
7.Working with mentees to set clear expectations of the mentoring relationship								
8. Aligning your expectations with your mentees'								
9. Considering how personal and professional differences may impact expectations								
10.Working with mentees to set research goals								
11. Helping mentees develop strategies to meet goals								
12.Accurately estimating your mentees' level of scientific knowledge								
13. Accurately estimating your mentees' ability to conduct research								
14. Employing strategies to enhance your mentees' knowledge and abilities								

	Not at all skilled			**Moderately skilled**			**Extremely skilled**	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A
15. Motivating your mentees								
16. Building mentees' confidence								
17. Stimulating your mentees' creativity								
18. Acknowledging your mentees' professional contributions								
19. Negotiating a path to professional independence with your mentees								
20. Taking into account the biases and prejudices you bring to the mentor/mentee relationship								
21. Working effectively with mentees whose personal background is different from your own (age, race, gender, class, region, culture, religion, family composition etc.)								
22. Helping your mentees network effectively								

	Not at all skilled			Moderately skilled			Extremely skilled	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A
23. Helping your mentees set career goals								
24. Helping your mentees balance work with their personal life								
25. Understanding your impact as a role model								
26. Helping your mentees acquire resources (e.g. grants, etc.)								

Sample Surveys

Mentor Survey

How confident do you feel in your role as a mentor?

Extremely Confident	Confident	Somewhat Confident	Indifferent	Not Confident at All

How often do you meet with your mentee?

1-2x a Week	1-2x a Month	1-2x a Semester	Once	Not at all

What needs of the mentee(s) are being met by the mentoring relationship?

What needs of the mentee(s) are not being met by the mentoring relationship?
What needs of the mentor are being met, and not being met, by the mentoring relationship?

What challenges have you encountered?

Does you feel your unit value your mentoring activity.

Extremely Valued	Valued	Somewhat Valued	Unsure if Valued	Not Valued at All

Mentee Survey

My mentor provides information on the University promotion process and expectations.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strong Disagree

My mentor provides strategies for promotion.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strong Disagree

My mentor creates networking opportunities with colleagues for me.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strong Disagree

My mentor provides strategies of how to balance multiple professional responsibilities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strong Disagree

My mentor provides strategies of how to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strong Disagree

Our meetings are frequent and useful.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strong Disagree

I feel supported in my professional development.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Disagree	Strong Disagree

What additional needs could be met by this mentoring relationship?

Sample Interview Assessments

Interview Guide – Mentors

- What types of mentoring activities do you engage in?
- How much time do you spend mentoring?
- What do you consider your most effective mentoring strategy?
- What support would help you mentor more effectively?
- How do you assess whether your mentoring is making a difference?

Interview Guide – Mentees

- How would you describe your relationship with your mentor?
- What aspects of mentoring have been most valuable?
- Are there areas where you wish you had more support?
- Have you noticed a change in your confidence, productivity, or sense of belonging?
- Would you recommend this mentor to others?

Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator Guide – Mentors/Mentees

- Introduce purpose of the group and ensure confidentiality.
  Sample Prompts:
- What does effective mentoring look like in your recent experience?
- What barriers have you experienced to good mentoring?
- What has helped you build a strong mentor/mentee relationship?
- What changes would make mentoring more inclusive and supportive?

Recognizing Mentoring

Mentoring a new faculty member can be very time consuming for the faculty member. When choosing recognitions for mentoring, units should be mindful of creating structures that avoid favoritism. For example, ***when a unit provides recognition for mentoring activity the unit should be careful to avoid using a particular group of faculty more frequently than another so as to avoid the unintended inequality that arises between those faculty who are consistently not chosen as mentors***. The following are a few ideas on how to address recognizing mentoring. Some of these ideas maybe more feasible for some units while others are less feasible. Units are encouraged to consider other possible rewards and recognitions that are not listed and potentially more appropriate for their unit and faculty.

Annual Merit Evaluation

At the simplest, recognition of mentoring activity may take place through the annual evaluation and salary increase process. However, given that mentoring will likely be lumped in with other service activities, the level of service apportionment (varies widely across the campus and seldom higher than ten percent) may effectively block providing any additional reward for mentors who are already doing their share (or more) of service.

Simple Recognition

Mentoring swag (e.g. a UNL Mentor fleece jacket) or gift certificates.

Social events

Social gatherings for mentors, mentees, mentors-plus-mentees. Perhaps a weekly or monthly meal that brings groups together?

Awards

A relatively frequent award recognizing mentoring, for example an Outstanding Mentor Award that is given out by year, semester, or month. Many UNL colleges already have such awards for mentoring or faculty service, but even a certificate of appreciation or names recognized at different unit levels could be considered (Iowa State University).

Celebration

A celebratory event (lunch, dinner, or reception) attended by mentors and mentees, mentoring coordinators and administrators.

Sample Mentoring Activities

Pathways for effective evaluation and recognition of mentoring need clear expectations regarding the nature of related activities. The list below, adapted from components found at the University of North Carolina Center for Faculty Excellence, is intended to be illustrative and not comprehensive. A look at the Iowa State program is also interesting.

1. **Career Enhancing Mentoring:** Those aspects of the relationship that enhance learning the ropes, strengthening professional skills and scholarship, and preparing for advancement in the organization and within the mentee's professional field.

- Development of short-term and long-term development plans.
- Providing mentoring related to major unit, college, and university requirements (i.e., annual merit updates/reviews; reappointment, and promotion and tenure files):
  - Ensuring mentee understanding of the reviews, including required documentation.
  - Reviewing mentee's draft documents.
  - Assisting mentees with interpretation of evaluations.
- Providing feedback on draft publications and external proposals or, if this is not feasible due to disciplinary differences, identifying others who can help.
- Mentoring focused on strategic approaches to unit, college, university, and/or professional service opportunities.

2. **Psychosocial Mentoring:** those aspects of the relationship that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in a professional role.

- Serving as a peer evaluator (whether formal or informal), when this is feasible.
- Offer input and support related to submission of publications and external proposals, or, if this is not feasible due to disciplinary differences, identifying others who can help.
- Allow time to discuss areas of concern/frustration for the mentee.

3. **Networking:** exposure to positive, career-building opportunities (individuals and resources) at the right time.

- As warranted, connecting mentee to campus and external resources for teaching (e.g., CTT), or research (AD-Research; ORED Sponsored Programs), faculty development (NCFDD), or personal issues (HR, EAS).
- Recommending professional, university, or department service opportunities.
- Discussing networking in each area of apportionment and assisting mentees in establishing contacts.
- When appropriate, nominating the mentee for awards *or* bringing the nominee's file to the attention of those better placed to make these nominations.

4. **Mentor-only activities:** Efforts related to mentor training, networking, and reporting.

If expectations for mentoring are expressed in terms of activities, it is suggested that mentors be given some kind of guidance as to the number and class of activities expected.

Adapted from University of North Carolina and Iowa State University

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