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Developing a mentoring program on a college campus

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Abstract

The past and continued use of mentoring confirms its reputation, which is overwhelmingly positive in the literature (Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America [BBBSA], 1995; Bolman & Deal, 1993; Bonilla, Pickron, & Tatum, 1994; Collins, 1983; Furano, Roaf, Styles, & Branch, 1993; Head, Reiman, Thies-Sprinthall, 1992; Heller & Sindelar, 1991; Jackson & Simpson, 1994; Johnsrud, 1994; Kram, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1988d; Millis, 1994; Morrow & Styles, 1995; Otto, 1994; Terrell & Hassell, 1994; Weinberger, 1992; Wolfe, 1992; Wunsch, 1994b). Mentoring is firmly rooted in history, but the solid foundation of mentoring may lead to misconceptions about its power.

DEVELOPING A MENTORING PROGRAM

ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS

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by

Jennifer Lynn Dilocker

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The past and continued use of mentoring confirms its reputation, which is overwhelmingly positive in the literature (Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America [BBBSA], 1995; Bolman & Deal, 1993; Bonilla, Pickron, & Tatum, 1994; Collins, 1983; Furano, Roaf, Styles, & Branch, 1993; Head, Reiman, Thies-Sprinthall, 1992; Heller & Sindelar, 1991; Jackson & Simpson, 1994; Johnsrud, 1994; Kram, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1988d; Millis, 1994; Morrow & Styles, 1995; Otto, 1994; Terrell & Hassell, 1994; Weinberger, 1992; Wolfe, 1992; Wunsch, 1994b). Mentoring is firmly rooted in history, but the solid foundation of mentoring may lead to misconceptions about its power.

Reports of mentoring often consist of testimonials from those who have had positive mentoring experiences (Furano et al., 1993; Head et al., 1992; Heller & Sindelar, 1991; Jackson & Simpson, 1994; Johnsrud, 1994; Kram, 1988c, 1988d; Morrow & Styles, 1995; Stanley, 1994; Terrell & Hassell, 1994; Wilson, 1994; Wunsch, 1994a, 1994b). Perceptions of mentoring based on such testimonials may mislead some to believe mentoring is a simple, straightforward process. In fact, the opposite is true.

Mentoring is very complex. The value of mentoring often diminishes when all factors are not considered during implementation and execution of the program. The most widespread myth is that mentoring is always positive (Braun, 1990). In fact, several factors could turn a potentially positive relationship into a disaster. An inappropriate reward system, the protege's over dependence on the mentor, or even opposite, the protege's desire to separate from the mentor could lead to the relationship's demise. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the considerations necessary to successfully implement a mentoring program on a college campus. This comprehensive awareness will allow the reader to recognize a greater spectrum of potential assets that mentoring can provide. The components that will be covered include: pre-program considerations, the phases of mentoring, and program evaluation.

<div align="center">Pre-Program Considerations</div>

A successful college mentoring program starts with thorough preparation. All resources and constituents on a college campus have to work together to create an atmosphere supportive of mentoring. It also involves careful consideration into developing an appropriate

program design, which leads to the successful
selection, matching, and training of program
participants.

Creating a Positive Mentoring Environment

The climate of the institution can either support
or suffocate a positive mentoring experience. Collins
(1983) and Enz (1992) relied on the institution to
construct and maintain an environment that encouraged
interaction and reflected a genuine interest in
mentoring. Enz (1992) further explained that the type
of assignments given to proteges, support systems in
place, and collaboration from all levels of
administration can send a strong message. Protege
assignments must be challenging, but not so much that
they are impossible to complete. In addition, support
systems have to be present for the proteges and their
mentors. Support from all levels of administration
gives the program more credibility.

Herr (1994) recognized the need of support from
all levels of constituents, particularly upper
management. A program without such support can be
misconstrued as giving special attention to those who
could not make it without advantages over the remaining

individuals (Johnsrud, 1994; Kram, 1988a).
Administrative support was re-emphasized by Wilson
(1994), Heller and Sindelar (1991), and Johnsrud (1994)
to be a critical component. An invitation to get
involved from a key individual, such as the department
head, adds credibility to the program (Heller &
Sindelar, 1991). Those in administration are in a
position to set the atmosphere for the entire
institution.

A collegial environment was seen by Millis (1994)
as the most supportive environment for mentoring.
Colleagues helping one another with constructive
criticism and fortifying encouragement is bound to
produce benefits. The institution can promote these
activities by educating all campus constituents.
Educational programs on mentoring help individuals on
campus understand mentoring and draw a connection
between the goals of the individuals and the
institution (Kram, 1988a, 1988b, 1988d; Wunsch, 1994b).
Education builds a strong foundation, but resources
need to be drawn from all parts of the institution.

Enz (1992) contended that resources of personnel,
facilities, time, financial commitments, and

administrative support are the building blocks of support for a successful mentor program. The type of incentive and reward system also sends a very strong message (Kram, 1988a; Wolfe, 1992). Money alone, although a prime incentive, is not sufficient. Release time, professional development opportunities, public recognition, and meaningful responsibilities offer a range of viable alternatives or supplements to financial incentives. An individual may want to mentor, but choose not to if there is not an adequate reward system in place (Wolfe, 1992).

However, too strong of a reward system may be misinterpreted. If the incentives are viewed as luring mechanisms, potential mentors may be leery of becoming involved. Externally, the reward system can be construed as a lack of interest or commitment to the program (Kram, 1988c). Every component of the program design must be carefully thought out to ensure success of the mentoring program.

Program Design

Although benefits are evident in both formal and informal mentoring, oversimplification of mentoring occurs more often in informal mentoring (BBBSA, 1995;

Heller & Sindelar, 1991; Terrell & Hassell, 1994; Wunsch, 1994a). The planning involved in structured programs allows the programs to be more proactive rather than reactive. To ensure exposure to all benefits, structured mentoring programs are advised (Furano et al., 1993; Head et al., 1992; Hein-Hutzell, 1994; Heller & Sindelar, 1991; Jackson & Simpson, 1994; Johnsrud, 1994; Kram, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1988d; Morrow & Styles, 1995; Terrell & Hassell, 1994; Wilson, 1994; Wunsch, 1994a, 1994b).

Herr (1994) emphasized that the mentoring program must be reflective of the structure and culture of the institution. The diverse array of institutions and people comprising those institutions represents a multitude of differing needs. Bureaucratic, collegial, and political institutions will formulate different agendas for the mentoring program, as will staff and students at various stages in their personal, professional, and developmental lives (Furano et al., 1993; Head et al., 1994; Kram, 1988b; Morrow & Styles, 1995; Otto, 1994). Heller and Sindelar (1991) suggested seeking input from all participants in the program once they are selected.

Selecting Participants

The selection of a mentor is one aspect of the literature that is not stated clearly. Stanley (1994) supported natural selection stating that a relationship based on individuals selecting one another would result in more sincere, concrete, honest feedback. Although a very valid point, the time constraints present in most academic relationships are not conducive to natural selection. However, mandatory involvement may cause anger and resentment, thus is not seen as a viable solution. Wolfe (1992) stated that if "mentors are to be chosen from a pool of qualified, willing volunteers rather than being appointed, then recruiting such individuals is a prerequisite to a selection process" (p. 107).

Otto (1994) listed desirable mentor characteristics that should be sought in recruiting efforts. The characteristics he mentioned included the willingness to share knowledge, honesty, competency, willingness to allow growth, willingness to give positive and critical feedback, and directness in dealing with the protege. Jackson and Simpson (1994) added that those who have previously served as mentors

are good candidates to be mentors again. A strong reputation and commitment to the field, usually through active involvement in organizations, were also recognized to be key qualities in being an effective mentor (Collins, 1983; Jackson & Simpson, 1994; Millis, 1994; Weinberger, 1994). Just as particular qualities are desirable in mentors, certain characteristics may be sought in proteges.

Some programs are designed with particular recipients in mind. If a department on a college campus instigated a program, a requirement may be that the potential proteges be declared majors in that department. Limited resources often limit the scope of mentoring ventures which could result in selective recruitment (Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Northeast Iowa [BBBSNI], n.d.). In some situations, recruitment is necessary to reach out to the most needy potential proteges.

Bonilla et al. (1994), Chattergy (1994), Johnsrud (1994), and Wilson (1994) concurred that those who need mentoring the most are the ones who are the least likely to seek a mentor relationship on their own. Terrell and Hassell (1994) and Wilson (1994) recognized

first generation students, students who experience a
difficult home life, students who face financial
difficulties, students who experience racism, and
underprepared students as needy mentoring candidates.
Kram (1988a) explained that these students often lacked
the confidence necessary to initiate the relationship,
did not realize the importance of mentoring, lacked the
interpersonal skills necessary, and often assumed that
others did not have the time to mentor. These
individuals might need more intrusive mentoring
programs for them to become involved. In addition, once
mentors and proteges are committed to the program, they
need to be paired in a way that will produce the
greatest level of benefits for the mentors, proteges,
and the institution.

<u>Matching Participants</u>

A successful mentor relationship is based on a
good match between the mentor and the protege. The
participants must have mutual respect to get the most
out of their relationship. Several factors must be
considered to ensure beneficial matches.

Practical, logistical, and subjective factors were
reported as possible matching criteria (BBBSA, 1995;

Furano et al., 1993; Weigel, personal communication,
September 8, 1995). Rauker (n.d.) confirmed that
logistical matters could become a concern on some
campuses. The residential college that enrolls
primarily traditional students generally will not
experience geographical barriers, but a non-residential
campus with distant commuters may find logistics a
concern. In either situation, the college campus
provides an easily accessible common meeting ground for
participants. Practical matters, such as location, are
vital but subjective factors were mentioned more
frequently in the literature.

Academic discipline and common interests were
repeatedly stated as excellent matching factors (Furano
et al., 1993; Jackson & Simpson, 1994; Millis, 1994;
Rauker, n.d.; Terrell & Hassell, 1994; Wilson, 1994).
Millis (1994) articulated that a match by discipline is
most beneficial, especially when the proteges are in
higher level courses. Interest in the subject area will
be particularly strong for both participants during the
proteges' upper level courses. Jackson and Simpson
(1994) and Johnsrud (1994) agreed with the disciplinary
match, but contend that the mentors and proteges should

be from different departments within the same college. This allows the proteges to be more open and gain insight into the field without being influenced by those who make decisions regarding their academic success.

As in all situations, opinions will vary and decisions need to be made that will benefit the majority. Matches will be made based on several different criteria. The success of the relationship relies heavily on a good match and also how well the participants are trained.

Training Participants

Education and a formal program design were stated to be instrumental in increasing the knowledge of the mentoring participants (Kram, 1988a, 1988b, 1988d; Wunsch, 1994b). These two elements can turn haphazard events into meaningful activities that are likely to produce positive results. Morrow and Styles (1995) researched mentoring programs and found that mentors thought training provided important information that aided them in their mentoring relationships. In fact, several mentors requested more indepth training on an on-going basis (Morrows & Styles, 1995). Johnsrud

(1994) and Millis (1994) supported the idea of on-going training through monthly meetings for mentors. Although training of proteges was not widely discussed in the literature, it too is important to the relationship.

The proteges will better understand the relationship if they are made aware of its purpose and overall process. It is important for the proteges to know that they too have responsibilities to make the relationship a success. Both the mentors and proteges need to be made aware of culture differences that might exist in the relationship.

Cross-cultural relationships will face serious complications if the participants are not sensitive to the others' culture. In these situations, mentoring needs to go both ways. The staff need to be exposed to the students' culture as much as the students need orientation to the "host" culture (Chattergy, 1994). Mentors and proteges also need to be knowledgeable about the phases they will likely experience in the relationship.

Phases of Mentoring

Although there is not a universal definition of mentoring phases, commonalities can be found in the

literature. Knowledge of the different phases of mentoring will give the mentors and proteges an edge on understanding the relationship they are experiencing. It will also give them and program coordinators insight into the type of activities that would be most beneficial at various points in the relationship.

Phase 1: Initiation

In the initial phase of mentoring, excitement levels are high and mutual attraction is strong. The protege is generally very accepting of advice that the mentor is overly anxious to provide. This is a time of direction, expectation setting, and awareness. Survival skills are taught as the protege is oriented to a new environment (Head et al., 1992; Kram, 1988d; Johnsrud, 1994; Otto, 1994; Terrell & Hassell, 1994).

Activities centered around socialization, awareness, and expectation setting are best during the initiation phase. The two participants are encouraged to develop a contract stating their expectations of the mentoring experience (Johnsrud, 1994). Movement to the second phase indicates that the mentor and protege have become more comfortable with each other.

Phase 2: Cultivation

In this stage, the emotional bond tends to increase between the mentor and the protege. The two may start to work together on projects as colleagues. The groundwork is set for career development and both individuals continue to benefit from the relationship.

Sharing of knowledge is vast in the cultivation phase. The proteges are embellished with the mentors' experience and wisdom as the mentors are exposed to innovative techniques that the proteges bring to the field (Head et al., 1992; Johnsrud, 1994; Kram, 1988d; Otto, 1994). The transfer of knowledge is tremendous and it becomes imperative that each give equally to the relationship.

Johnsrud (1994) warned against the mentor being relied upon for the success of the protege in the cultivation phase. Kram (1988c) contended that it is risky to rely on one individual for support. He suggested activities toward independence and also forming more than one mentoring relationship. Dependent relationships that do not move towards autonomy can be dangerous to all parties involved (Head et al., 1992).

Phase 3: Separation

The relationship is very fragile in the separation
phase because the fate of the relationship is tested
and determined. The proteges usually want autonomy more
than guidance. The mentors may begin to feel
unappreciated and frustrated. Resentment may also set
in as the proteges begin to establish a position in the
field while the mentors are plateaued in their current
positions.

The proteges need to clarify and test their sense
of purpose during separation. It is important that each
individual understand the perspective of the other
(Head et al., 1992; Kram, 1988d; Terrell & Hassell,
1994; Otto, 1994). Active listening and open dialogue
will reinforce the relationship and help the mentors
and proteges advance to the last phase.

Phase 4: Redefinition

The protege generally seeks involvement with the
mentor after a sense of self-accomplishment is
experienced. Gratitude and appreciation for past
experiences heighten as friendship and mutual respect
strengthens. Important personal and professional
accomplishments are shared and both have a sense of

belonging (Head et al., 1992; Johnsrud, 1994; Kram, 1988d; Otto, 1994). Kram (1988d) acknowledged that this phase lasts for an indefinite period of time because life-long friendships are bound to occur.

The phases of a healthy mentoring relationship can be described in a variety of ways. The above descriptions represent a conglomeration of several analogies in the literature. Regardless of how the phases are described, Head et al. (1992) summarized that a healthy relationship involves a progression from protege dependence to autonomy as the participants evolve into colleagues. Continued success with mentoring programs rely heavily on evaluation.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is "a data collection process that provides information which is useful in making decisions about the merit and worth of a program" (Odell, 1992, p. 95). Merit is judged by the intrinsic value that the participants get out of the mentoring experience. The worth of the program is derived more extrinsically by assessing whether or not the goals of the program were met.

The obstacle of evaluating a mentoring program is that it is hard to measure what is not universally defined and is based on intrinsic, as well as extrinsic components (Terrell & Hassell, 1994; Weinberger, 1992; Wunsch, 1994a). Although evaluating a mentoring program is difficult, it is necessary to reap continued support from the administration and the institution as a whole.

Purpose of Evaluation

To maintain support from administrators, a program evaluation must show accountability, produced knowledge, and offer suggestions to improve the existing program (Odell, 1992). Long term and short term assessments are necessary that link the evaluation to the goals of the program (Odell, 1992; Wilson, 1994; Wunsch, 1994a). Although it is tempting to expand an evaluation to prove benefits beyond the set goals, the primary focus should be on the goals defined during the implementation of the program.

Approaches to Evaluation

Worthwhile evaluations consider multiple sources of information using a variety of procedures. Qualitative measures are desired, as well as quantitative evaluations (Odell, 1992). Quantitative

reports generated to show increased retention and enhanced performance of the participants can evidence the success of the program. Contracts developed before the mentoring experience begins and activity reports during the experience, provide a means of qualitative evaluation (Wunsch, 1994a).

Post-program sessions that facilitate communication between the mentors and proteges is another beneficial qualitative technique. The participants can be asked to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the program which should reveal areas that need improvement. To maintain its positive influence, mentoring must be continually improved with consideration to all the components that result in successful implementation.

<div align="center">Summary and Conclusion</div>

The strong reputation of mentoring is not enough to guarantee its success. The complexity of mentoring requires thorough attention to several factors before, during, and after the act of mentoring. Heartfelt testimonies and overwhelmingly positive feedback may mislead people into believing mentoring is a simple process. Mentoring programs must also be built on a

solid educational foundation and a structured, yet flexible program design.

The program design has to allow for the diversity of the mentors and proteges. A variety of academic and administrative staff and students will have a huge array of assets to enhance the program. In addition, their weaknesses must also be considered as the structure of the program is developed, and requirements as well as goals are set.

Long term and short term goals should be coordinated with the four phases of mentoring: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. Activities must reflect the changing attitudes and needs of the mentors and proteges as they progress through the phases of mentoring. Awareness that the participants enter the relationship very enthusiastically and move towards collaboration, autonomy, then appreciation will help the participants understand their experiences.

The success of the program relies on constituents from all venues. The overall climate of the institution must support the program which includes all campus constituents. Traditions and rituals need to support

the nurturing philosophy behind mentoring and ensure
that the selection, matching, and training methods are
carried out the way they were intended to be utilized.

The last factor necessary to render a positive
mentoring program is to have an adequate evaluation
system in place. It must use multiple methods of
collecting information to monitor the success or
failure of obtaining the goals established when the
program was initiated. Verification of the program's
merit and worth is necessary through qualitative and
quantitative measures to justify its current and
continued existence.

Mentoring programs are not as simple as a first
glance would indicate, but they are also not as complex
as a thorough literature review can portray. Mentoring
programs are manageable tools that result in benefits
to the proteges, mentors, and the institution. However,
the success of a mentoring program is not guaranteed.
Thorough planning is necessary to create a positive
mentoring environment, to develop an appropriate
program design, to effectively select, match, and train
participants, to create awareness of mentoring phases,
and to utilize productive evaluation techniques.

Oversimplification of mentoring and the lack of
planning will deprive mentors, proteges, and the
institution of the enormous array of assets that
mentoring can provide.

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