

SURVEY RESULTS OF FACULTY MENTORING PROGRAMS AT AACSB SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a survey of faculty mentoring programs at US schools of business accredited by the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The results, coupled with evidence from the literature about the value of mentoring programs and AACSB requirements for formal faculty orientation and mentoring, suggest that opportunities exist for business schools to more fully and effectively leverage such programs.

DEFINITIONS AND BENEFITS OF MENTORING

There is no consensus definition of mentoring. Bozeman and Feeney (2007) for example cited thirteen different definitions found in the research literature. Based on this, they proposed a comprehensive definition centered on differential sharing from mentor to protégé. Part of this definition states that mentoring is “. . . the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and psychosocial support . . . between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé).” Based on this definition anyone can simultaneously be both a mentor and a protégé due to differential knowledge and experience across various domains. Moreover, the role of the mentor can be characterized by a variety of titles such as sponsor, coach, role model, and counselor.

The literature on the benefits of effective mentoring programs is extensive, totaling over 1,500 articles (Colley, 2001). A sample of recent literature reviews provides a gateway into the literature. Boyle and Boice (1998) described some of the benefits of mentoring for graduate students, graduate teaching assistants, and new faculty members. These included a willingness to take risks, political savvy, as well as positive research productivity and career advancement. Ragins et al., (2000) provided statistical evidence that mentoring provides positive outcomes on a variety of attitudinal measures including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, satisfaction with opportunities for promotion, career commitment, organization-based self-esteem, procedural justice and intentions to quit. Allen et al., (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature, concluding that mentoring was related to positive objective and subjective career outcomes including high levels of compensation and salary growth, promotions, career satisfaction, expectations of advancement, career commitment, job satisfaction, and intention to remain with an employer. Hegstadt and Wentling’s (2005) compilation of the demonstrated benefits of effective mentoring programs showed that they affected retention, promotion/advancement opportunities, job satisfaction, performance, networking, organizational learning, loyalty, diversity awareness, engagement, and professional development.

Zellers et al., (2008) cataloged the organizational benefits of mentoring. They found that mentoring positively impacted organizational stability, socialization, communication, retention, the preservation of intellectual capital and institutional memory, cultural diversity, leadership capacity, succession planning, and cost effectiveness. Protégés benefited in the areas of assimilation, job satisfaction, probabilities of success and promotion, earnings, leadership development, and the motivation to mentor others. Protégé benefits that were unique to academe reflected improvements in confidence, scholarship, satisfaction, teaching effectiveness, adjustment, and reduced feelings of isolation and alienation. Benefits to the mentor that were unique to academe included increases in the sense of contribution and accomplishment, personal satisfaction, revitalization, fresh ideas, and new perspectives. Suffice it to say, there is broad consensus in the literature that an effective formal mentoring program provides many positive outcomes both to the individual and the organization.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

To date, no survey has explicitly reported on the role of mentoring in the context of business schools. However, given the issues business schools face regarding faculty recruitment and retention, an examination of faculty mentoring is particularly germane. Based on a review of the literature, a survey instrument was developed to explore the use and effectiveness of formal mentoring programs in AACSB accredited business schools in the U.S. (The complete survey is available from the first author). A draft of the survey was pilot tested by faculty members at the authors' institutions and the instrument was refined accordingly. The final on-line version of the instrument was then distributed to Associate Deans of AACSB accredited business schools in the US following a request for their participation.

SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey was sent to 473 potential respondents. Two follow up emails were automatically sent at two week intervals to respondents who had not submitted a response. The three emails generated a total of 118 useable responses, representing a response rate of 25%. The sample represented a diverse set of institutions in terms of size, whether the institution was public or private, degrees offered, and the mission of the reporting unit. Fifty six responses (48%) came from units reporting a formal faculty mentoring program. Of the fifty six responses, three were not useable, resulting in fifty three useable surveys as described in the following sections.

Program Administration

Forty five percent of responses indicated that the program was a college level program, twenty one percent said it was a university program, and eight percent said it was a department program. The remaining twenty six percent indicated that it was a joint program between the college and department and/or university. Twenty eight percent of responses indicated that the program was less than five years old, forty percent reported that it was between five and ten years old, and twenty two percent indicated that it was more than ten years old. In seventy percent of cases, the program was not funded. When the program was funded, funding was most likely to come from the college alone (7 of 16 cases) or from both the college and university (7 cases). While it is not surprising that programs were not funded, the results do indicate a gap between desired outcomes (as implied by the existence of a program) and resource support.

Participation in programs was largely voluntary. Forty seven percent of respondents reported that participation was voluntary for both protégés and mentors, and forty two percent indicated that it was

mandatory for protégés only. Five respondents (9%) reported that the program was mandatory for both protégés and mentors, and one reported that it was mandatory for mentors but voluntary for protégés! With respect to new faculty, not surprisingly, all respondents indicated that mentors were assigned to assistant professors, and in forty five percent of institutions they were also assigned to associate professors. It was less likely that full (19%), adjunct (15%), or visiting professors (13%) were assigned a mentor. In only sixty six percent of institutions were continuing assistant professors assigned a mentor, with the corresponding figures for associate and full professors being twenty one and nine percent respectively. In thirty two percent of institutions, no continuing faculty were assigned mentors. These results suggest that mentoring is seen by some as a one-time event rather than an ongoing process.

In almost all institutions (96%), the mentoring relationship was one to one, and in only five instances did a protégé have multiple mentors. In the majority of institutions (68%), there was a hierarchical relationship between the mentor and protégé. In only three institutions was the mentor of the same rank as the protégé, and in a further fourteen institutions, both hierarchical and peer to peer relationships exist. This raises the question of whether a mentor of higher rank but who may be more removed from the career stage and challenges of a more junior faculty member, was necessarily the best mentor for a new faculty member.

Formal training/orientation appears to be largely absent from mentoring programs. Seventy nine percent of respondents indicated that there was no formal training for mentors, and sixty percent indicated the same for protégés. Seventeen percent of responses indicated that protégés receive at least eight hours of training/orientation, but overall, when training was provided, it was for fewer than eight hours. Eighty three percent of respondents stated that there were no requirements regarding the frequency of meetings between mentor and protégé, but when there were requirements, they most often called for a once a semester/quarter meeting (9.4%). Almost ninety percent of respondents indicated that there were no required structured activities associated with the program, seventy seven percent reported that there were no workshops/seminars, and a similar percentage indicated that there were no planned social activities.

Twenty nine percent of respondents indicated that mentoring relationships lasted one year or less, and a further thirty percent indicated they lasted at least 2 years. The single most frequent response was that the duration of the relationship was open ended (34%). Similar numbers of respondents indicated that the relationship may be terminated by the mentor, protégé, or program administrator respectively.

In almost sixty percent of cases (59%), mentors received no compensation or recognition, and in a further forty percent of institutions, mentors were recognized only as part of the faculty evaluation process. Only two respondents indicated that either compensation or course release was offered. Programs were largely managed by department heads (38%) or college administration (28%), though in some institutions (13%) the program had its own director. In a little over one quarter of institutions (26%), there was no formal oversight of the program.

Mentor-Protégé Matching

In fifty six percent of institutions, the department head was responsible for assigning the mentor to the protégé, and in twenty six percent of institutions, it was the responsibility of college administration. In the remaining institutions, assignments were most likely to be made by a college level committee or by the department head in conjunction with college administration. In the large majority of institutions (89%), no formal processes were used to screen potential mentors nor were formal processes generally used to match mentors to protégés (83%).

When asked how important various variables were in assigning mentors to protégés, several themes emerged. The eleven variables examined fell into two distinct groups (Table 1). The first group consists of the variables gender, race/ethnicity, and age. Mean responses (based on a five point Likert scale, extremely unimportant = 1, extremely important = 5) within the group ranged from 2.52 (gender) to 2.35 (age) but differences were not statistically significant¹. The observation that gender and race/ethnicity were not considered to be important in making mentor assignments is significant given evidence from earlier studies (e.g., Tillman, 2001) that indicated that such factors can impact the effectiveness of mentoring.

The second group consisted of eight variables. Mean responses ranged from 4.15 (tenure status) to 3.62 (preference and interest of the protégé), but differences in means within the group were not statistically significant. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that tenure status was important (54%) or very important (36%) in making assignments. The corresponding figures for academic discipline/department, academic rank, preference/interest of the mentor, and experience/effectiveness of the mentor were 81%, 79%, 77%, and 77% respectively. It should be noted that academic discipline/department was the only variable for which the most frequent response was ‘extremely important’. Other variables that speak to potential fit between the mentor and protégé were considered to be relatively less important. For example only 72% of respondents indicated that compatibility of the mentor and protégé was important or extremely important, and the corresponding figures for unique qualifications of the mentor and preference/interest of the protégé were 69% and 63% respectively.

Assignment Criterion	Mean
Age	2.35
Race/Ethnicity	2.40
Gender	2.52
Preference/Interest of Protégé	3.61
Unique Qualifications of Mentor	3.63
Academic Rank	3.69
Preference/Interest of Mentor	3.87
Compatibility of Mentor/Protégé	3.87
Experience/Effectiveness of Mentor	3.88
Academic Discipline/Department	4.12
Tenure Status	4.15

Table 1. Mentor Assignment Criteria

Program Objectives

In the majority of institutions (53%), no formal goals were established for the program. When they did exist, goals were equally likely to be established at the university or college level (15% of responses each). Only 11% of respondents indicated they were set at the individual level, and 6% that they were set at the department level. Eighty one percent of respondents stated that program participants were not required to set personal goals. Only nine percent each stated that protégés alone or both mentors and protégés were required to set them.

¹ $\alpha = 0.05$

Just over three quarters of respondents indicated that the primary focus of the program was on career development, the remainder indicating that there was an equal focus on career and psychosocial success. This is interesting in light of prior findings that indicate that mentoring can provide significant benefits in the area of psychosocial development (e.g., Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008). In the domain of career success, eighty-one percent of respondents said that the focus of the program was on improving both teaching and research performance, and a further eleven percent said that it was focused on teaching alone. Two respondents each indicated that the program was focused on research alone and on career success outside the realm of teaching and research.

With respect to specific dimensions of professional support, mean scores for six variables varied from 4.19 (providing guidance and advocacy) to 3.7 (opening doors/making introduction), but differences in means were not statistically significant (Table 2). Over three quarters of respondents said that faculty mentors were involved in providing formal training and guidance to protégés on matters related to tenure and promotion, either themselves (24%) or as part of a broader process (41%).

Role	Mean
Open Doors/Make Introductions	3.70
Professional Development - Teaching	3.94
Professional Development - Research	3.96
Serve as Role Model	4.02
Personal Support/Advice/Coping Strategies	4.11
Professional Guidance/Advocacy	4.19

Table 2. Mentor Roles

Program Level Outcomes and Assessment

Fifty three percent of respondents indicated that the overall success of the program was not formally evaluated, and when it was, it happened annually (22%) or less frequently (24%). Mentoring outcomes themselves were similarly not evaluated (80%). When evaluations did occur, they were typically conducted at the college level (12%), which was consistent with the finding that programs were largely college owned. Only in twenty two percent of institutions were outcomes tied to other faculty evaluation processes. These results combined with those on program structure suggest that programs were loosely defined, and raise questions about the purpose of the programs as well as how their effectiveness was evaluated.

Despite the limited presence of formal program evaluation mechanisms, respondents did report that programs had a positive impact on protégé outcomes (Table 3). Mean scores for nine outcomes ranged from 3.82 (adjustment to organizational culture) to 3.08 (self-esteem). Adjustment to organizational culture, promotion and tenure outcomes (3.72), teaching performance (3.57), and research performance (3.47) have the highest individual means, but as the numbers suggest, the results were somewhat underwhelming. For all other variables, fewer than fifty percent of respondents suggested that the programs were at least effective in achieving desirable outcomes. Not surprisingly, these variables were largely those that relate to psychosocial issues.

Protégé Outcome	Mean
Self-Esteem	3.08
Self-Confidence	3.14
Personal Well Being	3.16
Managing Work-Life Balance	3.31
Job Satisfaction	3.32
Research Performance	3.47
Teaching Performance	3.57
Promotion and Tenure Outcomes	3.72
Adjustment to Organizational Culture	3.82

Table 3. Mean Responses – Protégé Outcomes

In terms of broader measures of program effectiveness, mean scores ranged from 3.75 (overall organizational culture) to 3.2 (development of leadership capability, Table 4). Only for the variables overall faculty retention, overall organizational culture, and tenure and promotion outcomes for female faculty do a majority of respondents indicate that the programs were at least effective, but in each case, the majorities were small. Overall, the results suggest that the programs, given their current structures, were somewhat limited in their effect.

Program Outcome	Mean
Development of Leadership Capacity	3.20
Mentor Job Satisfaction	3.22
Promotion and Tenure Outcomes – Minority Faculty	3.49
Promotion and Tenure Outcomes – Female Faculty	3.51
Faculty Retention	3.63
Organizational Culture	3.75

Table 4. Mean Responses – Program Outcomes

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results suggest that at present, even though business schools typically include faculty and presumably administrators with some familiarity with HR and mentoring practices, formal faculty mentoring programs are not implemented in a large portion of AACSB schools and those that do exist largely ignore the extant mentoring literature resulting in sorely suboptimal program performance.

N.B. A complete version of this paper is available by contacting the first Author.