



Flyer 239

Mentoring Programs in ARL Libraries

March 1999

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is "a developmental, caring, sharing, and helping relationship where one person [mentor] invests time, know-how, and effort in enhancing another person's [mentee's/protégé's] growth, knowledge, and skills, and responds to critical needs in the life of that person in ways that prepare the individual for greater productivity or achievement in the future."¹ A *formal* mentoring program requires that a mentee formulate goals agreed upon by the mentor, which also meet institutional goals. This type of program requires that there be an assessment of the goals after a designated time period.

The SPEC survey for this Kit addressed many frequently asked questions that preceded the implementation of a formal mentoring program in a library. Questions included: What are the responsibilities, characteristics, and expectations of the mentors and mentees? What are the benefits? Should participation be voluntary? How are pairs matched and trained? How is the program coordinated and by whom? When is the pairing terminated? Does it work? And how is the program assessed?

Informal mentoring is undoubtedly practiced in all libraries among all levels of staff. Many responses indicated librarians receive help and informal mentoring from supervisors; tenure and promotion, diversity, research, and welcome committees; and intensive staff development programs. This Kit, however, reports the survey results of ARL libraries that reported having a formal mentoring program, even though not all programs demanded goals, nor did all the responding libraries have an evaluation component in their mentoring programs.

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was sent to 122 ARL libraries, of which 113 are academic. It asked if the libraries had *formal* mentoring programs. There were 81 responses. The results are based on the 21 libraries (26%) that reported having such pro-

grams where mentors and mentees are paired and where there is usually goal setting and assessment. None of the remaining 61 (74%) reported planning a formal program at this time. Of the 21 with programs, three have websites.

All 21 libraries provide mentors for professionals, and one includes support staff. Supervisors or department heads usually mentor the librarians (57%). Others who mentor professionals include members of a library or tenure review committee (33%), tenured faculty (29%), deans or directors (24%), assistant or associate deans or directors (14%), and librarians of higher rank or volunteer librarians (each at 10%).

Seventy-one percent reported no formal program for support staff; support staff are primarily mentored by supervisors (43%). Seventy-one percent of the programs are voluntary for both mentors and mentees, while another 24% are voluntary for mentors but required for mentees.

The primary purpose for the programs surveyed is delivering guidance or advice for reappointment, tenure, and promotion (76%), followed by: enhancing knowledge about the library's culture (71%), giving assistance in preparing a vita or dossier (67%), supplying information about campus culture (57%), and providing research direction (38%).

Seventy-one percent of the libraries have mentoring policies or procedures. However, only 24% have a training workbook or template.

Librarians are informed of the program either upon arrival (81%); through brochures, fliers, documents, and library policy statements (38%); when interviewing for the position (29%); by the supervisor (29%); or by a library committee (24%). One library reported mentioning it in the hiring letter, and another advertises it as part of its affirmative action residency program.

Individuals with many different titles oversee the program. The most frequently listed title was personnel librarian (24%). Other titles mentioned were human resource

librarian or committee, deans or directors, assistant or associate deans or directors, or librarians on a review committee (each 14%). Others include instructional services librarian, staff development officer, and associate to the dean.

Twenty-nine percent of the mentees select their own mentor, while 24% select from a pool. In contrast, only 2% of the mentors select their own mentee, and 5% select from a pool. Committees match the pool of participants 24% of the time, followed by matching by other administrators, such as deans (14%) or personnel/human resource/staff officers. Thirty-eight percent of the participants receive training. Similarly, only 38% are required to formulate goals.

Time frames are set most often until tenure is attained (24%), although only 43% of the libraries indicated having a suggested time frame. Most of the pairs meet initially and then as often as needed until the goal of the time frame is reached (76%). The pairings terminate when the mentee receives tenure (33%), after a designated time period (29%), at the will of the mentors and mentee (29%), or when the goal is met (19%). Mostly the pairs just report to each other (52%).

In 38% of the responses supervisors play no role in the program. However, in 43% they are aware of the relationship and kept abreast of activities.

Only one library has a budget for the mentoring program, and that is used for speakers. Mentors rarely receive awards, except for some service recognition at the time of annual evaluations (One provost gives \$500 to the mentors for travel!).

Surprisingly, most of the programs lack an evaluation component. Thirty-three percent reported some evaluation by the mentor, mentee, and/or administrator; 48% did not.

CONCLUSION

The benefits from a formal mentoring program are wide and varied. Benefits to the mentee included receiving tenure, emotional support, input from more than a supervisor, making friends and gaining confidence more quickly, having a relationship with an experienced librarian, getting quickly on track for tenure and promotion, and

receiving more information early on about the library and the university.

Benefits to the mentor included the chance to offer support, satisfaction for contributing to the growth of staff, and learning from new ideas and perspectives.

Where mentoring programs were in place, there was reportedly more retention at the university and an environment in which a mentee can shape his or her own growth and development.

Suggestions were: beware of "mandatory" programs, be flexible, and provide training.

In the future, more ARL libraries or their parent institution may initiate mentoring programs. With the lessons learned from the programs currently in place, libraries are better equipped to address the reasons and process for a program beforehand and decide how it will begin, how it will be organized, how it will complement already existing training and development programs, and how the program will be evaluated. The annotated bibliography, as well as the accompanying documentation from several libraries in this Kit, should provide the initial assistance needed to create a formal library mentoring program that benefits mentees, mentors, and, as a result, libraries.

This SPEC Flyer and Kit were prepared by Barbara Wittkopf, Louisiana State University, as part of the OLMS Collaborative Research/Writing Program.

¹Gordon F. Shea, *Mentoring: Helping Employees Reach Their Full Potential* (New York: AMA Membership Publications Division, American Management Association, 1994), 13.

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