

Faculty Mentoring in Higher Education: Hype or Help

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Lt. Col. Willis R Foster Sr., U.S.M.C.,
James H Poole, &
Dr. Margery M Coulson-Clark

In the third millennium, collaboration, excellence in education, globalization and certification of competence will ultimately determine a university's survival. William Plater (1968) suggests that market factors will materially affect the future of institutions of Higher Education. Among them are:

1. Globalization of education
2. Potential collaborative relationships between units of a university and parallel industries
3. Need for certification of individual and institutional competence
4. Evolution of professional careers along a more complicated track than existent in most institutions of higher education.

Some universities are distinctive in that they already have positioned themselves for success in the third millennium. Their development is well defined by Weber's "routinization of charisma". These distinctive institutions are developed nominally in three ways: (1) a new institution conceived and created by a single person or small cadre with a strong purpose; (2) an institution in decay revitalized by a person of vision; and (3) an institution not in decline or crisis but ready for evolutionary change (Clark 1972). In other words these institutions have developed a culture that is vibrant and forward looking. One institutional approach to develop this "routinization of charisma" is mentoring.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a developmental relationship between a powerful, experienced, senior colleague (i.e. mentor) and a less experienced junior colleague (i.e. protégé) (Tepper, Sheffer, Tepper, 1996). Another definition of a mentor is a guide or sponsor who looks after, advises, protects, and takes a special interest in another's development (Sands, Parson and Duane, 1991).

Mentoring can take on a formal or informal relationship. In the formal relationship, the institution defines the process, the relationships and the timeframe in which this mentoring will take place. Whether one is a student, a beginning faculty member or an administrator, one is advised to seek a mentor. This mentoring process is crucial because a new faculty member hired in a department is, quite literally, isolated within the department, even though he may be one of many new faculties within the college or university (Cawyer and Friedrich, 1998). A potential problem, both in the American and International university system, is the small number of minority and women faculty and mentors. Often, formal mentoring relationships are based on mutual interests while informal mentoring tends to lean toward faculty who have similar backgrounds. The mentoring process is often seen as one-sided. But this isn't so; mentors also benefit from the mentoring relationship. Benefits such as enhanced self-esteem, revitalized work interests, friendship, and professional assistance on projects, plus many others may be realized (Kridel et.al. 1996).

Why Mentor?

More than 90% of the typical college/university's academic budgets are reserved for personnel costs with most of that earmarked for faculty salaries. By the time a new faculty member reaches the point of receiving or being denied tenure, the institution has invested anywhere between \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 (Thomas 1997). Consequently, institutions of higher education are concerned about selecting faculty that will be successful and attain tenure. The importance of mentoring to the intellectual vitality, quality of life and economic stability of higher educational institutions should not be underestimated. Reduced turnover and longer productivity over the faculty member's academic lifetime will significantly reduce institutional costs, and enhance the university's vision, mission and strategic planning process.

To further assess the mentoring needs, a preliminary survey was conducted at the second educational summit, *Towards the Global University II: Redefining Excellence in the Third Millennium*. The initial results are summarized in the following charts.

The survey results indicate that if a formal mentoring program was available, respondents felt that the institution provided assistance for developing new faculty as researchers and educators. Therefore, the need for mentoring is paramount to the institutional development of new faculty.

Figure I
Types of Mentoring Programs

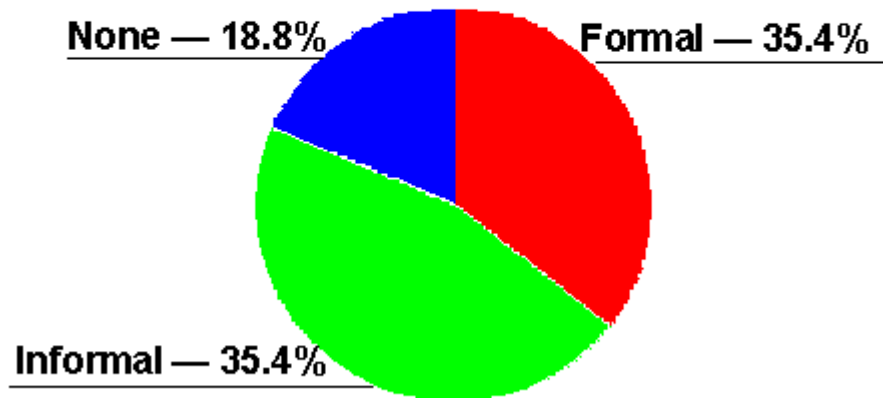


Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents that had formal (36.4%) informal (45.8%) or no mentoring programs (8.8%).

Figure 2
Mentoring Programs by School

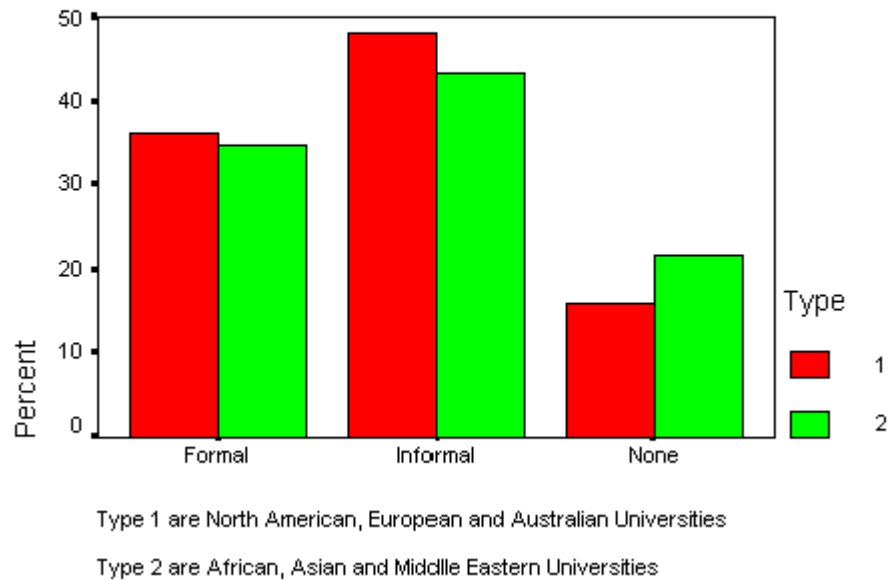


Figure 2 breaks down the mentoring programs between the two types of institutions sampled. The chart shows that globally, mentoring programs, or the lack thereof at both types of institutions occurs at approximately the same percentage rates.

Figure 3
New Faculty are Provided Assistance as Researcher

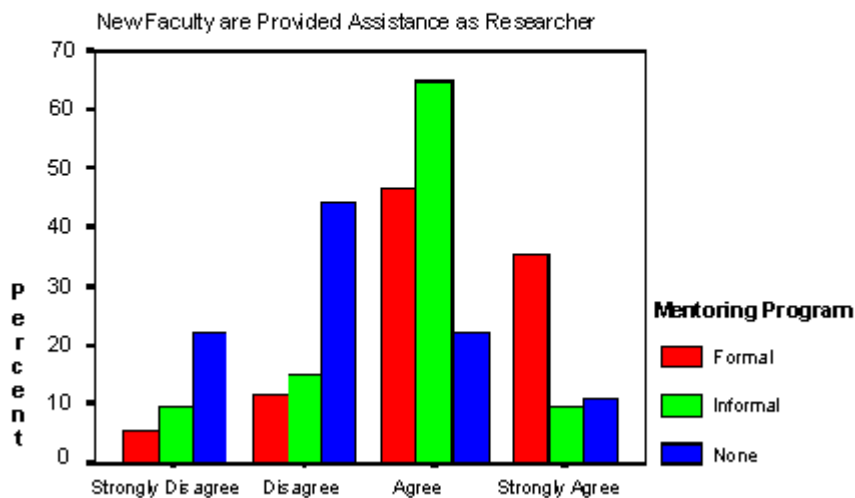


Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents, by mentoring program type, who felt that new faculty members at their institutions were provided assistance in developing as researchers. The chart indicates that there is a high level of agreement when there is a formal or informal mentoring program in place. Conversely, there is a high level of disagreement when there is no mentoring program.

Figure 4
New Faculty are Provided Assistance
as Educators

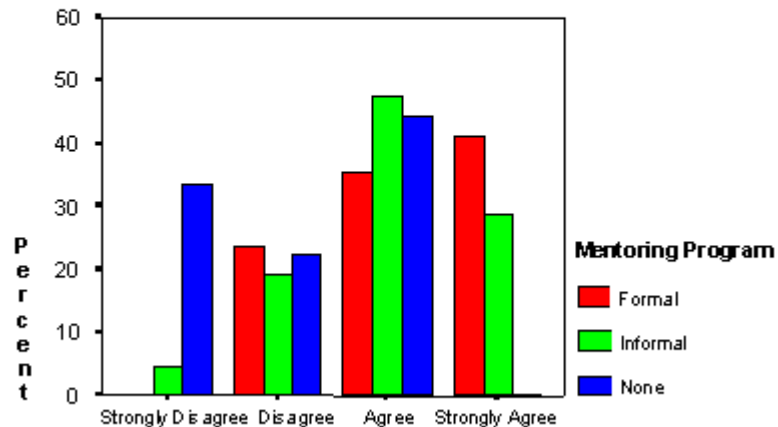


Figure 4 shows the percentage of respondents, by mentoring program type, who felt that new faculty members at their institutions were provided assistance in developing as educators. The charts show that with formal and informal programs the majority of the respondents felt that there was assistance provided to new faculty in developing as educators. Whereas, the majority of the respondents with no mentoring programs felt that new faculty were not provided assistance in developing as educators.

The need for mentoring is paramount to the institutional development of new faculty. From the survey it was evident that if a formal mentoring program was present, the respondent felt that the institution provided assistance to new faculty in developing as researchers and educators.

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