RE-THINKING MENTORING: Building Communities of Inclusion, Support & Accountability

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Today’s Talk

Part I: Challenges on the tenure track

Part II: Conventional wisdom about mentoring and what is missing

Part III: Re-Thinking Mentoring

Part IV: Models of Community, Support and Accountability

Part V: Discussion
PART I: CHALLENGES ON THE TENURE-TRACK
The tenure-track is stressful for ALL junior faculty due to:

- Varying degrees of preparation for ALL aspects of job
- Minimal feedback and support
- Lack of support for work-life balance
- Unclear criteria for promotion & tenure
- Ever-escalating expectations for research and funding
- Need to front-load research portfolio
- Long probationary period (6 years) followed by a series of high-stakes, yet anonymous votes
In addition to the challenges ALL new faculty face, under-represented faculty also describe specific stressors that are due to “solo” status:

1. **Struggling to find time for research**
   - Overburdened with service demands related to diversity.
   - Overwhelmed by students seeking support, mentorship, advising and guidance.
2. Emotional exhaustion from classroom dynamics

- Students get confused and can respond differently to majority and minority faculty.
- Differential behavior creates questions about competence and belonging.
- Not getting the benefit of the doubt triggers *over-functioning* in teaching in efforts to prove that we *deserve* the position.
- When teaching about inequality, students can project their reactivity and discomfort onto the professor and/or punish them in course evaluations.
THE CHALLENGES: Under-represented Faculty

3. Feeling a profound sense of loneliness and a lack of collegial acceptance that are tied to “solo” status
   - Navigating an overtly or covertly hostile environment without requisite skills
   - Unclear how to negotiate conflict with (and say “no” to) those who have more power
   - Lacking a support network, mentors, and sponsors
   - Unlikely to reach out for help until there is a crisis due to a perception that asking reveals weakness and/or lack of competence

The nature of academic culture tends to make under-represented faculty feel like they are the ONLY one having these experiences, despite the fact that they are widespread.
THE CHALLENGES:
Under-represented Faculty

Common results:

- Negative impact on productivity (years 1-3)
- Emotional exhaustion and anxiety
- Self-isolation
- Stress-related illness and strained relationships
- Thoughts of leaving the academy

Even when successful winning tenure, some faculty are so harmed by the process that they withdraw, unconsciously reproduce the oppressive circumstances they experienced, and/or are too angry or disengaged to work for long term change.
PART II:  
CONVENTIONAL WISDOM & WHAT’S MISSING
**CONVENTIONAL WISDOM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVENTIONAL WISDOM</th>
<th>WHAT’S MISSING?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity efforts tend to heavily emphasize <em>recruitment</em></td>
<td>Individual support for the transition from grad student to professor</td>
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<td>Mentoring = relationship between the pre and post-tenure faculty</td>
<td>Identifying new faculty needs &amp; getting them met</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentoring is <em>really</em> important!</td>
<td>“Mentoring” means different things to different people</td>
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<td>Faculty have the time, energy, and desire to serve as active mentors</td>
<td>Mentoring is labor-intensive, invisible, and unrewarded labor</td>
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<td>Tenured faculty are the best and only mentors for new faculty members</td>
<td>For some things yes! For other things, not necessarily….</td>
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PART III:
RE-THINKING
MENTORING
New faculty have a wide variety of needs during the transitional years

Most people call **ALL** of this “mentoring” and expect it to be done by 1 or 2 post-tenure faculty members in the department

That’s impossible!

1. **Professional Development**
   1. Time management, conflict resolution, project planning, organizational & management skills

2. **Emotional Support**
   1. Help in dealing with stress and pressure

3. **A Sense of Community**
   1. Intellectual and/or social community

4. **Accountability**
   1. To stay focused on what matters

5. **Institutional/Political Sponsorship**
   1. Someone to advocate their best interest behind closed doors

6. **Access to Networks**
   1. Research collaborations, grants & opportunities

7. **Project Specific Feedback**
   1. Comments on proposals, drafts, and new ideas
RETHINKING MENTORING

Key Transitional Skill: Identify what you need and determine the most efficient ways to get it

- Provide ways to meet these needs in collective and efficient ways

- Create support, structure, and accountability for the 1-on-1 relationships that really matter

Professional Development
Emotional Support
A Sense of Community
Writing Accountability

Project Specific Feedback
Institutional Sponsorship
Access To Networks

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Publications are the currency in the academic market so your market value and institutional value will be determined by your ability to publish your research.

The Problem:

✅ We tend to prioritize based on accountability

✅ The most important activity in your promotion, professional reputation, and future mobility has no built-in accountability.
## RETHINKING MENTORING

### “TYPICAL” NEW FACULTY MEMBER

- Over-prepare for class
- Spend far less time on scholarly writing than needed to meet promotion and tenure criteria
- Have difficulty developing productive contacts with colleagues
- Feel a sense of loneliness and lack of collegial acceptance

### “QUICK STARTERS”

- Don’t spend major amounts of time on course preparation
- Consistently spend 3 hours (or more) per week on scholarly writing
- Regularly seek advice and talk with colleagues about research and teaching
- Report high levels of job satisfaction

It’s about different **BEHAVIOR**, not different **ABILITY**!
# RETHINKING MENTORING

## Daily Writing & Productivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT GROUPS</th>
<th>PAGES WRITTEN PER YEAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote Daily &amp; Recorded progress</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote daily, recorded progress, and were accountable</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Criteria for Tenure & Promotion

- Research: 20%
- Teaching: 40%
- Service: 40%

Typical New Faculty Member

- Research: 2%
- Teaching: 70%
- Service: 28%
Faculty development researchers have documented the behaviors of successful new faculty:

- Effectively manage teaching and service time
- Write every day (30 – 60 minutes)
- Regularly seek advice from their colleagues about research & teaching
- Keep detailed records about how work time is spent each day
- Create accountability for writing & research

We know what works! The question is how can we teach these skills to faculty in transition?
PART IV:
MODELS OF COMMUNITY, SUPPORT & ACCOUNTABILITY
Successful Department-Level Mentoring Programs:

- Assign a departmental mentoring committee (Research mentor, Teaching mentor AND Service Mentor)
- Provide alternative/additional mechanisms for teaching evaluation and assessment
- Designate the service mentor to monitor the cumulative total of service requests and advises when/how to say “no”
- Build in feedback loops every semester
- Consistent, clear, and meaningful annual evaluation
- Recognize achievements and celebrate success
- Leaders initiate and model difficult conversations
Campus-Wide Under-Represented Faculty Mentoring Program

- Start with a needs assessment of pre-tenure faculty
- Democratize needed professional development information
- Senior Faculty Panels (role modeling, social support & community building)
- Formally organized mechanisms to support **daily writing**, **productivity**, and provide **writing accountability**

Outcomes:
Increased productivity, job satisfaction, and retention
III. EXTERNAL MODEL

Model #1: NCFDD 12-Month Mentorship

Provides pre-tenure faculty with:

- 12 months of professional development workshops
- Weekly support for increasing writing productivity
- Access to a private, professionally moderated discussion forum
- Monthly writing challenges

Benefits:

- An outsourced, cost-effective way to mentor diverse faculty
- Efficient, on-demand delivery of faculty development services
- Increased productivity & satisfaction of under-represented faculty
- A concrete support plan to attract potential new faculty as a benefit in the recruitment process
III. EXTERNAL MODEL

NCFDD 12-Month Mentorship

Monthly Workshops

1. How to Align Your Time With Your Evaluation Criteria
2. How to Develop a Daily Writing Practice
3. Mastering Academic Time Management
4. The Five Secrets to a Super Productive Summer
5. Procrastination, Writing and Resistance
6. Cultivating Your Network of Mentors, Sponsors & Collaborators
7. The Art of Saying "No"
8. Overcoming Academic Perfectionism
9. Engaging in Healthy Conflict
10. Strategies for Stress and Rejection
Model #2: Faculty Boot-Camp

- Semester-long intensive program
- Faculty create semester work plans
- Weekly community meeting
- Weekly accountability groups
- Daily support via electronic discussion forum

Outcomes:

Increased research productivity, increased job satisfaction, increased participation in healthy conflict and network development and greater work/life balance.
Pre-tenure faculty describe wanting:

- Clarity and transparency in promotion & tenure criteria
- Consistent, concrete, and ongoing feedback
- Support for meeting research expectations
- Support for work/life balance
- Recognition and understanding that succeeding on today’s tenure track is different from the past
- Communities of support during the transition from graduate student to tenured professor

What does that mean for your faculty?
PART V: DISCUSSION
Welcome!

The National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity is a professional development, training, and mentoring community. We work with colleges, universities, organizations, and individuals towards one goal: helping new faculty members make a successful transition from graduate student to professor. We offer online and on-site training workshops, leadership development programs, individual coaching, and institutional consulting.

Become a member of our community today! Then share, connect, exchange, and grow -- that’s why we’re here and we hope you are too. You can engage this community’s resources anytime, from anywhere there’s a web connection.

Welcome. We're glad you're here.

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