

## **Facilitating Success Among New Faculty: Approaches To Mentoring**

Howard Goldstein, Ph.D.

Florida State University

*The mentor takes the protégé under his/her wing, invites the protégé into a new occupational world, shows the protégé around, imparts wisdom, cares, sponsors, criticizes, and bestows his/her blessing. The teaching and the sponsoring have their values, but the blessing is the crucial element. (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978)*

The suggestion that academic programs in communication sciences and disorders institute mentoring programs is often heard. The idea that mentoring will help junior faculty members achieve success in meeting the demands of challenging academic environments certainly makes sense intuitively. What is not clear is what constitutes an effective mentoring program. Perspectives on mentorship can be found in literature produced by diverse disciplines, especially education, business, and nursing (Borman & Colson, 1984; Clawson, 1980; Fagan & Walter, 1982; Gray & Gray, 1986; May, Meleis, & Winstead-Fry, 1982; Rawlins & Rawlins, 1983; Swoboda & Millar, 1986; Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, & Niles, 1992; Woodlands Group, 1980). One will find diverse definitions of mentoring (cf. Phillips-Jones, 1982). For example, one of my favorite examples defines a mentor as one who provides “a brain to pick, a shoulder to cry on, and a kick in the pants” (Josefowitz, 1980). Although this definition has appeal, it does not provide much guidance on how to offer effective mentoring. This paper presents a model of mentorship and explores its application to academic settings. Then a developmental progression in mentoring relationships will be presented. Finally, the

potential for mentorship networks as a means of expanding beyond and overcoming the limitations of traditional dyadic mentoring relationships will be discussed.

The model that I would like to share has the advantage of encompassing many of the ideas found in the diverse literature one encounters on mentorship. Anderson and Shannon (1988) emphasize mentoring as a nurturing process:

in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and protégé. (p. 40)

*This model of mentoring is depicted in Figure 1.*

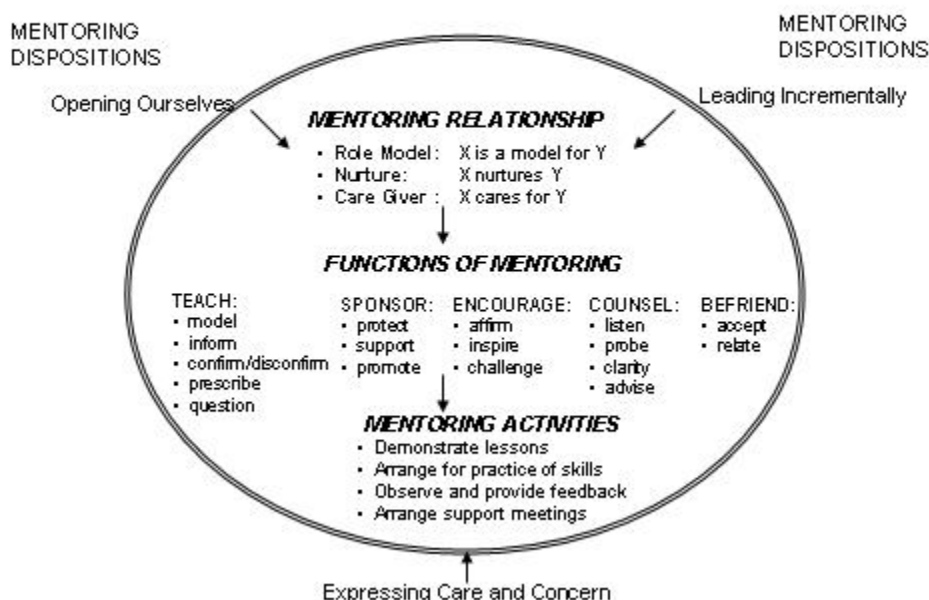


Figure 1. A schematic model of mentorship adapted from Anderson & Shannon (1988).

Note that the perimeter of the model designates several predispositions that are essential for one to serve as a mentor. First, one must be willing to open oneself to protégés. This might entail a willingness to share reflections on one's past successes and mistakes or to divulge thought processes that guide personal and professional decision making. Second, one must lead incrementally. Because preparation for academic challenges varies, mentors must individualize the mentoring process and maintain realistic expectations that progress in an incremental fashion. Protégés have different strengths and needs. This second predisposition acknowledges the need to individualize the mentoring process to lead in an incremental fashion. Third, mentors must express genuine care and concern. The mentoring process requires a personal connection that is at its heart supportive.

Fundamentally, mentoring implies a relationship between a mentor and a protégé. Anderson and Shannon's (1988) model proposes three possible roles for the mentor: (1) serving as a role model for the protégé, (2) nurturing the protégé, and (3) caring for the protégé. These three roles set the context for the most informative part of this model, the identification of five mentoring functions: teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counseling, and befriending. Each of these functions could be operationalized via a variety of activities. A few examples are provided.

*Teaching* can be a rather direct form of mentoring. Examples abound: when a mentor might provide feedback on a manuscript that is being prepared for submission; when offering questions or suggestions about a proposed research study; when confirming that the protégé's response to a manuscript or grant review is appropriate; when suggesting an alternative means of assessing student performance; when offering suggestions for how to provide feedback to students on their written assignments.

The mentor also can serve as a *sponsor* for the protégé. This may occur when the mentor suggests the protégé for a review panel or as a consultant. On the other hand, the mentor may protect the protégé from becoming overcommitted to a variety of activities that may detract from research and teaching efforts. In general, the mentor provides support in such a way to increase the local and especially the national visibility of the protégé while trying to maintain a balance that will not overwhelm the protégé.

The mentor offers *encouragement*. This may be a matter of affirming or praising the quality and quantity of the protégé's work. It may be a matter of offering inspirational chats. For some protégés offering challenges may be most effective. Nicholas Hobbs taught me the benefit of challenges. He introduced me to the concept of JMDs or *Just Manageable Difficulties*. He taught that if individuals put themselves in situations that were difficult, but just manageable, it would promote personal growth and development.

*Counseling* is another function of a mentor. The mentor might need to be able to lend a sympathetic ear or ask probing questions that help the protégé understand motivations or values associated with actions. As problems arise, the counseling function might serve to bring greater clarity to personal and professional expectations, roles, and situations. Sometimes the mentor offers advice.

Finally, the mentor is expected to function as a *friend*. One is expected to relate to the protégé with positive interaction patterns leading to a friendly relationship. A sense of acceptance and an acknowledgement of the protégé's individuality needs to be communicated. Successful mentorship is built upon a good interpersonal relationship and sufficient time for the mentor and protégé to relate.

By outlining these functions prospective mentors can evaluate whether they are able to serve all these functions. Similar to all kinds of relationships, a mentor may self-identify an unwillingness or lack of comfort with his/her ability to carry off some of these functions. That does not necessarily disqualify a person from being a good mentor. Nevertheless, this self-awareness could be communicated to help the protégé determine areas that might best be addressed by other colleagues, friends, or mentors.

To sustain mentoring there needs to be advantages to both the mentor and the protégé. The activities discussed above outline many advantages that protégés might realize from the mentoring relationship (Goldstein, 1993). Common advantages to the protégé include:

- Gaining advice on career goals
- Receiving encouragement; help instilling self-confidence
- Acquiring new or improved skills and knowledge
- Being offered models of how to handle difficult situations
- Being provided opportunities and resources
- Being provided increased exposure and visibility
- Being provided guidance and a model to help bridge difficult life transitions

Of course, the primary purpose of mentoring junior faculty is to ensure their success by promoting career development, thus bringing along a colleague (and “worthy successors”). Perhaps there are advantages that are not altogether altruistic. Some potential advantages thought to appeal to those considering serving as a mentor, include:

- Furthering one’s own development. One learns by teaching. Also, new faculty members are likely to bring new skills that might be of value to mentors.

- Alleviating feelings of alienation by forming relationships with others like us. Indeed, social psychologists observe that parents envision their children to be just like themselves but a little better. Don't faculty members share a similar vision for their doctoral students? This is a common tendency that faculty members may need to overcome if they are willing to broaden their perspectives and consider unfamiliar strategies and activities that may improve their mentoring skills. At the very least, through mentoring relationships one learns to talk the same language.
- Being involved in close, caring, and productive relationships. The nurturing of interest and desire, and the development of skills can be accomplished in a reciprocal fashion if one believes that these accomplishments are best achieved through such relationships.
- The returned investment when protégés involve their mentors through their future contacts, advice, expertise, and so forth.

It may be useful to think about how the functions and activities involved in mentoring are implemented as the mentoring relationship develops. Haring (1993) makes this explicit in her discussion of a developmental model of mentorship. During the *Initiation* phase, the emphasis might be on activities associated with the teaching function (e.g., modeling, informing, consulting, and coaching). Subsequently, there may be a long phase of *Cultivation*. During the Cultivation phase, a number of additional functions may be added, such as encouraging, sponsoring to provide exposure and visibility to other colleagues, protecting, and counseling. Over time, many of the functions that are outlined in Anderson and Shannon's model would need to be faded. Eventually, one should expect a *Separation* phase. At this point, the protégé should be increasingly independent and have established a strong self-identity; the mentor no longer plays a pivotal role. Finally, a *Redefinition* phase may be discerned as the mentor moves from being a transitional figure to a friend, colleague, and co-equal.

Mentor-protégé interactions do not always flourish and develop into productive, mutually beneficial relationships. In the literature on mentorship, there are a number of potential problems that are discussed (Bolton, 1980; Brooks & Haring-Hidore, 1987; Goldstein, 1993; Kram, 1983; Philips-Jones, 1982; Rawlins & Rawlins, 1983; Rowe, 1981; Shapiro, Haseltine, & Rowe, 1978). Matching a mentor to a protégé is far from a science. Inappropriate choice of mentor or protégé could produce a number of unsatisfactory outcomes, such as:

- Excessive time and energy commitments experienced by either the mentor or the protégé.
- Unrealistic expectations imposed by the mentor upon the protégé or vice versa. Although such mismatches in expectations might be preventable through open and honest communication, candid discussions leading to shared expectations may be rare.
- Expectations of protégé failure. This is a serious problem and one that is likely to lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Protégé's feelings of inferiority. This may be an issue when an inexperienced faculty member is intimidated by the reputation, skills, activities, or productivity of the more experienced mentor.
- Unfair manipulation by a mentor or a protégé. The mentor may view the protégé as an underling to do his or her bidding or cavalierly exploit the protégé's ideas or skills. On the other hand, the protégé may take advantage of a situation and exploit the mentor.
- Overdependence. Not only might the protégé become overly dependent on the mentor and fail to develop independence, the mentor also may become overly dependent on the protégé as an assistant, coauthor, statistician, and so forth.

Even healthy and productive mentor-protégé relationships may not be free from problems. For example, such relationships could evoke excessive jealousy from others—other faculty members or family members might not appreciate the time or camaraderie they perceive.

### **Exploring Alternative Models of Mentorship**

Many of the potential problems associated with dyadic mentor-protégé mentoring could be minimized with “networking mentoring” (Haring, 1993; Swoboda & Millar, 1986). Because mentors may be uncomfortable with all the mentoring functions outlined by Anderson and Shannon (1988), drawing on Haring’s (1993) concept of a network of mentors has distinct advantages. Different mentors might help meet diverse needs and even provide multiple perspectives when multiple mentors are addressing the same needs. Dyadic mentoring relationships have an explicit acknowledgment that the more experienced mentor is offering assistance to a less experienced protégé. In contrast, networking mentoring has the potential for reciprocal and non-hierarchical relationships. Perhaps the greatest advantage is the potential for gaining multiple perspectives. One could argue that combining new perspectives with the empowerment of networking is likely to yield more creative problem-solving and is more likely to yield departures from the status quo.

In most universities where mentorship programs exist, they typically promote a dyadic mentor-protégé model. Although they may be highly successful programs, a lot depends on a mentor’s ability to function effectively in that role. And success with one protégé does not guarantee that productive relationships will be repeated with other protégés. Training programs for mentors are scarce, to be sure. In the spirit of developing a network of mentors at FSU, I asked if junior faculty would be interested in participating in weekly morning meetings. Four assistant professors welcomed the opportunity. In fact, they gave the weekly meetings a name: The Meerkat Roundup. I have since learned a bit about Meerkats; they showed up in the novel, *The Life of Pi*

(Martel, 2001). The FSU Meerkats found a website with a motto they found apt (<http://www.meerkats.com/>): “Respect the elders, teach the young, cooperate with the family, play when you can, work when you should, rest in between. Share your affection, voice your feelings, leave your mark.”

From the outset, I expressed my expectation that this weekly meeting should not be considered a “tenure-prep course.” I saw it serving two basic functions. First, we would focus on writing projects. My intention was that this would make all of us accountable for planning writing projects and evaluating whether we were making progress each week. I encouraged them to share parts of manuscripts, grant proposals, and reviews. I did so as well. This allowed us to have mini-research meetings in which we were able to get feedback on our writing projects. Second, we would provide a forum for problem-solving. We shared ideas about the common problem of how to distribute one’s efforts to maintain a satisfying and productive balance in our lives. In many respects, we reflected on the Meerkat motto. As a function of these meetings, it is my impression that these junior faculty members were more willing to share thoughts, ideas, and concerns with one another as well as other colleagues. I believe it had an effect on writing productivity and the development of coping strategies. At the very least, the Meerkats knew that someone cared and was willing to assist them. I am less confident that these meetings helped establish network mentorship, but it has raised the consciousness of faculty members in the department and perhaps many folks associated with the CAPCSD.

## References

- Anderson, E., & Shannon, A. (1988). Toward a conceptualization of mentoring. *Journal of Teacher Education, 39*, 38-42.
- Bolton, E. B. (1980). A conceptual analysis of the mentor relationship in the career development of women. *Adult Education, 30*(4), 195-207.
- Borman, C., & Colson, S. (1984). Mentoring—an effective career guidance technique. *Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 32*, 192-197.
- Brooks, L., & Haring-Hidore, M. (1987). Mentoring in academe: A comparison of protégés' and mentors' perceived problems. *International Journal of Mentoring, 1*, 3-10.
- Clawson, J. G. (1980). Mentoring in managerial careers. In C. B. Derr (Ed.), *Work, family and the career: New frontiers in theory and research* (pp. 144-165). New York: Praeger.
- Fagan, M. M., & Walter, G. (1982). Mentoring among teachers. *Journal of Educational Research, 76* (2), 113-118.
- Goldstein, H. (1993). Perspectives on research mentorship. In N. Minghetti, J. Cooper, H. Goldstein, S. Warren, & L. Olswang (Eds.), *Research mentorship and training in communication sciences and disorders* (pp. 51-66). Rockville, MD: American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation.
- Gray, W., & Gray, M. (Eds.) (1986). Mentoring: Aid to excellence in career development, business and the professions. *Proceedings of the First International Conference of Mentoring, 2*. Vancouver, BC: International Association for Mentoring.
- Haring, M. J. (1993). Mentoring for research: Examining alternative models. In N. Minghetti, J. Cooper, H. Goldstein, S. Warren, & L. Olswang (Eds.), *Research mentorship and training in communication sciences and disorders* (pp. 117-125). Rockville, MD: American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation.
- Josefowitz, N. (1980). *Paths to power*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academy of Management Journal, 26* (4), 608-625.

Levinson, D. J., Darrow, C. L., Klein, E. B., Levinson, M. H., & McKee, B. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Martel, Y. (2001). *The Life of Pi*. New York: Harcourt.

May, K., Meleis, A., & Winstead-Fry, P. (1982). Mentorship for scholarliness: Opportunities and dilemmas. *Nursing Outlook*, 30 (1), 22-28.

Phillips-Jones, L. (1982). *Mentors and protégés*. New York: Arbor House.

Rawlins, M. E., & Rawlins, L. (1983). Mentoring and networking for helping professionals. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 62, 116-118.

Rowe, M. P. (1981). Building mentorship frameworks as part of an effective equal opportunity ecology. In J. Farley (Ed.), *Sex discrimination in higher education: Strategies for equality* (pp. 23-33). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.

Shapiro, E. C., Haseltine, F. P., & Rowe, M. P. (1978). Moving up: Role models, mentors, and the "patron system." *Sloan Management Review*, 19 (3), 51-58.

Swoboda, M. J., & Millar, S. B. (1986). Networking-mentoring: Career strategy of women in academic administration. *Journal of National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors*, 49 (3), 8-13.

Wildman, T., Magliaro, S., Niles, S., & Niles, J. (1992). Teaching mentoring: An analysis of roles, activities, and conditions. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 43, 205-213.

Woodlands Group. (1980). Management development roles: Coach, sponsor and mentor. *Personnel Journal*, 59, 918-921.