



Benchmarking and gap analysis of faculty mentorship priorities and how well they are met

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ABSTRACT

Background: There is little consensus among faculty mentoring programs as to best practices. While there are recommendations in the literature to base faculty development programs on gap analyses of faculty ratings of actual and preferred performance in teaching, scholarship and service, no gap analysis was found in the literature.

Purpose: Thus, the purpose of this study was to develop a survey tool to benchmark school of nursing (SON) faculty mentorship priorities and conduct a gap analysis of how well they were being addressed.

Methods: Senior faculty who lead mentorship as part of their roles in the SON (associate and assistant deans and director of mentorship) developed a survey through (a) asking faculty members for priorities at in-person mentorship seminars, (b) a review of current nursing literature, and (c) input from the SON mentorship advisory board. The final survey included 37 items focused on general job duties, structure of the mentoring program, time management, as well as skills needed for research, teaching, practice, writing and team science. Responses (rated from 0—not important to 5—very high priority) were requested in 4 areas: the first area focused on how high a priority the respondent rated a given item and areas 2 to 4 focused on how well the need was met by one of three resources: their SON primary assigned mentor, other SON resources, or other university resources.

Discussion: There were 63 eligible SON faculty to whom the survey was e-mailed with a 60% ($n = 38$) response rate. Most of the respondents were clinical track (42.1%) followed by tenure track (39.5%) and research track (15.8%). Half were assistant professors. The percentage of respondents giving a rating of 4 to 5 were calculated and then ranked. Almost all the faculty responding, regardless of track or rank, desired formal mentorship. Among all faculty, the top five priorities were guidance on producing timely publications (70.4%), mentorship on work-life balance (68%), mentorship on putting together a promotion package (61.5%), guidance on test writing (60%), and utilizing technology in the classroom (60%). Priorities varied by faculty track. In terms of the gap between mentorship priorities and how well they were being met, the highest gaps overall were for test writing, using technology in the classroom, curriculum development,

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lecturing, and developing and managing a research team. As with priorities, the gaps between priorities and how well they were being met varied by track.

Conclusion: The priorities and gap analysis were used to guide career development program activities and to develop a plan for future mentor–mentee training and activities. The survey tool demonstrated face validity, variability, and preliminary utility as one method for assessing and guiding improvements in faculty mentorship.

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Introduction

Mentoring and development are essential for recruitment, retention, and career advancement of talented faculty (American Psychological Association, 2006; Chandler, Hall, & Kram, 2010; Dunham-Taylor, Lynn, Moore, McDaniel, & Walker, 2008; Sambunjak, Straus, & Marušić, 2006; Turnbull, 2010). Forging a solid relationship between mentor and mentee is the fulcrum for successful mentoring and requires effort on both the part of the mentor and mentee. The process of developing these relationships and mentoring strategies may differ based on the individual goals of the mentee and mentor and context in which the mentoring relationship dwells (Zerzan, Hess, Schur, Phillips, & Rigotti, 2009). Nevertheless, the literature consistently demonstrates that people who are mentored are more productive, experience less role conflict, and are more successful than those who are not (Ramanan, Taylor, Davis, & Phillips, 2006; Sambunjak et al., 2006; Specht, 2013). Academic institutions and departments across the nation are investing effort into the development of formal mentoring programs with varied structures and processes that promote mentoring relationships and successful outcomes. Examples of these programs can be found on many of the Web sites of the top ten-ranked nursing schools, such as the University of California, San Francisco, 2015 (http://academicaffairs.ucsf.edu/ccfl/media/UCSF_Faculty_Mentoring_Program_Toolkit.pdf), University of Pennsylvania, 2015, and University of Illinois, 2015.

Yet, there is little consensus among mentoring programs, and development of best practices is still needed in nursing (Nick et al., 2012). Pagliarulo and Lynn (2002) recommended faculty development programs be based on gap analysis of faculty ratings of actual and preferred performance in teaching, scholarship, and service. However, no gap analysis was found in the literature that focused on assessment of faculty mentoring priorities and how well these priorities are being met.

Nursing faculty assume a variety of roles including teacher, expert clinician, researcher and scholar, collaborator, leader through various aspects of community citizenship and service, and mentor for other faculty and students (Edwardson, 2010; Garand et al.,

2010; Specht, 2013). The word mentor is often used as a general term to refer to an advisor, a coach, a sponsor, and a role model (National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, & Institute of Medicine, 1997). Traditionally, however, mentoring has been defined as a relationship between an older, more experienced individual and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of helping and developing the protégé's career. The Oxford English Dictionary provides the following definitions (adapted) of these words: (a) Advisor: a person who advises a particular course of action or measure; an advocate, a proponent, a person who gives advice; a counselor, (b) Coach: a private tutor who prepares a candidate for an examination (or to reach a specific goal), (c) Mentor: a person who acts as guide and adviser to another person, especially one who is younger and less experienced; an experienced person in a company, college, and so forth, who trains and counsels new employees or students; a wise advisor, and (d) Sponsor: one who enters into an engagement; makes a formal promise or pledge, on behalf of another (opens door, provides opportunities or resources, nominates mentee for positions).

At Emory University (Atlanta, GA), the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing (NHWSN) has three faculty tracks: tenure, clinical, and research. As the NHWSN has become increasingly research intensive, a formal mentoring plan for faculty at the assistant professor rank on the tenure track and research track was put in place 5 years ago. Mentoring for clinical track faculty was not part of the initial formal plan. However, clinical track mentorship evolved to include new assistant professor mentorship by the Assistant Dean for Clinical Advancement, through group-based faculty development activities, and when specifically requested by faculty. The tenure and research track mentoring plan was developed with the philosophy that mentoring activities would be integrated into the roles of all leaders in the school of nursing (SON; dean, associate deans and program directors) and senior faculty. The tenure and research faculty plan also included assignment of a primary mentor based on area of expertise and research, a formal structure for a mentoring team involving additional nursing and multidisciplinary faculty, and resources such as mentoring guides and literature and training sessions for both the mentor and mentee. Separate and combined

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