

Mentoring at AdventHealth University (AHU)

According to the Faculty Handbook of the AdventHealth University (AHU) the faculty are required to mentor students and colleagues as part of their role related to Professional Service. This privilege has been documented by Boyer (1990) as having roots in colonial collegiate education as an expectation of the employment of faculty in the classroom and beyond. According to Boyer (1990), faculty were expected to be “educational mentors.” This same expectation continues in contemporary collegiate education and is highly valued at AHU as a faculty activity for both the annual review and promotion in rank.

Mentors

A mentor has been defined as (1) a wise or trusted advisor or guide (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2009, on-line) and (2) an influential senior or sponsor (Dictionary.com, 2012) for a mentee. Mentors support mentees as they integrate into their new environment and establish new relationships in ways that help the mentee to flourish and reach their full professional potential. According to Ferman (2002, p. 147) mentoring includes:

“...a process whereby one is assisted, guided and advocated for by another...[usually] more experienced... person... It can lead to an overlap with networking and other collaborative endeavours and can occur in many and varied modes, ranging from frameworks characterized by hierarchy and formality to those marked by informality and a peer relationship.”

Therefore, all faculty are in an excellent position to serve as mentors for students. Likewise, senior faculty are in an excellent position to mentor their junior faculty colleagues.

Mentoring as the Vision at AHU

The process of mentoring at AHU is grounded in the four vision statements that identify and explain the values of the university as related to the students, faculty, and administration – Nurture, Excellence, Spirituality, and Stewardship. Each of these vision statements provides an excellent framework for mentoring.

Nurture: in order to be effective, the mentoring relationship must be sustained in a positive and nurturing environment. The mentor and mentee must find the relationship to be rewarding. Faculty who mentor students must nurture their academic efforts. Senior faculty who mentor junior faculty must nurture the mentees efforts at integrating into the academic environment.

Excellence: all mentoring activities must be accomplished with the underlying expectation of excellence as the outcome. This includes promoting the academic achievements of students, as well as scholarly production by faculty. The faculty of AHU view mentoring as fundamental to our character and a culture that promotes excellence.

Spirituality: this University is founded in the principles of Christianity and expects that mentors will support and promote the spirituality of their mentees. The distinguishing characteristic of a Christian professional is best expressed when spirituality is at the core of the mentoring relationship.

Stewardship: mentorship is founded in the wise use of human, intellectual, financial, and physical resources. Faculty and students will development more fully in this atmosphere.

The University supports the process of mentoring through various departmental and university-wide activities that may be formal or informal. Additionally, mentorship at AHU is both interdepartmental and intradepartmental in that faculty are expected to serve as mentors for their discipline-specific colleagues, as well as their colleagues from the various other departments.

The Mentoring Environment

Mentoring is multidimensional and energizes the mentor and mentee (Wagner & Seymour, 2007). It may be accomplished in a variety of settings and through varying methodologies. As opportunities to communicate via technology expand, so do the opportunities for mentoring. The traditional setting for mentoring occurs in the office of the faculty using interaction as the chief methodology. However, electronic mentoring (i.e., e-mentoring, virtual mentoring, cybermentoring, tele-mentoring) increases the opportunity and methodology for expanded sessions between the mentor and the mentee. The benefits of virtual mentoring include that it is: easier to accomplish, cost effective, provides infinite resources related to place and time, and is rapid and more unrestricted than the traditional type of mentoring (Bierema & Hill, 2005).

The Mentoring Process

The process of mentoring by faculty includes, but is not limited to:

- providing advice related to academic and professional roles, responsibilities, and obligations;
- encouraging the mentee through positive feedback; and
- demonstrating academic and professional behaviors.

For students, this may be demonstrated by encouraging the learners as they strive to synthesize course content and seek admission to graduate and professional programs. For junior faculty, this may include encouraging these faculty as they seek graduate degrees, engaging them in research and other scholarly activities, serving as role models in course and university activities, and providing the avenue for publishing and presentation in national and international venues. The process of mentoring fosters as much growth for the mentor as it does for the mentee.

Faculty mentors must use positive communication skills when mentoring both students and junior faculty. These groups need a supportive attitude from their mentor that promotes confidence and well-being. These positive skills are applicable to face-to-face and technology-

based interactions with mentees. Schwartz & Holloway (2012) found that graduate students found a deeper understanding of “self” when they were positively mentored by their professors.

These same faculty members expressed a sense of reinvigoration when “giving back” through the mentoring process.

Benefits

Other benefits of mentoring for both the mentor and mentee include increased satisfaction and retention (Goode, 2012). For students, this includes satisfaction with the academic experience and retention in the program of their choice. For junior faculty, satisfaction with academia as their career, job retention, and increased professional confidence are the major benefits of being mentored (Wilson, Brannan, & White, 2010). Additionally, good mentoring for junior faculty facilitates the development of scholarly production (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997). For both groups, transitioning from novice-to-expert is enhanced when they participate in a successful mentoring experience (LaFleur & White, 2010).

It is important to consider that senior faculty benefit from being mentored by junior faculty. This occurs when junior faculty share the knowledge they have gained from recent graduate studies that includes the current evidence-based, research findings in their discipline, innovative educational methodologies, and current trends in technology. Ultimately, students benefit from this collegial exchange as they are taught by faculty who value excellence in the scholarship of educating.

Summary

Mentorship is a requirement of the faculty at AHU for both students and colleagues. The mentoring experience provides positive outcomes for the mentor and mentee, demonstrates excellence in the scholarship of teaching, and serves to support the academy through professional service. The University supports the privilege of mentoring and expects that the faculty will participate in this valuable activity.

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