**The Persistent Questions of a Calling and Career:**

**Mentoring as Innovation and Collaboration: Insights from the Across the Academic Career**

**Abstract**

This proposed Professional Development Symposium, designed for faculty from all career stages, junior through emeritus, will discuss the “How, and Why?” of mentoring. Mentoring is a neglected topic role that is seldom, if ever, part of PhD studies or a faculty orientation program. This is ironic given that mentoring of students, at any point of their education, as well as peers and others, is a basic form of teaching, and is often one the most fulfilling activities of being a faculty member. Junior faculty are generally new to mentoring both as a mentee and or mentor.

**Keywords:** Mentoring, Junior Faculty, Professional Development Symposium

**Format Panel Discussion**

**Participants**

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**Introduction**

*First, at the most basic level, mentorship is about teaching, and teaching is the most essential element in leadership.* Mitchell, 1998

Ironically, one of the most common of faculty roles is mentoring, yet it is one that is seldom discussed formally. Often, whether as the mentee or the mentor, we are not fully aware we are one of the players in a mentoring relationship. When we are the mentee, we need to know what to expect, where to find a mentor and how to interact with one. When approaching a mentor relationship, how do we even recognize the relationship is being asked for, is emerging or how do we fulfill the role of mentor.

For many of us, mentoring began when we were an undergraduate and one of our professors met with us outside of regular class to help understand the course, the field, how it can be useful to us, or even to give us broad career advice. That career advice, for many of us, may have included to become a PhD student so that we could become a professor. Its informal nature may have resulted in our not having recognized that mentoring relationship and its impact on us for years, even decades. As we pursued our graduate programs, our mentoring relationships may have been more conscious, but to us they appeared to emerge and not have a formal structure or process to them. This often continued when we were junior faculty during early mid stages of our careers. In the meantime, we often are not aware of a mentoring relationship until it is fairly well developed.

In the meantime, as young faculty we often had emerging mentoring relationships with our students. When we realized we were mentoring them, the only guidance we had was drawn from our own experience as a mentee. At the same time, addition, we may be e mentoring relationships with peers, faculty who are junior to us, and even with our friends who have become administrators.

This symposium is designed to for a panel of faculty ranging from a fairly recent graduates to emeritus faculty to briefly discuss our experiences in order to elicit commentary and questions from those attending the session about mentoring relationships. Those of us on the panel will try to tie key points from the literature on the Ethics of Care and Organization Citizenship Behavior into our comments. In the end, we hope to provide some broad guidelines on how both a mentee and mentor can make a mentoring relationship more enriching and effective.

**Theoretical Foundation**

In an academic context, mentoring is the sharing of experiences and insight by more senior faculty with less experienced colleagues. Faculty engaging in mentoring are seen by their mentees as sources of information, influence, network connections, and protection. (Karm, 1985). It might be the highest and most sophisticated form of teaching we experience, both as a mentee and mentor. Furthermore, the nature and context of the mentoring process can vary significantly over our academic career.

New faculty members were often mentored to enter Ph.D. programs during their undergraduate years by their professors. Doctoral studies typically included new mentors who directly engaged them in certain research topics and who counseled them about the choice of whether to pursue positions at teaching or research oriented schools. In this part of the process, we usually are not told, nor may we intuitively understand that they are being mentored: they often just perceive it as part of their educational experiences.

Later on, as new professors, we often engage students beyond class time through the critical role of moving beyond the explicit explaining aspects of the teaching (e.g., talking about the textbook, readings, and so on) to the sharing of tacit insights, experiences, field, and professional knowledge, which means we are becoming mentors to our own students. In these roles, we may be seen being like older siblings, rather than as professors who will ultimately evaluate the student’s learning.

As we progress through our careers, more mentoring opportunities emerge, often in new contexts, including working with less experienced colleagues, professionals in evening programs, and the business community in general. However, only in the rarest of situations are these roles explicitly presented as mentor roles. Over time, and with experience, these activities evolves not only in who is being mentored, but also in the nature of the stories and the insights being provided. The role of the faculty, the nature of academic inquiry, professional responsibilities, and the culture of the field and the institution itself are typically common topics.

The Nature of Mentoring

Given the above, Woolworth (2019) stated that successful mentoring requires we address the whole person. It is often a personal, and unscripted, attempt to help the mentee to achieve success. When successful, we teach others how to analyze situations more completely, while helping mentees to understand their talents and gifts so that they can more effectively perform their roles. Crucially, in addition to transferring skills and knowledge, we help others to exceed perceptions of their own limits. Ultimately, the we become the mentee’s role model (Cutterbick, 2002). We concur with Football Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy’s (2007) statement that when we are a role model for others, we should be make sure it is a positive role model.

*Mentoring as a Reflection of the Ethics of Caring*

When acting as a mentor, we implicitly endorses the ethics of caring (Gilligan, 1982). Given that our ultimate responsibility as a mentor is the development and growth of others. We must focus on the responsibilities, concerns, and relationships with our mentees. We have to put the mentee’s concerns near the top of our own priorities to effectively facilitate the mentee’s growth and development, and this is often enhanced by having a strong personal relationship between built upon trust and care (Murphy, 2019).

An ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982), is an on-going relational process. A caring relationship is not an ethic of abstract principles or universals leading to the ideal of individual autonomy through cognitive rationality. Rather it is one concerned with the primacy of building healthy relationships set in the concreteness of each moral situation, using our capabilities to arrive at actions that enhance both the ones cared for, as well as ourselves. As mentors, we apprehend the other’s reality, feeling what he or she feels as nearly as possible. This means preserving the uniqueness of our encounters since so much depends on the subjective experience of each of us involved in ethical encounters and conditions (that) are rarely sufficiently similar to warrant ignoring context and using abstract universals.

All ethically caring relationships involve engrossment, displacement of motivation, commitment, and confirmation. Engrossment occurs when we, the mentor, accepts the mentee as they are: caring, as totally as possible for the duration of the mentoring relationship, which can range from a semester to an entire career, and perhaps long into retirement. Displacement of motivation means we step out of our personal frame of reference and into the mentee’s. Although legal or formal constraints maybe placed on the relationship in educational institutions and professional organizations, the caring relationship is not displaced or weakened. Commitment is the steadfastness to the mentoring relationship, even in difficult times, by both the us (mentor) and them (mentee). Finally, confirmation requires we see the mentee see him or herself in the most positive light, including their potential. Caring is serving the growth and development of the other and ourself at the same time.

*Mentoring, Caring and Organizational Citizenship Behavior*

Embodying the ethics of caring is a discretionary act which supports the social and psychological context within which work is conducted. In addition, it is generally outside the normal measurement and reward system of an organization. Thus, mentoring can be fits the criteria of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), (Organ, 2018, Zhang, 2011).

Many of the qualities we exhibit when we engage in OCB are those that both fit the standards of acting in the ethics of caring, as well as what we have noted in those who have served as our mentors. Among these are courtesy, altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue and sportsmanship (Organ, 2018). These qualities are the drivers of the best practices of OCB, setting an example for others to follow and encouraging teamwork. By sharing of experiences and wisdom, articulating cultural norms, we are both setting examples of how mentee should approach the tasks and roles of the profession, as well as creating a team orientation in addressing those that are new or have been poorly defined for the mentee.

Outside of the traditional teaching of course material, the roles the professor as mentor plays generally fit the standards of Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Serving as a mentor is usually a discretionary choice we make as the mentor. This role is oftennot formally defined in the our department, school, college or professional organization. Finally, by helping the mentee expand both their range of behaviors and values, it improves the effectiveness of academic units by expanding the capabilities of both the mentor and mentee, as well as creating or expanding a pipeline of effective faculty.

Conclusion

The importance of mentoring among faculty is seldom addressed, yet almost of all of us have been on at least one side of a mentoring relationship. It is engaged in regularly, some would say continuously, but it not often a formal topic of our conversations. We are attempting to formally discuss and document what is good mentoring, what makes us an effective mentor and how our can mentoring be made more consistent, as well as more effective for others and ourselves.

Each of us on the panel smentoring has been, and is, a rewarding and enriching experience anything we do, or have done. It supersedes s and in many ways, even being granted tenure. Ironically often come a mto more students and faculty peers if that is our desire.

**Session Overview**

Despite its prevalence and critical importance, evidence suggests that mentoring, and the development of mentors, is typically an overlooked and ad hoc process. This 90 minute interactive sharing session is designed to help session participants more formally explore key elements of the mentoring process--regardless of the stage of one’s academic career--by engaging in an interactive sharing and tips session by the session’s panel of experienced mentors (who represent a spectrum of experience ranging from assistant professor to emeritus faculty). And, like all MOBTS sessions, we plan to include ample time for the sharing of key mentoring insights/lessons from all session participants.

**Session Format**

| **Topic** | **Activities** | **Outcomes and Time (Time/Total Elapsed Time)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Introductions | Introduction of panelists and participants, if time allows (for larger group use polls to identify career stage, if small individual introductions) | Participants introduced.  (5 minutes/5 minutes) |
| Initial Question: Reflection | 1. What do I want a mentor to do for me? 2. How have mentors benefitted me? | 1. Needs identified and how others addressed them. 2. Comparison and summary   (10 minutes/15 minutes) |
| Brainstorming Question | 1. Why would I want to be a mentor? 2. When do I want to be a mentor (career stage) 3. What different types of mentor could I be in higher education? Framing: Mentors in all core professional roles: Teaching; Service/Administration; Research | 1. What to consider when choosing roles 2. What to avoid   (15 minutes/30 minutes) |
| Panelist Insights | Panelists insights/lessons related to their mentoring activities | Personal reflections from panel (1 brief mentoring insight from each)  (10 minutes/40 minutes) |
| Tips & Tricks of Being Mentored AND Mentoring | 1. What should I request? 2. How do I avoid difficult situations? 3. What do people really want in mentoring? | 1. What should I look for? 2. Where and how do I find it? 3. What should I avoid?   (30 minutes/70 minutes) |
| Action Planning: Reflection | 1. Flipping the questions: Where do you need mentoring and why? | (10 minutes/80 minutes) |
| Closing Thoughts | Paraphrasing Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership,* p. 17, 2003   * *“Everyone is a (mentor), and everyone is (mentoring) all the time---sometimes in immediate, dramatic and obvious ways, more often in subtle, hard-to-measure ways, but mentoring nonetheless.”* | (10 minutes/90 minutes) |

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**Other Information**

None of this material has been presented at any other conference, not is it under consideration at any journal.

All the members of the panel have presented at MOBTS in the past.