Mentoring University of Maryland Extension Faculty

Guidelines and Best Practices

New University of Maryland Extension (UME) faculty are faced with a barrage of information and subsequently many questions:

- What is my role within the organization and what does it expect of me?
- What are my clientele needs?
- Which committees should I serve on?
- How do I build teams?
- Where can I learn about the organizational culture?
- What’s the process for promotion and tenure?

These are only a few of the many questions a new junior faculty member might experience. It can be overwhelming for new faculty to understand and balance the enormity of their role, potentially influencing how they develop a sound Extension plan and conduct effective programming. While most faculty are subject matter experts, they have not always had teaching or program development training, further necessitating fundamental and comprehensive employee development.

New employees in any organization need sufficient and ongoing training, onboarding, coaching, and mentoring to be successful in their positions (Baker et al., 2014; Kutilek and Ernest, 2001; Safrit, 2010). The employee development process is a strategic collection of interrelated organizational investments, with each element being critical to meeting the employee and organization goals (See Figure 1).

As a key component of employee development, mentoring provides invaluable early career support, direction, and perspective, typically from a more experienced organization member (Godwin et al., 2011).

A mentor by definition is a guide, which implies both support and an element of trust in the mentor-mentee relationship. It is important to note that coaching and mentoring are often used interchangeably and involve an educational support relationship.

“One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination.”

— John C. Maxwell

Figure 1. Relationship of four investments in UME faculty
In coaching, the learner directs the process (Allen, 2013). In mentoring, the mentor provides guidance catered to the needs of the mentee in a mutually agreed upon relationship (Franz and Weeks, 2008). Both are needed for faculty growth and development (OSU, 2018).

This publication presents a snapshot of mentoring principles, guidelines, and best practices garnered through review of the literature and key informant interviews with established mentoring programs throughout the nationwide Cooperative Extension System.

**Benefits of Mentoring**

Mentoring is an effective educational and employee nurturing strategy that provides numerous benefits to the organization, mentee and mentor (NCCE, 2017; OSU, 2007; Powell, 2012). The significant value of these benefits should be understood by all parties to ensure appropriate investment in the process.

**Organization:**

Mentoring programs benefit organizations by enhancing the capacity of experienced faculty while building and leveraging the capacity of new organization members. The result can be improved outcomes and increased programming outputs (Farrell, 2017).

Senior faculty continually build their leadership skill set through the responsibility of mentoring incoming junior faculty, and junior faculty are provided with a guide to navigate the potentially complex organization they’re joining. The results can be reduced disorientation, confusion and costs that are often associated with joining a new organization.

Satisfied, productive employees may be less likely to leave the organization and more willing to grow into mentors for future junior faculty as they progress in their own career (Brodeur et al., 2011; Farrell, 2017; Strong and Harder, 2009). The results can be both reduced organization brain drain and decreased costs associated with onboarding and orienting of replacement employees (Strong and Harder, 2009).

**Mentor:**

By design, the mentoring relationship aims to enhance the skills of both the mentee and mentor. While mentors may be seasoned in their practice and invaluable sources of organizational history and wisdom, their skills were built through experience and repetition over years of practice.

Mentors gain exposure to new or emerging areas of study and opportunities for partnership by helping the mentee navigate their own career interests. They can strengthen their leadership by using and refining skills and approaches within the mentoring relationships.

**Mentee:**

Incoming junior faculty can benefit from mentoring if the right pairing is made and the mentor and mentee both commit to investing in the relationship.

Confusion and stress are common when joining a new organization (Place and Bailey, 2010). Indicators of their presence include:

- Uncertainty about role expectations;
- Hesitancy in building relationships or collaborating with others within and outside of the organization (Byington, 2010);
- Reluctance to be creative in problem solving due to unfamiliarity with the academic support structure of the organization (Farrell, 2017).

Mentors can mitigate some of the challenges new faculty experience by providing the mentee opportunities to gain clarity into the performance expectations of the new role, guidance on navigating the physical and administrative landscapes, and input on approaches to networking and career development.

**“The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.”**

-- Steven Spielberg

**Attributes of a Good Mentor**

A good mentor in many ways holds the roles and attributes of an advocate, particularly when working towards the mentee’s best interests within the organization (Cyr, 2011; Powell, 2012). This role can be seen in the commitment of the mentor to act on behalf of the mentee to coach them towards the expectations of the program through sharing their own experiences and providing honest feedback.

Other attributes of a good mentor include a genuine interest in the mentee’s growth and development and a willingness to commit the time needed for that growth. Good mentoring skills are key to mentoring success. Those skills allow the mentor to challenge, support, and provide vision to their protégés.

While the technical knowledge of the mentor is an important attribute, more important than what the mentor knows is how the mentor approaches conferring what he/
she knows to the mentee. The personal characteristics present in a mentor’s approach such as being an encourager and good listener, being sincere, positive, and understanding, while also being professional, sensitive, and trustworthy, are all attributes of a good mentor (Byington, 2010; Cyr, 2011; Farrell, 2017; NCCE, 2017; Powell, 2012).

**Mentoring Guidelines and Practices**

While a considerable collection of mentoring practices exists in the literature, a fundamental set of practices are commonly employed and recommended by Extension systems:

**Ownership and tracking** of the process is identified and structured in policy (Mincemoyer and Thomson, 1998). Various models are used depending on the type of Extension administrative structure, responsibilities and load. The responsibilities can be handled by the human resources office; managed by a mentoring coordinator; assigned to Operation Director, County Extension Director, Area Extension Director or Program Leader, or a combination of these roles. A web-based tracking process is recommended for ease of access for all and to maintain records.

**Training of mentors** is essential and web-based training is recommended (Safrit, 2010). Even with training, mentor quality will vary and evaluation of mentors with follow-up training is critical. Defining and discussing roles and responsibilities, establishing short- and long-term goals and identifying approaches to problem solving are skills needed by mentors (Byington, 2010).

**Matching mentor to mentee** is critical and involves understanding the circumstances of both mentor and mentee. Best matches are made based on compatible interests, personality, and future goals of both (Menges, 2016). Mentee and mentors can complete a bio sketch form to help in the pairing process (Menges, 2016; Mincemoyer and Thomson, 1998; NDSU, 2012; VCE, 2013). Proximity matters as well. It is better if a mentor is located near the mentee (Mincemoyer and Thomson, 1998; NDSU, 2012).

Pairing can be done through multiple models (See Table 1). Most common is assigning an official mentor to a new faculty member. Others include assigning a mentor team (with specific expertise, such as subject/topic, unit policies, promotion) to a new faculty member; and assigning multiple mentees to one mentor or mentor team.

**Evaluation of the relationship** should be continual in regular intervals until the mentoring relationship is concluded. The pair should have dedicated quarterly contact at a minimum with initial meetings held face-to-face (within 1st month) and at least twice per year (Gallagher, 2004; Menges, 2016).

Formal meeting reports should include topics, ideas, recommendations, resources, and plans. These reports will help both the organization and pair and should be maintained by the mentee and tracked by an administrator via a web-based system.

**Length of the relationship** varies from two to three years with some continued support to promotion (Gallagher, 2004; UME, 2018). If the relationship is not productive for both parties, a no-fault approach is suggested (ACES; Luz, 2013; Menges, 2016; NCCE, 2017). New mentors and mentees can form new relationships.

**Peer mentoring** can occur among new employees. The organization should provide a formal process for new employees to meet with each other to share stories and ideas. The organization could establish cohort networks.

**Responsibilities of a Mentoring Program**

**Organization:**

Organizational responsibilities include investment, implementation, evaluation and management of the mentoring program (Luz, 2013). Two organizational inputs are crucial: 1) comprehensive policy and 2) dedicated personnel. The organization is also responsible for providing tools for tracking and reporting on mentoring activities, and financial support for travel that may be needed for the mentor and mentee to meet face-to-face.

Comprehensive policy sets the expectations for the program by establishing a vision and program guides, and sets expectations for the mentors and mentees through role manuals Llewellyn, 2013; Mincemoyer and Thomson, 1998). Dedicated personnel coordinate the administrative elements of the program that allow it to function.

**Mentors:**

Mentors hold valuable responsibilities in their roles working with junior faculty. Navigating the complexities of a new, large organization can be challenging for a new faculty member. Part of the mentor responsibility is to guide the mentee through the new landscape. Ideally, mentors will initiate contact with their mentees, and through an atmosphere of open dialogue provide guidance and insight on the expectations of their role within and outside of the organization (Byington, 2010; Farrell, 2017; Harder, 2013; Mincemoyer and Thomson, 1998). Within the organization, mentors will provide insight on how to set priorities (Gallagher, 2004), balancing time between scholarship, teaching, and service, and will help the mentee network with colleagues (Luz, 2013).

Outside of the organization, mentors will help mentees navigate their relevant professional organizations, and
connect with stakeholders and other advisors (Cyr, 2011; Denny, 2016). Honest, constructive criticism and encouragement (Cyr, 2011) will allow the mentor to provide motivation for the mentee to perform and meet the mentee’s goals (NCCE, 2017).

Mentee:
As new members to an organization, mentees hold responsibilities (Harder, 2013), influencing the success of their mentor-mentee relationship, as well as their progression in the organization. Regular meetings between the mentor and mentee are important. The mentor is responsible for initiating the contact and beginning the relationship. The mentee is responsible for their own growth by actively listening to, asking for, and giving feedback (Denny, 2016; NCCE, 2017; Powell, 2012), as well as articulately stating their needs (Byington, 2010). The mentee is expected to follow through on the information, referrals, or assistance provided by the mentor (Farrell, 2017; NDSU, 2012).

**Recommended Mentoring Topics**
The following list of topics should be discussed by each mentor and mentee:

- Introduction to Extension and understanding of professional position role/objectives and expectations (Farrell, 2017; Harder, 2013);
- Fundamentals of program development, including logic model, needs assessment (Llewellyn, 2013), impact evaluation (Baker and Hadley, 2014; Farrell, 2017; Saunders and Reese, 2011);
- Learning how to find, build relationships, and work with clientele, stakeholders, and community leaders (Luz, 2013);
- Building teams with peers/campus faculty/regional colleagues/stakeholders (NCCE, 2017);
- Developing an advisory committee (Harder, 2013);
- How/where to tap into other resources (Farrell, 2017);
- Understanding system reporting and where to go for resources and training;
- Professional associations and getting involved;
- Scholarship opportunities and tips to be involved in grants, how to publish, leadership roles (Kutilek and Ernest, 2001; Llewellyn, 2013; Saunders and Reese, 2011);
- Time management (NCCE, 2017) and balancing scholarship, teaching and service. How and when to say yes/no;
- Balancing work and family (Luz, 2013; NCCE, 2017);
- Professional development ideas/strategies (Gallagher, 2004; NCCE, 2017);
- Effectively and efficiently responding to clientele needs/inquiries and managing volunteers (Farrell, 2017; Harder, 2013; NCCE, 2017);
- Matching technology and program venues;
- Promotion strategies and available resources (Luz, 2013; OSU, 2013).

**Evaluation of the Mentoring Program**
Evaluation is essential to understand whether the relationship is productive and beneficial to the mentee, demonstrate the impact of the program, and guide any changes needed to improve program and individual outcomes (Byington, 2010; Lumpkin, 2011).

Formalized recordkeeping by the mentor and mentee is highly recommended to completely and uniformly track notable events and activities in the mentoring relationship (Harder, 2013). Providing tools and guidelines for recordkeeping can encourage some consistency in what is reported and how the mentee is progressing in his/her role. Administrative tracking through recordkeeping can assist in identifying the productiveness of the relationship and satisfaction with the match.

Understanding productiveness, satisfaction, and the activities included with those elements can guide future mentor-mentee matching and the activities the matches are encouraged to explore in their relationships. If adequate recordkeeping is kept by both administrative personnel and by the mentors and mentees, overall mentor program evaluation will be easier to conduct at periodic intervals to address enhancement and revisions to the mentoring program.

**Conclusions**
Successful mentoring is based on a relationship of trust (Byington 2010; Farrell, 2017) and genuine interest. Mentoring is an essential and cost-effective investment in Extension faculty. Mentoring is only one piece of educating faculty to be successful and must be accompanied by sufficient onboarding, ongoing professional development, and other coaching (Franz and Weeks, 2008).

The mentoring process can be accomplished in many ways and the best approach is dependent on system/admin structure, roles, capacity. Formalized policies on
mentoring structure, training, individual responsibilities, and organizational tracking and evaluation are recommended. To truly be successful, someone must own the program and champion it within and across Extension administration.

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<tr>
<th>Table 1. Mentoring models used by universities – Hanover Research, 2014</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>One-to-One Mentoring:</strong> One mentor meets with one mentee at a time; this is the traditionally accepted model. The individualized attention that the mentor pays to the mentee allows for greater rapport building. These relationships often last a number of years but can be a lifelong partnership. These relationships are highly structured with multiple outcomes, often for both the mentor and the mentee.</td>
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<td><strong>Group Mentoring:</strong> One mentor meets with multiple mentees at a time. Mentees typically have a common or similar goal. This method is especially effective in situations where time and mentoring resources are at a premium. Once a level of trust and openness has been achieved, this model is also effective for tapping into collective knowledge, where shared knowledge and ideas can trigger larger possibilities.</td>
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<td><strong>Team Mentoring:</strong> Multiple mentors work with a single mentee. The relationship lasts for a limited time, until the goal is achieved or the project is completed. The focus of the mentoring relationship is the function of the group, rather than any psychosocial bonding. The mentors are assembled to act as guides and resources, providing feedback on the work, but it is the responsibility of the mentee to bear the burden of learning and to move the project forward.</td>
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<td><strong>Peer Mentoring:</strong> Another junior faculty member or members provide guidance and/or feedback to a junior faculty member. These relationships can be one-to-one or as a group, and are an informally structured relationship. This type of mentoring can be effective for sharing job-related knowledge or to share insight on some of the challenges and experiences the others may encounter.</td>
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<td><strong>E-Mentoring:</strong> One mentor works with a single mentee via the Internet. Some programs factor in an initial meeting or periodic face-to-face meetings, if distance is not too much of a barrier, but most do not because to the participants are in vastly separate locales. This type of mentoring is extremely helpful for schools or organizations that have multiple branches around the world. It is also a great way for participants in different locations but common fields to establish mentoring relationships. However, it is important that both parties be self-motivated to maintain regular communications and complete agreed upon tasks without the traditional &quot;face time&quot; to serve as an impetus.</td>
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<td><strong>Informal Mentoring:</strong> The mentee self-selects their mentor, usually initiated as part of a conversation or because the mentor is someone the mentee has identified as a role model. These relationships develop naturally, may not include any formal agreement, and may not have any formalized structure to them. Most of the relationship progresses at the behest of the mentee and even though there are goals, measures of success are seldom kept track of.</td>
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<td><strong>Reverse Mentoring:</strong> The junior faculty member has more experience or knowledge in a particular area than the senior faculty member. This kind of mentoring can be used when the senior person needs to know about a particular kind of new technology or can be used to encourage diversity and cross-generational understanding. For this kind of mentoring to be successful, it is important to remove barriers of status and position and to create a safe, open environment.</td>
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Recommended Resources:
UMD Faculty Handbook – Faculty Mentoring: https://faculty.umd.edu/faculty/mtntndx.html

University of Maryland Extension Faculty and Staff Affairs: http://extension.umd.edu/faculty-staff

References


Harder, A. (2013). UF/IFAS Extension Mentoring Roles and Responsibilities. UFL WC087. Available at: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/wc087


APPENDIX

EXAMPLE MENTORING PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT
(online or paper)
Adapted from Texas A&M (2012) and UNH Coop. Extension (2013)

Name: _____________________________________  Cluster/REC: ________________________________________

Role (check one):  _______ Mentee  _______ Mentor

Report Date (check appropriate one):

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Qtr 1</th>
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Describe the key topics of conversation:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What were the specific recommendations or actions?:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What problems have arisen?:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What was the resolution to the above problem(s)?:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

How would you describe the relationship between you and mentor/mentee?:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What assistance or resources are needed to enhance the relationship?:
________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Reviewed by:

Local Extension Director: ______________________________   Date: ______________
Program Leader: _____________________________________   Date: ______________
Director of Operations: ________________________   Date: ______________

Year 1:  _____ Qtr 1  _____ Qtr 2  _____ Qtr 3  _____ Qtr 4
Year 2:  _____ Qtr 1  _____ Qtr 2  _____ Qtr 3  _____ Qtr 4
Year 3:  _____ Qtr 2  _____ Qtr 4