

Title: Mentoring Early Career Faculty in Higher Education

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Authors:

Dr. Karen Blair

Department of Reading, Special Education and Instructional Technology

College of Education

Towson University

Baltimore, MD 21252-0001

[kblair@towson.edu](mailto:kblair@towson.edu)

Tel 410-70402348

Fax 410-704-4227

Dr. Robert Wall

Department of Reading, Special Education and Instructional Technology

College of Education

Towson University

Baltimore, MD 21252-0001

[rwall@towson.edu](mailto:rwall@towson.edu)

Tel 410-704-2391

Fax 410-704-4227

Dr. Paul Jones

Department of Reading, Special Education and Instructional Technology

College of Education

Towson University

Baltimore, MD 21252-0001

[pjones@towson.edu](mailto:pjones@towson.edu)

Tel 410-704-2568

Fax 410-704-4227

## Mentoring Early Career Faculty in Higher Education

### Introduction

Higher education is in the midst of a wave of retirements of senior faculty and an influx of new faculty who must survive a changing and challenging system of responsibilities and rewards. Promotion and tenure, merit pay, off-campus teaching, service and research responsibilities can be overwhelming for those who are now entering academe. How do we retain talented new faculty who must first survive and subsequently thrive in the higher education environment?

“In academe, empowerment is fundamental to quality improvement in terms of productivity and effectiveness, and mentoring within an institution provides an avenue to empower educators.” (Luna, 1995 p.1). In the study *Heeding New Voices* (Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin), it is suggested that intellectual, social, and resource support from senior faculty, chairs, deans, and other campus administrators may be critical to attracting, developing, and retaining faculty.

The purpose of this report is to describe is to provide a forum to discuss issues related to faculty empowerment through mentoring. It is the purpose of this report to describe results of one education department’s efforts to develop a mentoring program for new faculty over the past three academic years. We will describe the results of our efforts as well as data collected from new faculty on this campus and from other institutions of higher education.

### Background

Previous studies have addressed a variety of questions related to faculty mentoring. These include:

What roles should faculty mentors play? Young and Wright (2001) stress the role of the mentor as a guide to success. Luna and Cullen (1995) describe the following potential roles of faculty mentors: teacher, enhancer, caretaker, modeling, maintaining tradition, offering a map, conceptualizing, and providing a mirror. Some suggestions include: the roles of teacher, sponsor, host or guide to the new occupational and social world, and exemplar (providing modeling).

What process should be used to match mentors and protégés? Support exists for matching by disciple or department. But, another school of thought supports the notion that the mentors should not be directly involved in promotion and tenure decisions regarding the protégés. Young and Wright (2000) feel that the protégé should identify and solicit a faculty mentor. Luna and Cullen (1995, p.25) suggest that we should also look at the qualifications of the protégé because “...the question of whether everyone should become a protégé is still being studied.” The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1999) suggests that the decline of the available senior faculty suggests considering a new model that matches a protégé to several mentors.

Should formal guidelines for mentoring exist, or should the mentoring relationship be informal and allowed to develop independently? Luna and Cullen (1995) suggest that

most mentoring develops informally. They feel that it is a myth that mentoring programs must be controlled in order to be successful. NFIE (1999) reports that over the past 30 years, mentoring in k-12 settings have become more formalized and dependent on administrative support. Our experience is that this is also true in higher education.

Should the institution provide training for mentors? If so, what components should be included in the training program? Feiman-Nemser (1996) suggest that training is needed and topics that should be included include research on effective teaching, beginning teaching concerns, theories of adult learning. In addition, institutions need to provide mentors with the time to examine their own beliefs about and practical knowledge of teaching. NFIE (1999) believes that the importance of training for mentors cannot be overstated.

Are mentoring issues different for women and minorities? According to Ruffin (1997, page 19) “as bad as coming up for tenure is for young white males, it is worse if you are not.” Young and Wright (2001) discuss some of the struggles (role conflict, time limitations and levels of support) that mothers have in juggling home and academic responsibilities. Madison and Huston (1996) note that there are fewer women among higher-ranking faculty, which limits the number of mentors available for new female faculty.

Results of the faculty mentoring program instituted in the department in the fall of 2000 to spring 2002 as well as survey results from faculty in other institutions of higher education will be part of the discussion.

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