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In-house collaborative mentoring

Programs that capitalize on campus community strengths

The Z. Smith Reynolds Library (ZSR) launched a formal librarian mentoring program in July 2009, coinciding with the granting of faculty status for librarians at Wake Forest University (WFU). A mentoring committee was appointed and charged with developing a program to offer different types of mentoring opportunities. In developing the program, the committee's strategy included surveying the professional literature on mentoring, drafting guidelines describing mentor/mentee responsibilities, soliciting input from library faculty on the guidelines, developing procedures for evaluating the program, and identifying effective mentoring activities. As the committee brainstormed about how to structure the mentoring program, it became clear that a variety of different approaches would be needed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise between mentors and mentees.

During the initial planning phase, the committee discussed different types of mentoring models and relationships. Like many organizations, ZSR uses the traditional one-on-one mentoring model to pair senior or seasoned librarians with new librarians. It also pairs mentees with mentors who have expertise in areas such as library instruction, collection development, service, and publishing.

Additionally, the mentoring committee incorporates collaborative peer mentoring into the program. The collaborative model emphasizes "professional development where all involved learn from each other through a relationship of mutual respect."[1] This approach promotes a sense of community among faculty librarians by creating multiple opportunities for faculty to engage with one another. For example, individuals who are not paired with a mentee—particularly senior administrators—have volunteered to share their expertise by participating as speakers in some of the committee's collaborative mentoring forums: panel presentations and journal reading groups.

Panel presentations

To create collaborative mentoring opportunities, the mentoring committee organizes on-site professional development panel presentations. Open to all library staff, panels extend mentoring program opportunities beyond mentor/mentee pairings. Drawing upon expertise of local colleagues diversifies participation in the mentoring program and saves money that might have been spent on registration fees or travel.

Ideas for some of the panels came from the library's staff development committee, which cosponsored those presentations. Other ideas were gleaned from responses to a survey of ZSR librarians. The survey revealed that librarians were interested in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, selecting topics for presentations and projects, and in writing and publishing.

One-hour panel presentations are held in the library during the workday for optimum attendance. Past panel presentations included:

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• **Publishing in the Library Field: A Panel Discussion.** Four ZSR librarians shared their experiences with publishing, which ranged from peer-reviewed journal articles to book chapters to books. Panelists offered practical advice and tips, and answered questions on marketing research and getting published.

• **Human Subjects Research Presentation for Library Faculty.** The WFU faculty chair of the IRB shared empirical research methods, and discussed qualitative and quantitative approaches to doing social science research, including focus group, survey, and experimental research methods. The associate director for faculty research compliance and support from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs highlighted institutional support for research. She also shared step-by-step guidance for achieving IRB approval using the university's electronic protocol submission and review system.

• **How to Do a Literature Review.** Two ZSR librarians discussed conducting literature reviews as a research method or for stand-alone articles. The process was outlined, tools and techniques were shared, and a suggested reading list was posted in the library wiki.

• **Writing Reviews for Professional Publications.** Two ZSR librarians led a session looking at a variety of options for becoming a reviewer, explaining what a proper review entails. They shared examples of their published reviews.

• **Serving the Profession through Committee Work.** Four ZSR librarians offered advice on selecting appropriate committees to volunteer for, and how to be an effective committee member. Panelists' committee experience ranged from state to national associations, members to chairs, and planning conference sessions to full conferences.

• **Landing Presentation Gigs.** Four ZSR librarians discussed their experience as presenters at conferences spanning local to national audiences, and traditional to unconference formats. Proposals, planning techniques, and nerve-calming tips were shared.

By using expertise among colleagues, both panelists and attendees are at ease and more relaxed during presentations. Audience members feel comfortable sharing their own experiences to augment those of the presenters. Panelists are able to directly relate their advice and responses to the role of ZSR librarians and staff within the library and university. Additionally, collaborative mentoring panels promote and raise visibility of in-house expertise, and help address the challenge of post-panel follow up, as local colleagues are more readily available for questions and further discussion.

Journal reading groups

A journal reading group was started by the library's Staff Development Committee in 2008. When the mentoring committee began thinking of ways to enhance mentor/mentee relationships by broadening knowledge of mentoring practices, the success of the existing journal reading group inspired the creation of a second journal reading group focused on aspects of mentoring. Groups discuss current theory and practice in mentoring, which enables mentors and mentees to share experiences and improve relationships.

The mentoring committee has hosted two reading group sessions. The first session featured two articles that discussed mentoring relationships in general.[2,3] Discussion evolved from basic descriptions of a mentor's characteristics to personal experiences from mentoring partnerships at ZSR. Attendees also talked about elements of a successful mentoring relationship:

• establishing an understanding at the beginning of what each person expects from the partnership;

• dedicating regular meeting time to the relationship;

• being honest with each other about issues that you are facing; and,

• asking for feedback from each other.

The second journal reading group session was held four months later, focusing on reverse mentoring. Reverse mentoring pairs a younger employee with an older, more seasoned employee, so the younger person can share his or her unique knowledge and

experience.[4,5] Common reverse mentoring topics include emerging technologies, new electronics, and computer software. In turn, the older employee teaches the younger about the work environment, time management, appropriate professional behavior, social interactions, and nuances about the business learned over the years.

As mentoring relationships progress and knowledge of best mentoring practices increases, the focus of future reading group selections will be tailored to more specific aspects of mentoring. The committee will seek mentors' and mentees' input for interesting article topics. It is anticipated that additional articles on multigeneration workplace issues and succession planning strategies will be of key interest.

Launching collaborative mentoring programs

Staff feedback is positive regarding the collaborative mentoring events offered so far. Our success in organizing a variety of mentoring activities can be easily replicated at other libraries, even without a formal mentoring program. Consider maximizing local expertise to the fullest extent possible when implementing organized professional development opportunities as part of collaborative mentoring programs in libraries. Other key elements include:

- involving senior library administrators and noted campus community experts as presenters when possible;
- identifying faculty and staff across campus willing to present to library staff on a variety of topics, such as preparing grant applications, effective presentation skills, or best practices for mentoring; and,
- seeking expert librarians from other nearby libraries that are willing to travel to your institution to address your staff.

Furthermore, identifying staff interest in topics to tailor collaborative mentoring opportunities reinforces the validity of a successful, engaging mentoring program.

In order to host successful journal reading groups, organizers should choose articles that are either available through the library's subscriptions or are freely available online. Ideal articles are those that are fairly short and practical. Organize meetings in one of the library's conference areas during a regular work day, possibly during the lunch hour with brown bags welcome. This way, staff members can better fit participation into their schedules. Further planning points to consider:

- find material from nonacademic blogs or Web sites that cover mentoring topics in lieu of reading articles;
- read chapters from books or textbooks that the library already owns; and,
- network with other campus departments, such as a teaching and learning center, to identify and borrow additional resources.

If your institution hosts programs on mentoring or invites speakers to campus to address topics related to mentoring, journal reading group participants could attend the program together and discuss the presentation at the next meeting.

Conclusion

A robust local mentoring program can provide a rich mentoring experience by leveraging existing programs and expertise, encouraging bidirectional mentoring relationships, and supporting multiple mentoring opportunities.

A side benefit of collaborative mentoring programs is that they are not cost-prohibitive; in fact, they can be implemented on a zero budget. Participating in mentoring as a mentor or mentee, formal or informal, within an institution or beyond, will likely take place in many librarians' careers, as ours is a naturally collaborative profession. Library programs with collaborative mentoring ensure that mentoring benefits extend beyond formalized pairings to all mentors and mentees—past, present, and future.

Acknowledgment

incidents related to group study rooms, we see this reservation system as a success. Students appreciate the opportunity to reserve a room for their group to work on projects collaboratively, and by responding to our student's request for equitable access to this limited resource, we have given them a voice in the services offered at their library.

Since the launch in September 2010, we developed a mobile version of the system, which allows students to reserve rooms with their smart phones or other mobile devices. We are also considering other student suggestions, such as allowing students to declare their group reservation publicly through the reservation calendar, so they can share their location with friends and study group partners on the Web.

Notes

1. Bradley D. Faust, Arthur W. Hafner, and Robert L. Seaton. "OpenRoom: Making Room Reservation Easy for Students and Faculty." *Code4Lib Journal* no. 10 (June 2010), http://journal.code4lib.org/articles/2941 (accessed February 8, 2012).

2. See BSU Web site at www.bsu.edu/libraries/getopenroom/ ♫

Giz Womack for their editorial advice and insight in preparing this article. Again, it's a collaborative effort!

Notes

1. Chris Perry, "Mentoring as partnerships in collaboration: One school's story of professional development," *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning,* 8, no.3 (December 2000), 241–50, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/713685537 (accessed February 2, 2012).

2. Susan E. Murphy and Ellen A. Ensher, "Establish a great mentoring relationship," *T+D* 60, no. 7 (July 2006), 27–28, www.ebsco.com/ (accessed July 22, 2010).

3. Lois J. Zachary, "Make mentoring work for you: Ten strategies for success," *T+D* 63, no. 12 (December 2009), 76–77, www.ebsco.com/ (accessed July 22, 2010).

4. Molly DiBianca, "How to use reverse mentoring as a retention tool for Gen Y employees," The Delaware Employment Law Blog, Young Conaway Stargatt and Taylor, LLP, October 29, 2008, www.delawareemploymentlawblog.com/2008/10/how_to_use_reverse_mentoring_a.html (accessed February 2, 2012).

5. Alexia Vernon, "Reverse mentoring empowers emerging and established leaders," *Diversity Executive,* May 10, 2009, diversity-executive.com/articles/view/637 (accessed February 2, 2012). ♫