A Mentoring Network for 21st Century Faculty

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Abstract

New faculty today are characterized by greater diversity, a variety of appointment types, a familiarity with communication technologies, and a range of approaches to their academic careers, including an emphasis on work-life balance, collaboration, and collegial relationships. The arrival of a large cohort of new faculty in 2014 challenged the existing support structures of our university. As a new institution, we had not yet developed a formal framework to meet the orientation and mentoring needs of our new faculty. Inspired by recent scholarship, we developed an innovative mentoring network with orientation and professional development opportunities to appeal to next-generation faculty. The network we developed centered on group orientation and professional development sessions, augmented with mentoring options (peer, one-on-one, small group, and e-mentoring). This article provides an overview of the formation and scope of the project, and a discussion of the brief assessment and results of the 2-year pilot phase.

Keywords: Mentoring, next-generation faculty, e-mentoring, faculty development, group model, mentoring network, faculty orientation

1.0 New Faculty, New Mentoring Approaches and Models

Over the past two decades, universities have witnessed the continuation, and often acceleration, of changes to the American faculty that were set in motion in the latter part of the 20th century. These changes include increased gender and racial/ethnic diversity (Beane-Katner, 2014; Bousquet et al. 2009; Rice 2014); increased numbers of full-time, tenure-ineligible appointments (Rice 2014); and an increased use of technology in teaching (Bousquet et al. 2009; Diaz et al, 2009; Rice, 2004). Complicating the situation are broader economic constraints which have forced many institutions to try to accomplish more with fewer resources (Bousquet et al. 2009; Mathews, 2003). In addition to demographic changes and economic constrictions, the attitudes and perceptions of many members of this new generation of faculty have shifted, as well. Many approach their academic careers in markedly different ways than their predecessors (Beane-Katner, 2013, 2014; Bousquet et al. 2009; Cullen & Harris, 2008; Washburn, 2007; Zellers, Howard, Barcic, 2008).These new approaches to the profession include a number of factors that diverge from traditional academic life. For example, new faculty are more likely to vocalize the desire for work-life balance, institutional transparency, and to emphasize the importance of collaboration and collegiality (Beane-Katner, 2013; Bousquet et al. 2009; Cullen & Harris, 2008; Maxwell, 2009). To address the changing needs of new faculty, many academic institutions have modified their approaches to new faculty orientation, faculty development, and mentoring in their efforts to attract and retain this new cohort of faculty members. In their review of the literature, Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008), examined new mentoring paradigms. These "21st-century mentoring relationships," they explained, "are no longer framed within a singular and hierarchical apprenticeship model" (p. 563). Traditional paired or dyadic mentoring, they maintained, has been supplanted with the "concept of multiple mentoring [that] encourages individuals to draw support from a diverse set or team of mentors (p. 563). Sorcinelli and Yun (2007) also emphasized the benefits of working through flexible mentoring networks which reduces the burden of expertise placed on any single individual.

This approach, a "broader, more flexible network of support," embraces multiple "non-hierarchical, collaborative, cross-cultural" partnerships that address different aspects of faculty activities (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007, p. 58). In addition, the network approach contributes to the collegial atmosphere valued by new faculty members, and reinforces the reciprocal nature of mentoring, "since all members of an academic community have something to teach and learn from each other" (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007, p. 58).

1.1 E-Mentoring

Online, e-mentoring, provides a practical means to "leverage the positive effects of multiple mentors," (Ensher, 2013, p. 2). In other words, by utilizing e-mentoring an institution can expand access to a mentoring network. It enables real-time and asynchronous communication between mentors and mentees, and facilitates the orientation, professional development, and mentoring materials. To be most effective, Ensher (2013) recommended incorporating higher-presence communication, such as synchronous chat to foster engagement by increasing social presence. Use of a learning management system or other electronic communication system also facilitates assessment of the mentoring process through usage statistics, electronic surveys, and simple record keeping (Rockwell, Leck, & Elliott, 2013). As Rockwell, Leck, and Elliott (2013) remind us, although e-mentoring accentuates technology, it is the quality of the mentoring and mentoring relationships that is paramount.

1.2 Theoretical Framework: Relational Cultural Theory

Recognizing the need to address the needs of our next-generation, new faculty, and to create an environment that transcends difference, fosters collegiality, and builds a sense of community, we adopted relational cultural theory (RCT) as our framework for the network project. The core concepts of RCT, according to Hammer, Trepal, and Speedlin (2013), include "the importance of growth-fostering relationships, attention to issues of power and marginalization, and opportunities to grow from disconnections through authenticity and mutual empathy" (Hammer, Trepal, & Speedlin, 2013, p. 7). Although their study focused on mentoring with female faculty, we applied their five relational mentoring strategies in the development of our network and training materials. The strategies consist of 1) attend to power in academic relationships, 2) focus on mutuality, 3) foster authenticity, 4) listen into voice, and 5) build a sense of community and connection (Hammer et al., 2013, p. 7-12). Through the application of the strategies, all parties step out of the traditional hierarchical dynamics. Through professional development and support from the network, those who have felt marginalized are supported into a more collaborative position of mutual respect and support. Trust is established so that the concerns and ideas of each participant will be heard. The goal is to establish a new organizational norm of collaboration and respect that encourages growth-fostering relationships (Hammer et al., 2013).

2.0 Our Challenge

As a new university with no existing new faculty orientation or mentoring framework in place, the challenge was to develop an approach that would best serve the needs of our new faculty. Following Beane-Katner (2014), we organized an orientation and mentoring network designed to meet the needs of our new, diverse, next-generation faculty, who, among other approaches to the profession, demonstrated a reliance upon instructional technology, and an emphasis on collegial relationships, work-life balance, and institutional transparency. We adopted a group-mentoring model (Otieno, Lutz, & Schoolmaster, 2010). Our network consisted of six peer mentors and a cohort of new faculty members (both full-time and adjunct faculty). In this model, two mentors represented each of the following areas of faculty responsibility: teaching, scholarship and research, and service. In addition, we developed a community in our learning management system (Blackboard Learn 9.1) for e-mentoring (Ensher, 2013) to include remote faculty, as well as a communication convenience for those on campus. Because this group/network concept is a new approach for our campus, we needed to evaluate it for efficacy, as well as for continuous improvement.

2.1 Assessment Site

Our university was established in 2009 as an independent university within the Texas A&M University System. It is a unique, upper-level university (no first or second-year classes) offering baccalaureate and graduate degrees (Texas A&M University-Central Texas, 2017). The institution was granted independent accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in 2013. As a new university, we lacked many of the support structures that have been long-standing at other universities. Prior to 2014, we did not have a faculty center, university-level new faculty orientation, or a mentoring program.

As we focused on preparing for reaffirmation of our accreditation and striving to achieve the standards of other external accrediting bodies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the university took steps to enhance the rigor of our tenure process and the promotion requirements for all ranks of faculty. We developed our new faculty orientation and mentoring network to support new faculty and minimize anxiety as they transition to our institution.

2.2 The impact of our Next-Generation Faculty

One of the most significant changes the influx of new faculty brought to our institution was diversity. In August 2009, we had 115 faculty members, 84% self-identified as White. In August 2013, the year before the "big wave" of new hires, we had grown to 153 faculty members, 74% self-identified as White. However, by August 2014, the total number of faculty members had jumped to 175, and those self-identifying as White had dropped to 54%. There was a relative decline in faculty members who self-identified as white, particularly white males, a modest increase in faculty members who self-identified as African American and Hispanic, and a substantial increase in faculty members who self-identified as Other. See Table 1.

Table 1 Faculty at a Glance

Gender	Race/Ethnicity	2009 Total	2013 Total	2014 Total
Female	White	43	45	45
	African American	3	2	3
	Hispanic	3	9	11
	Other	3	11	26
Male	White	53	68	60
	African American	3	3	4
	Hispanic	3	5	5
	Other	4	10	21
	Grand Total	115	153	175

Note: **Table demonstrates changing demographics.**

The ages of the faculty members changed, as well. In the fall 2009, the largest group of faculty members fell into the age range of 55-64, by 2013 the largest group was in the 45-54 age range, but by fall 2014, by a very slim margin, the largest group of faculty members fell in the 35-44 age range. In addition for the under-35 age range, there were no faculty members in 2009, but there were 18 faculty members in fall 2014. See Table 2.

Table 2 Academic Workforce by Age

Age	2009 No.	%	2010 No.	%	2011 No.	%	2012 No.	%	2013 No.	%	2014 No.	%
<35	(0)	0.00%	(5)	4.10%	(10)	6.99%	(14)	9.21%	(11)	7.19%	(18)	10.29%
35-44	(23)	20.00%	(29)	23.77%	(34)	23.78%	(33)	21.71%	(36)	23.53%	(46)	26.29%
45-54	(22)	19.13%	(21)	17.21%	(27)	18.88%	(36)	23.68%	(40)	26.14%	(45)	25.71%
55-64	(36)	31.30%	(34)	27.87%	(40)	27.97%	(37)	24.34%	(35)	22.88%	(36)	20.57%
64-74	(29)	25.22%	(28)	22.95%	(26)	18.18%	(27)	17.76%	(26)	16.99%	(26)	14.86%
>75	(5)	4.35%	(5)	4.10%	(6)	4.20%	(5)	3.29%	(5)	3.27%	(4)	.02%

Note: Table depicting trend toward a larger proportion of the faculty in the under-44 age range. All data based on the certified report to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

These next-generation faculty also encompassed those that Diaz et al. (2009) called 21st-century faculty. This group needs support "keeping up with an increasingly technological workplace.

Developing ways to further integrate technology into the instructional experience, and assessing student learning in a variety of instructional delivery modes" (Diaz et al., 2009, p. 48). All university faculty are required to use the learning management system to augment their teaching, regardless of modality. During the period discussed in this article, the university was using Blackboard Learn 9.1. It has since migrated to Instructure Canvas. Teaching with technology, and innovative teaching with an emphasis on utilizing technology became key areas of emphasis in professional development sessions offered through the orientation and mentoring network.

2.3 Our Orientation and Mentoring Network

While the university saw remarkable growth over the five years from independence to the initiation of the mentoring project, there remained a significant numerical difference between the tenured faculty (27) and the large number (166+) of those with other statuses. As in many institutions, the imbalance resulted in more service opportunities than there were full-time (particularly tenured) faculty members to address them, which can lead newly hired faculty to feel overwhelmed by service demands (Rice 2004). In addition, traditional mentoring models whereby seasoned, tenured faculty maintain one-on-one relationships with new tenure-track faculty fail to address these disparate needs of the new faculty with other statuses. These traditional models ignore the specialized needs and concerns of professional-track and adjunct faculty. Equally important, the literature suggests that layering a network of various mentoring styles and approaches, including peer, reverse, group, and electronic, provides the greatest flexibility and results in a higher mentoring success rate for new faculty (De Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007; Zellers et al. 2008).

It was our goal to address the various concerns among all new faculty through our orientation and mentoring network. The objectives of the network included the following: 1) provide a series of orientation presentations during the first year for each new faculty member, regardless of status; 2) support tenure-track faculty in fulfilling the requirements for tenure; 3) support the ongoing professional development of professional-track faculty; and 4) further engage adjunct faculty in the university community. To help achieve these objectives, the network fosters a supportive environment of mentoring relationships. Because this is a new project for the university, we began with a pilot year for the orientation and mentoring project in fall 2014. Rather than a conventional mentor-mentee pairing, we employed a group-mentoring model (Otieno et al., 2010). This type of approach better met the diverse needs of our faculty members (Bean, Lucas, & Hyers, 2014). As emphasized by Ewing et al. (2008), flexibility is critical to success: flexibility for the mentees in selecting mentors, in defining the focus of the mentoring relationship, co-creating core documents, and responding to needs of participants. Through the network, we hoped to develop a mentoring culture at the university that would extend beyond the participants.

2.4 The Mentors

The mentor group consisted of six experienced faculty members. The mentors were chosen from a pool of volunteer applicants. Our tenured faculty group was so small that it was not practical to limit the selection of mentors to those with tenure. In addition, because we have so many non-tenure-track new faculty, we felt it was important for at least one of the mentors to represent this group. With our provost's support, one of the teaching mentors was selected from the non-tenure-track faculty. Two mentors represented each of the following areas that are central to faculty life: teaching, scholarship and research, and service. The mentors committed to two, three-hour training sessions to learn the foundations of mentoring and to collaborate on the construction of the mentoring booklet for use with the project. A key concept for the training, which reflected RCT, was Hansman's ethical mentoring maxims: Do No Harm, Communicate Honestly, Examine Power and Privilege. (Hansman, 2009, p. 61-62).The booklet included the core documents – the mission, vision, outcomes, and confidentiality agreement, all co-created by the mentors and project facilitators, with input from the mentees, for the project. See Figure 1.

Figure 1 Co-created Core Documents

Mission: To create professional relationships based on respect and openness that provide mutual guidance and support for all faculty, resulting in a vibrant and connected university community.

Vision: To contribute to the positive development of the university.

Program Outcomes:
- Facilitate professional success of the faculty
- Provide access to the university mentoring network resources to all new faculty
- Foster and facilitate faculty development through a network of collaborative mentoring support
- Provide University Mentoring Program participants with flexible and responsive training to enhance mentor/mentee competencies at A&M-CT

University New Faculty Orientation & Mentoring Project Confidentiality Statement
The success of the University New Faculty Orientation & Mentoring Project (NFO&M) is predicated on trust and discretion. Participants are encouraged to share critical information related to her or his career advancement, and those disclosures must remain confidential. In an effort to establish trust among all participants in the NFO&M, confidentiality and discretion will be maintained among all participants in the mentoring project. Confidential information includes all personal and professional information exchanged through the project, unless express permission is given to share that information. Information that is subject to this confidentiality agreement includes but is not limited to print records, oral communications, and electronic communications (including but not limited to email, audio, and video). The NFO&M is designed to help new faculty advance in their careers; NFO&M is not designed as an evaluative project. Thus, discussions related to performance evaluation should be avoided, and all information disclosed should not be shared with those individuals (department chairs, deans, or others) who are in a position to evaluate the mentee. The only exceptions to the confidentiality agreement are if a participant is a threat to self or others and in cases of sexual harassment, discrimination, or other actions that violate university policy or state/federal laws.

Note: Core documents of the University New Faculty Orientation and Mentoring Project – initiated by the network facilitators, further developed by the mentors, and reviewed and elaborated upon by the mentees.

2.5 The Mentees

The mentees consisted of annual cohorts of new faculty members (both full-time and adjunct). All faculty members who join the university each year are placed into an annual cohort. Mentees had the opportunity to work with the group of mentors, selecting individual mentors or groups of mentors for assistance with specific challenges, questions, or for help in meeting professional goals. The initial project was announced at our fall 2014 Convocation. The project facilitators introduced new faculty to the volunteer mentors, and discussed the project and available resources. The mentees received training on how to obtain the most benefit from the mentoring experience. Mentee participation varied due to the voluntary and flexible nature of the project design. In other words, we anticipated that the degree to which each cohort member would voluntarily participate in the network activities would fluctuate. Holmberg-Wright emphasized that mentoring relationships should be voluntary due to the intimate communication that can occur between participants (Holmberg-Wright, 2013). The mentees were encouraged to seek general guidance and support as they needed it. Ultimately, the level of mentee participation in this pilot project depended on their individual degree of commitment.

2.6 Compensation

Ewing et al. (2008) recommended that mentors and mentees be compensated for their participation in formal activities to encourage mentees to participate as mentors in future years. In addition, Ewing et al. (2008) reported that recognizing the demonstration of leadership skills through mentoring further motivates mentors to volunteer their time and expertise. We felt it was important that mentors, as well as mentees, were recognized for the time and effort they invest in professional development and creating a community of support. The Provost offered a stipend to the mentors; this recognized their time and commitment the initial training and participation in monthly organized activities. The mentees received access to substantial professional development opportunities.

2.7 Activities

It was important that all participants understood what was expected of them, and that they accepted the responsibility for making the program a success (Holmberg-Wright, 2013). It was also important that all participants were involved in co-creating the mentoring environment. For mentors, "conducting a personal inventory and assessing their current skill set" (Moore, Miller, Pitchford, & Jeng, 2007, p. 79), was an important starting point.

Mentees, in turn, "must assume responsibility for their own career development" (Holmberg-Wright, 2013, p. 50). To help each group understand and formulate a plan, we organized a series of informational meetings. To launch the project, we hosted a brief "meet and greet" session as part of their initial orientation each fall. This was followed by a work-session. The work-session began by addressing the goals and objectives of the project, as well as how the group-mentoring model functioned: including the flexibility of providing and receiving support, and the multiple modalities available for the exchange of information. As relevant topics were examined in presentations and workshops, the mentors and mentees got to know each other, their strengths, and the areas that needed development. There were ongoing formal and informal opportunities to work together or consult in large groups, small groups, one-on-one, in-person, or electronically. An important aspect of the combined session was for the mentees to lead a goal setting session for the group (Moore et al., 2007). As Moore et al. (2007) found, this activity "empowers the mentee to engage actively in the mentor/mentee relationship" (Moore et al., 2007, p. 83). The combined group was tasked with reviewing the agenda for the year, and making any recommendations or suggestions. After the initial combined meeting (mentors & mentees), the groups met separately. During this separate meeting time, the mentors met for their second formal training session. In this session, they further discussed their roles and responsibilities, worked on mentoring strategies, and developed their personal inventories. The mentee group discussed their roles and responsibilities, and created their individual development plans or lists of goals they each hoped to achieve by participating in the mentoring project. The formal, face-to-face, monthly meetings included presentations by the mentors and by leaders of various services in the university, including the University Library and Information/Digital Literacy, leaders of Civic and Student Engagement, Academic Technology, Institutional Review Board. The final session included a discussion of the Promotion and Tenure Processes led by our Provost. Because we have a substantial online teaching and learning presence approximately 43% of the university's semester credit hours (SCH), there are a number of new faculty mentees as well as some potential mentors who are not physically present in Killeen, Texas. Therefore, we made an e-mentoring option available. Using our learning management system, Blackboard, to facilitate asynchronous communication, the project was easily extended to faculty working from a distance. Other electronic forms of communication also facilitated the process for those who do not live and work in close proximity.

3.0 Assessment Methods

### 3.1. Purpose Statement and Assessment Questions

The purpose of this mini-study was to assess the efficacy of our approach to orientation and mentoring: a group/network model, with an e-mentoring component. We sought to answer the following questions:

1. Is the voluntary, group network model effective for supporting new faculty orientation and mentoring needs?
2. Is the e-mentoring community an effective approach for supporting new faculty orientation and mentoring needs?

These are broad questions. We recognized going in that it is not a scientific study, and with our small population, we would not be able to glean information that would be statistically significant. However, more important than the research aspects of the study for us, were the continuous improvement aspects: implement, assess, reflect, modify (repeat). We hoped to gain quality, actionable feedback from our survey questionnaires to enable us to make improvements during what became the two-year pilot phase before fully implementing the project.

3.2 Assessment Design

This examination employs a combination of a qualitative case study with practical action research design (Creswell, 2015), utilizing a modified version of Stringer's (2007) interacting spiral. The design was selected to assist us in resolving a problem we identified in our institutional approach to supporting new faculty. Practical action research design was selected for its usefulness in testing new ideas and promoting change (Creswell, 2015). Stringer's (2007) interacting spiral was selected because of its close alignment with our 4-step continuous improvement cycle of implementation, assessment, reflection, and modification. The combination of the two approaches, case study and practical action research, enabled us to examine this project in an informal and formal manner that would generate useable, although not generalizable results. See Figure 2.

Figure 2 Four-Step Continuous Improvement Cycle
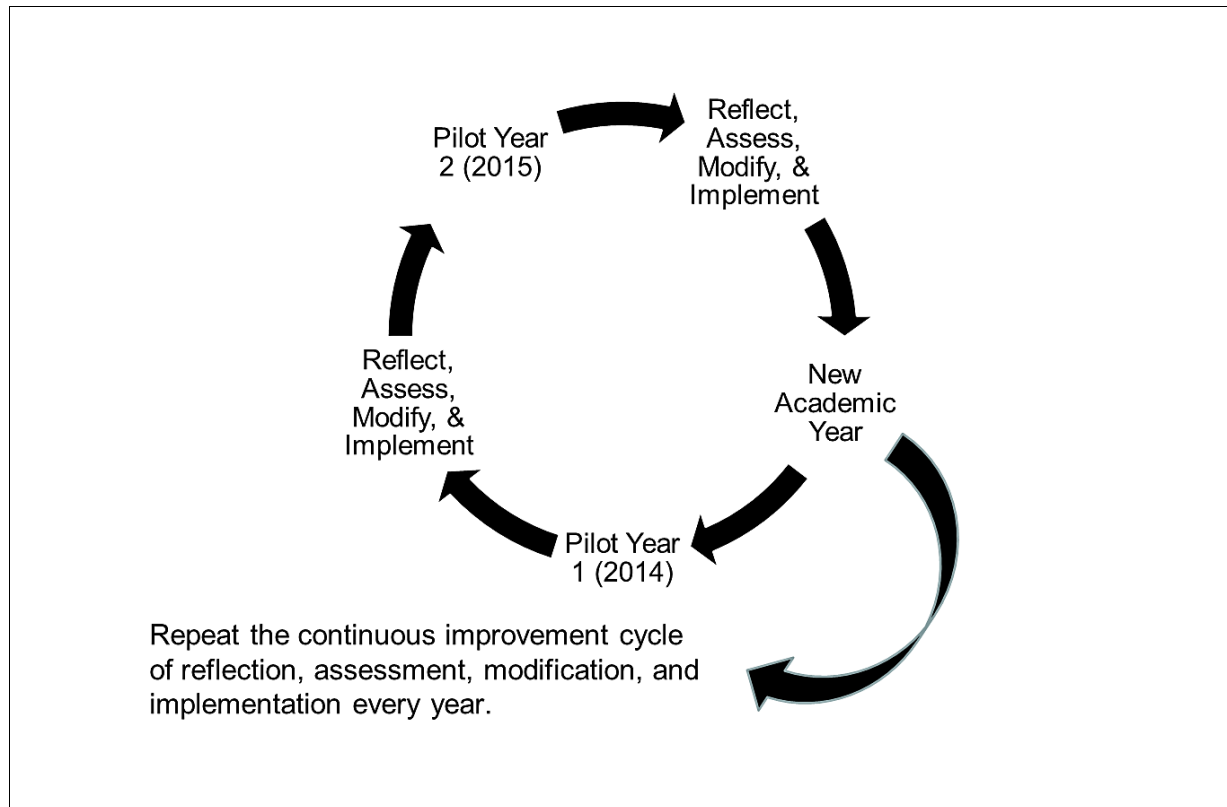
Note. Graphic depicting the Four-Step Continuous Improvement Cycle utilized each year of the study.

3.4 Instrument

In addition to the associated project materials that provide the context for the case study (mentoring booklet for the mentees, training guide for the mentors, various support materials for the mentoring sessions, and the e-mentoring site), the primary instrument for this study was a survey questionnaire. The survey consisted of closed-ended and open-text response questions developed by the researcher, as well one scaled question consisting of mentoring skills inspired by a question developed by the University of Wisconsin Institute for Clinical and Translational Research for their mentoring survey. The study survey was constructed using the survey framework of Qualtrics Research Suite Software (2017), an online, survey creation, collection, and analysis platform. The first four dichotomous and ratio questions addressed the respondents' general backgrounds with mentoring. The questions measured the respondents' roles as mentor, mentee, and participation in training. There was a six-point scaled question that includes 16 items. These items consisted of mentoring skills that the respondents are to rate on a scale of importance in the mentoring relationship from *Not Observed* (1) to *Extremely Important* (5). There were two open-text response questions for respondents to elaborate on important characteristics, attitudes, or approaches for mentors and for mentees. Three more open-text response and two dichotomous questions focused on the activities and participation in the formal sessions. Three dichotomous and ratio questions address the demographic background of the respondents.

3.5 Participants

The sample consists of the members of the new faculty cohorts of each of the two pilot years. These new faculty were full time faculty of various ranks (visiting, tenure-track, and professional track), as well as adjunct faculty. The mentors were also included in this sample population. All participants were employed at this small regional university in central Texas, which is part of a state university system. The university began in 1999 as a satellite campus of a larger institution, part of the Texas A&M University System. It became independent within the System in 2009 and was accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Committee on Colleges in 2013. It had a fall 2016 student enrollment of 2,619, with 200 faculty members. It is a unique institution, which only offers upper-level courses for baccalaureate degrees, as well as graduate programs. It supports online education as an augmentation to its traditional face-to-face programs.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Upon receiving approval from the university Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researchers utilized the official university email addresses and the e-mentoring tool (Blackboard organization) of the mentoring group to contact each potential participant. Individual email invitations containing the anonymous Qualtrics survey link were sent to the participants. The informed consent letter was embedded as the first question on the survey. Utilizing skip logic, the survey was designed to forward each respondent directly to the survey questions if they agreed to participate; it terminated the survey if they did not agree. The survey was anonymous, meaning no identifiable information was collected with the responses. Where individual participants included identifiable information in the open-text questions, this material was reviewed and stripped of identifying information by a staff member who worked outside the mentoring project. All research materials have been stored securely and only the primary investigator has access to the records. The original response data is preserved online in the Qualtrics system – accessible only by the researcher and the university system administrator. The data collection phase of the study occurred in cycles each year, lasting several weeks with each collection effort. Follow-up email messages were sent to all sample members at the end of the first week, and again at the end of the second week. Because this was an anonymous survey, there is no way to determine which sample members had responded at any given point. Each follow-up email message encouraged participation and reiterated the potential benefits of the research. This study benefitted from the advantages of web-based research noted by Creswell (2015). The data was collected quickly and easily using sophisticated software. In addition, this study avoided some of the potential drawbacks of electronic survey research. Because the participants are all faculty members at a university with an institutional subscription to Qualtrics, they were familiar with the survey framework and used computers in their daily work.

3.7 Researchers' Roles

The primary investigator of the study is one of the co-developers of the project. She acted as a facilitator for the orientation and mentoring network, the formal sessions, and the e-mentoring effort. The other co-developer, facilitator, and original co-primary investigator left the university at the end of the first pilot year. The coordinator of the Technology Enhanced Learning department took her place in the data collection process, supporting the formal sessions, and on the IRB-approved protocol for the second pilot year survey. At the end of the second pilot year, the most active of the mentors stepped up to assist the primary investigator with the final evaluation of the pilot phase of the project. He will continue to serve in this role as a facilitator and organizer for the network.

4.0 Results

At the end of the first pilot year (2014), we conducted an online survey of participants, asking about their prior experience with mentoring, their attitudes about mentoring, characteristics they felt were important for mentors and mentees, and what they felt worked well and what could have been improved with the project. We made modifications based on the results, and ran the pilot for another year. At the end of the second pilot year (2015), we conducted the survey questionnaire with the second cohort. See Table 3.

Table 3University Mentoring Project population

	AY 2014-2016	AY 2015-2016
Mentors	6	6
Mentees (Full-time status)	13	16
Mentees (Adjunct status)	16	15
Total Surveys completed	5	12

Note. Table demonstrating the total population of mentors and each new faculty cohort, as well as the total participants in each year's survey.

Our goal for the surveys was feedback for continuous improvement. Based on the results we received, in addition to increased mentoring efforts at the department and college levels, we have re-conceptualized the network, support materials, and framework in preparation for full implementation in fall 2018. The survey instrument included open-ended, reflective questions about the program and activities (Bean et al., 2014; Ewing et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2007). The purpose of the survey was to measure the participants' satisfaction with the program; explore their reflections and reactions to their experiences; and to collect their suggestions for improving the project for future participants.

These data enabled us to craft a stronger project moving forward and provided us with information that assisted in fostering a culture of mentoring at the university. We were interested in knowing how many mentees had experience as a mentor or a mentee prior to this project. The second-year cohort had much more mentoring experience than the first group. See Table 4.

Table 4 Mentoring Experience

Prior Experience	AY 2014-2015 (5 survey participants)	AY 2015-2016 (12 survey participants)
As a Mentor	0　(0%)	8　(67%)
As a Mentee	4　(80%)	5　(42%)
Formal Training	1　(20%)	9　(75%)

Note. Table demonstrating the prior experience with mentoring held by members of each cohort.

We also provided a list of skills for a mentors in the mentoring relationship and asked the participants to rank them. See Table 5.

Table 5 Observation of Effective Mentoring Characteristics

	AY 2014-2015 (5 survey responses)	2015-16 (12 survey responses)
1.	Establish a relationship based on trust (49.09/50)	Establish a relationship based on trust (49.09/50)
2.	Provide constructive feedback (48.18/50)	Consider how personal and professional differences may impact mentoring expectations (40/50)
3.	Active listening (48.18/50)	Active listening (42.5/50)
4.	Work effectively with mentees whose personal background is different from his/her own (46.36/50)	Work with mentees to set professional goals (42.5/50)
5.	Employ strategies to improve communication with mentees (45.45/50)	Establish a relationship based on trust (40/50)

Note. **Table demonstrating respondents' ranking of skills for a mentors in the mentoring relationship.**

This list was based on a question from a mentoring survey developed by the University of Wisconsin Institute for Clinical and Translational Research. (Top 5 responses with average value). In comparing the 2014 cohort with the 2015 cohort, the 2015 responses to questions about mentor characteristics were more specific in detail. For example, in the 2014 cohort, participants emphasized empathy, organization, positive attitude, availability, and a willingness to share. In 2015, these characteristics were raised, along with emphasis on teaching tips, trust, an open-mind, kindness, flexibility, expertise, constructive feedback, and being an effective leader.

Table 6 Use of Blackboard Organization for Mentoring

	2014-15 (5 survey responses)	2015-16 (12 survey responses)
Yes	2	5
No	1	5
No Response	2	1

Note. Table demonstrating survey responses regarding participant use of the Blackboard organization for mentoring.

Similar responses arose when mentees reflected on their own role in the process. The first year cohort stressed a willingness to reach out, to accept constructive feedback, to be honest and respectful, to not expect a mentor to know everything, and to utilize opportunities to seek multiple perspectives. The second year group also emphasized being pro-active, positive, and open-minded. They stressed motivation and a willingness to participate in training and accept authority and leadership advice, as well as to avoid defensiveness. We asked the participants to reflect and describe the aspects of the project that they found most useful. Their comments highlighted concern over promotion and tenure demands. In 2014, two-thirds of the responses mentioned tenure information. In 2015, four of the nine text responses mentioned tenure. Other responses that appeared in both groups included "teaching tips" and getting to know "university roles of key people." The second year group provided more detail, and also emphasized best practices in teaching, service, and scholarship, personal/relevant narratives, and information about mentoring. Continuous improvement is central to our project, and we asked the participants to make suggestions for topics or additional information that could make the project more useful. The first year group was satisfied with the status quo.

Although a number from the 2015 group echoed this sentiment, a few made specific suggestions that we are incorporating into our plan for the 2016 academic year, such as a "cheat sheet" of university resources and contacts. When asked about the formal sessions, a few respondents from the first year group expressed that there could have been a more efficient use of meeting time. An initial challenge was that the Associate Provost's new faculty orientation lecture series and our New Faculty Mentoring project were developed in isolation and were cobbled together at the last minute. This made for an inefficient fall meeting series for the new faculty, because schedules had already been set, and some topics did not pair up well together. This was addressed for pilot year-two when the schedule was streamlined, and planning with the new faculty orientation series was coordinated. The 2015 group did not express consensus about the organization or structure of the sessions. However, plans for full implementation address some of these concerns while maintaining the components the respondents noted as strengths. For example, they suggested keeping the network structure, but moving the meetings from midday to first thing in the morning. We used our learning management system (Blackboard) to host an organization for our network. It was important to evaluate the effectiveness of this component, as well. For the first-year group, Blackboard did not prove to be effective as an e-mentoring option. One respondent explained that because he or she taught online in Blackboard it was "overwhelming" to use Blackboard for mentoring, as well. Going into the second year we revised the organization by adding wikis to facilitate collaboration on the core documents. In addition, we added the initial questionnaire from the orientation session into Blackboard as an anonymous survey to make it easier for adjunct faculty to participate. We created groups for the new cohort and the original cohort, and increased the use of the announcement with a concurrent email tool to prompt participation and increase the emphasis on mentees directing the score and focus of the formal sessions. This also enhanced the 21st century faculty component of the project. Using technology for additional activities, including a subscription to 20-Minute Mentor videos through Magna Commons, for use as discussion starters for workshops and on-demand training. To make this option truly engaging and effective for orientation and mentoring, we plan to start a peer mentor blog, and ensure the organization has a mentor-facilitator moderating on a regular basis. In addition, we are migrating from Blackboard to Canvas which promises to offer enhanced communication options, as well as streamlining of our training and professional development delivery.

5.0 Discussion

We are a relatively new institution engaged in refining a newly-developed group orientation and mentoring project to address the diverse needs of our next-generation faculty members. As an institution committed to providing exceptional learning experiences for our students, this project promoted an institutional climate of support for all educators; whether they were tenured, on the tenure track, professional track, or part-time adjunct faculty. Our project was designed to support all faculty as our university continues to expand and develop, and the flexibility and layers of support built into our project promise successful results. The project was intended to better prepare new faculty for the rigors of teaching and curriculum design by offering classroom management strategies, strategies for incorporating new technologies, or suggestions for working across multiple modalities. Another intention for our project was to support new faculty as they struggled to balance their teaching and service responsibilities with their scholarship activities; our project was designed to foster an environment that was conducive to and supportive of scholarly work. While many professional track and part-time adjunct faculty do not have scholarship responsibilities, some maintain scholarship by publishing original research, presenting at and attending conferences. While some individuals in these two cohorts, due to their academic status, may not have been officially evaluated on their scholarly contributions, their research supported their teaching, so our project was designed to help these individuals manage their time so that they could make more meaningful contributions to the university community. Finally, we intended our project to help new faculty navigate the many service opportunities available and to choose opportunities that best match their needs and interests. The university is in a unique position to build an orientation and mentoring network that will grow and develop alongside the growth and development of the institution itself. This model incorporated a continuous improvement plan and embraced the goal of cultivating a mentoring culture at the university. The flexible, dynamic group-model was developed to meet the needs of our next-generation faculty at this 21st century institution.

5.1 Continuing Challenges

Upon completion of the first two years of the project, we found several areas of concern. The imbalance of faculty members with tenure to those without is an ongoing issue. Although the imbalance is reduced each year as more faculty receive tenure, the imbalance was incorporated into the planning for each year.

The faculty still struggle with significant service loads in their early years of employment here. Formal orientation and mentoring sessions offer strategies to manage workload and make smart decisions regarding service commitments. Another significant challenge was buy-in from the new faculty mentees. Employing the group-mentoring model (Otiero et al., 2010) was generally well received by the faculty mentors and the cohort of new faculty (mentees). One aspect of this was a very effective first meeting with the two groups. Giving the mentees control over their commitment enabled them to feel more comfortable about the process as did the voluntary basis of their commitment. The Provost offered a stipend to mentors which was well received (Ewing et al., 2008). There were three sessions throughout each semester. These went well and the fact they were pilot sessions provided ample opportunities to incorporate changes to the program. However, while we planned for several points of contact between the university mentors and the new faculty mentees, these contacts did not continue on their own. Our challenge going forward involves creating an atmosphere that stimulates continuing contact between the new faculty mentees and several of the faculty mentors, and understanding why it is so challenging to establish this relationship. One solution could be to require several contacts between mentors and mentees. Mentees might be required to meet at least twice with three of the six faculty mentors and write a short reflection of each meeting. It is essential we solve this problem. We will seek opinions from many different areas; i.e. mentors, mentees, the literature, the provost, other faculty

5.2 Limitations

We recognize that we do not have a large enough number of participants in the voluntary orientation and mentoring project, nor enough number of participants in the voluntary survey for the results to garner statistically significant or generalizable information. In addition, the survey instrument needs to be refined to enable better differentiation between mentee and mentor responses in future data collection.

6.0 Conclusions

We designed the new faculty orientation and mentoring network to be responsive to the needs of our growing, next generation faculty (Beane-Katner, 2014; Diaz et al., 2009). We adopted a group-mentoring framework (Otieno et al., 2010) which consisted of six peer mentors and cohorts of new faculty members (both full-time and adjunct faculty). In this model, two mentors represented each of the areas of faculty responsibility: teaching, scholarship, and service. In addition, we added an e-mentoring component to meet the on-demand preferences of many of the new faculty, as well as the scheduling needs of adjunct and remote faculty (Ensher, 2013). We provided flexibility and support (Ewing et al., 2008) for input in the revisions to the project from the mentors and mentees. Mentees exercised agency in selecting which mentor(s) they worked with, when they met for additional activities, collaborating on the focus of the mentoring relationship, co-creating core documents, and articulating the needs of participants. By the end of the second pilot year, several of the academic departments had adopted their own mentoring project with one-on-one assigned mentoring pairs. Other departments, however still do not offer any mentoring. This university orientation and mentoring network is the only university-supported mentoring available to faculty members without a departmental option. Although our network is organized to meet the specific to the needs of our institution, the concept could easily be applied to any college or university setting. Providing a pool of experts, with training in mentoring, available to work with new faculty – specific to their areas of expertise or the faculty experience in general is an approach that could be easily replicated. Even those faculty members here with assigned mentors in their departments have continued to express appreciation for having access to mentors outside their academic departments. The relationships that formed during the mentees' first years have persisted, and the informal mentoring continues.

7.0 References

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