



THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF MENTORING IN ENHANCING HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: Mentoring offers an important way to give students the emotional and practical support they need to earn a college degree. Mentors provide information, advice, and motivation, helping students stay focused on their goals. They play a key role in encouraging students to dream about college and in preparing them for the future. Mentorship programs help students complete their studies, build confidence, and shift smoothly into further school or work. Today, the internet connects university alumni with current students more easily than ever. This research paper focuses on the main challenges students face during college and shows how faculty mentors support them through mentoring. The author also highlights the growing importance of mentorship in higher education and its promising future.

Mentoring is crucial in influencing the academic, personal, and professional growth of students within higher education institutions. As universities and colleges aim to create inclusive, supportive, and vibrant learning environments, mentoring has become a fundamental approach to boost student engagement, retention, and success. It reviews different mentoring models, such as faculty-student, peer, and professional mentoring, and how these connections help in building confidence, enhancing leadership abilities, and overcoming academic and professional obstacles. Additionally, the abstract highlights the advantages of mentoring for mentors themselves, as it enriches their teaching methods, broadens their professional networks, and cultivates a culture of shared learning and support within educational institutions.

KEYWORDS: Mentoring, Leadership, Educational Institutions, Professional, Encouraging, Academic, Engagement.

INTRODUCTION: Student's worldwide facing many problems that can make them feel discouraged. These issues often lead to feelings of hopelessness within the student community, causing unrest among young learners. Today's student life is likely tougher than ever before. They must juggle many challenges, such as studying, managing time, finances, relationships, and hopes for jobs. Many times, parents' advice and their previous education don't fully prepare them to handle these pressures. Some students avoid sharing their problems, which can hurt their chances of future success. Over time, these unresolved issues may negatively affect their behavior and outlook. Many students experience emotional ups and downs as part of growing into adults. The stress from their busy lives often makes these emotions worse. However, understanding and applying mentoring in higher education can help manage and reduce this negativity significantly.

Higher education functions not merely as a venue for academic growth but also as a vital stage for personal, professional, and social development. In this regard, mentoring is instrumental in influencing the experiences and futures of students. A mentor serves as a guide, advisor, and role model, offering essential support, encouragement, and insights that assist students in navigating the intricacies of higher education and preparing for their careers.

Mentoring relationships play a significant role in students' academic achievements, boost their confidence, and cultivate a sense of belonging within the academic community. Through consistent guidance and constructive feedback, mentors aid students in establishing realistic goals, honing critical thinking abilities, and creating networks that are crucial for future opportunities. Moreover, mentoring can be particularly impactful for students from underrepresented, disadvantaged, or first-generation backgrounds, providing them with vital academic and emotional support.

In the current fast-paced academic landscape, where students encounter escalating pressures from competition, career uncertainties, and personal challenges, the significance of mentoring has become increasingly pronounced. It not only facilitates academic success but also fosters leadership skills, ethical principles, and a lifelong enthusiasm for learning. This paper/discussion aims to delve into the significance of mentoring in higher education, its advantages, and its influence on student success and institutional development.

HISTORY OF MENTORING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: Research on mentoring in school settings has been growing and shows clear benefits. Many studies have looked at mentoring in general, special, and higher education. Some research focuses on mentoring at-risk students, peer mentoring in high school, student teachers,

new teachers, faculty, and students. Topics include how mentoring works and what affects it has, especially in elementary and secondary schools.

Like in workplaces, schools have formal programs that match students with mentors. But many mentoring relationships happen naturally without any official setup. At the elementary and high school levels, structured and organized mentoring tends to work better and be more successful. The following sections briefly review current research on mentoring in different educational environments.

Research on mentoring between faculty and students is still limited. Goodwin, Stevens, and Bellamy (1998) found there are only a few books and articles on this topic. While graduate student mentoring is more common than at the undergraduate level, studies about faculty and graduate students are rare. Waldeck and colleagues tried to fill this gap by surveying graduate students with mentors. They looked at how students and faculty connect, how students choose mentors, how mentors provide help, and how satisfied students are.

One key finding was how hard students find it to start mentoring relationships with teachers. The authors believe fear of legal issues like sexual harassment may scare faculty away from mentoring students. Despite this, most students felt they received emotional and social support and liked their mentoring. Still, Waldeck's team says long-term studies are needed to see how effective these relationships really are.

Other research focuses on women who act as both mentors and mentees. Ervin (1995) reports women felt their academic mentors didn't give enough emotional support or share their knowledge. Another study by Bowman, Bowman, and Hatley (1995) looked at the boundaries between faculty and graduate students. It shows that more research is needed on the ethics of these relationships. Students should have a bigger say, as mentoring and social ties influence their graduate experience.

Campbell and Campbell (2000) studied a survey at a large university on the West Coast. Faculty volunteers mentor students, and they are paired based on shared academic interests. Their findings show students see value in mentoring mainly through academic help. Faculty mentors, however, focus more on social benefits and building personal bonds with students. These differing views suggest more research is needed to understand what drives both faculty and students to join mentoring programs.

MENTORING AND THE ROLE OF FACULTY MENTORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: The word "mentor" might bring to mind helpful people from our past or present. These people support us in our careers

and personal lives. But Patricia Cross (1999) calls mentoring a tricky idea. In her foreword to Daloz's second edition of *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners*, she says it's a complex concept. Many studies offer different meanings for mentoring. Levinson et al. (1978) said a mentor is a "teacher, advisor, or sponsor," leaving the term wide open. Daloz (1999) describes mentors almost as mystical figures, saying they give us "magic" to face darkness. They are like talismans, offering wise advice, guidance, or courage. Others see mentors as mainly supporting careers. Ragins (1997b) describes mentors as experienced people willing to help protégés move up the career ladder. Sands, Parson, and Duane (1992) include nurturing in their definition: a mentor is a "professional guide" who helps protégés learn and succeed.

John Crosby once said, "Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction." Researchers focus a lot on the mentoring process. They give many definitions of what a mentor, mentee, and mentoring really are. Almost everyone has some experience with mentoring at some point.

In the past, mentoring was mainly a way to share knowledge. Usually, it meant pairing a new worker with someone more experienced in the same job. Mentoring is a way to develop people at work. A senior person takes responsibility for guiding and empowering a less experienced worker. Kram (1985) described a mentor as someone who is experienced and knowledgeable. They are committed to helping the protégé with their career. Mentors willingly give time and support to aid in moving up. Peluchette and Jeanquart (2000) agree this fits well with how teachers help students today.

Mentors share expertise to help protégés reach goals like career growth, education, or connections. Mentoring benefits everyone. It helps the mentor, the mentee, and the school altogether. The benefits of mentoring to the institution are many and cannot be ignored.

Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993) describe a mentor as an experienced senior in an organization who helps a young professional grow their skills. These skills include technical, social, and political areas. Many students in higher education want to develop or improve their abilities but face challenges in figuring out how to do so. Faculty mentors play a key role during this time by guiding students in mapping out their career paths. Some experts see mentoring as a "Learning Collaboration"—a caring, supportive relationship focused on helping the mentee grow and learn new skills. The main goal is to address the mentee's career and emotional needs. Mentoring provides timely support, insights into issues, and sharing of knowledge, values, and perspectives. Mentors act as catalysts, encouraging actions that might not happen otherwise or speeding up future reactions. One result of

this support is that mentees often get involved in research work and present papers at national and international conferences with their mentors. Some mentors even co-author articles with their mentees in international journals, giving the young researcher valuable exposure and recognition in their field.

Evertson and Smithey (2000) studied how the support from trained mentors affected new teachers. They found that well-prepared mentors helped their protégés succeed better. Mentees with trained mentors managed routines more effectively, handled lessons smoothly, and gained better cooperation from students. The researchers concluded that having a mentor alone is not enough. The skills and knowledge of the mentor are what really matter. Other research from Michigan State University (Gratch, 1998) shows that mentoring does not always make new teachers more skilled. Mentoring relationships are complex and influenced by factors like gender, race, class, ethnicity, or power. These issues can shape how mentors and protégés work together and impact the success of mentoring programs.

CONCLUSION: Mentoring plays a key role in guiding students through their academic, personal, and professional lives in higher education. It connects classroom learning with real-world experience, giving students support, advice, and chances for growth. Good mentoring helps students build confidence, find clearer career paths, improve grades, and develop the strength to face challenges both on campus and beyond.

Mentoring also builds a culture of teamwork, inclusion, and lifelong learning within colleges and universities. It benefits not just students, but also mentors and the institutions themselves by developing leadership, nurturing talent, and encouraging academic achievement. With today's competitive and changing world, well-structured mentoring programs are essential to prepare students for complex work environments and responsible citizenship.

Including strong mentoring systems in higher education is no longer optional; it is a must. It helps shape capable, confident, and socially aware graduates who can make a real difference in society. Cunningham notes many faculty members don't see mentoring as very important. It isn't usually part of their job or included in workload or review criteria. Faculty often has too many other duties. Without formal recognition, they tend to focus on paid tasks that are checked during reviews. If colleges want more mentoring, they must make it a formal part of faculty roles. Universities and administrators need to add mentoring to official expectations to encourage more faculty involvement.

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