

USU Extension Visioning Mentoring and Retention Work Group

Process

The group invited to participate in the mentoring and retention work group include: Kristine Saunders, group leader; Lindsey Shirley, specialist; Kynda Curtis, specialist; Adrie Roberts, experienced county faculty; Margie Memmott, experienced county faculty; Paul Hill, early career county faculty.

The charge to the group was to consider the following questions when making recommendations relevant to mentoring and retention of extension employees.

1. Determine formal and informal mentoring already occurring and either refine and build upon structure.
2. Who should be mentored? Specialists, Agents, Educators, Program Coordinators, Staff Assistants, etc.
3. Who should do the mentoring?
4. Should the best mentors be excused from serving on P&T committees?
5. Distinguish between the roles of PP&T committee members versus mentors.
6. Should mentors be invited to attend P&T committee meetings?
7. Discuss travel funding for new faculty to receive mentoring.
8. Should mentoring be an option or a requirement for Extension faculty?
9. What kind of expectations and incentives, if any, could/should be put in place for mentoring?
10. Assuming there will not be a stipend for mentors, how can mentoring occur and be "counted" under the service component of the role statement?

To establish a research base and to determine what the literature says about mentoring, a brief review of the literature and review of documents created by other universities will be included and cited throughout the document. To begin the visioning process the group leader met with the two specialists and three county faculty members individually to determine if there are separate mentoring needs for on-campus vs. off-campus extension faculty. The outcome of the separate meetings resulted in each group member agreeing to review and report mentoring practices occurring at other universities and professional groups and share findings by adding documents to a mentoring group drop box initiated by Kynda Curtis. The initial group meeting of all committee members included those attending by IVC who were at remote locations, included discussion about what has already been done elsewhere concerning mentoring, review of mentoring programs, a discussion about the literature and how to proceed next. On the surface, it appears that the

mentoring needs for on-campus faculty are slightly different from off-campus faculty and other new hires.

1. Determine formal and informal mentoring already occurring and either refine the process or build upon the existing structure.

For off campus employees, including faculty, educators, staff assistants, and 4-H coordinators, the primary mentoring practice is called, “agent-to-agent shadowing”. Within the first few weeks for about the first three months of an early career employee start date, they either choose or are assigned an office or individuals to visit for a day or up to a week with the goal of observing, questioning, and assisting to determine how an Extension office functions, observe a typical day in the life of an Extension employee, and assist in the preparation and presentation of an event. The early career employee can choose to shadow more than one office or individual during their first three months. In addressing the needs of the “next generation” employee, Beane-Katner (2014), and USU’s Paul Hill suggests that placing much of the responsibility for making mentoring happen and choosing mentors is the responsibility of the mentee. It is important that an early career employee develop SMART objectives so that mentors can be chosen who can provide the formal and informal network to facilitate, support, and plan for success as a new employ works to fulfill expectations outlined in the role statement. One type of mentoring that is already occurring is the mentoring of potential Extension faculty (e.g., college interns and those completing a practicum, paraprofessionals, and volunteers). Recognizing that planning, organizing, and facilitating successful Extension programs can be an overwhelming challenge, those interested in learning more about Extension as a career are paired with experienced Extension personnel in an actual Extension office for an intern or intern type experience. New Extension employees who have been mentored previous to securing a job are more equipped to take on the challenge. Mentoring potential faculty is a form of recruitment which needs to be a priority. (Christensen, Roberts, Jewkes, MacArthur, Garcia, 2014)

All committee members agree that Extension needs to establish “intentional mentoring” with the goal of developing successful employees at all levels. It is also clear that there needs to be someone assigned as part of their role or hired to give leadership to the mentoring and retention (or attraction as described at the end of this document) initiative to follow through and touch bases with mentors and mentees, to make sure that formal and informal mentoring is happening to “keep the ball in the air”. It has become apparent that the mentoring needs for on-campus faculty and off-campus employees are somewhat different. On-campus hires are more frequent and the start date is consistently July 1 of the documented year. Whereas, the hiring of new off-campus employees can occur any time during the year. Also, in recent years when hiring off-campus employees the trend is to advertise for and hire non-tenure track employees at the county level. For county based tenure track employees, the intentional mentoring model would include a promotion and tenure unit. For early career faculty a mentoring/faculty development system needs to be developed based upon “disruptive innovation” that incorporates ideas from one-on-one interactions, shadowing, a selection of training/informational videos, network mentoring, and symposia.

Since the model for on-campus faculty and off-campus employees is somewhat different, it is recommended that an on-campus coordinator, appointed by the vice president for Extension, work

with the two region directors in the establishment of a mentoring advisory board. The board would consist of the on-campus coordinator and two region directors with two on-campus representatives and three off-campus representatives. The term of office would be two years. In the first year, one on-campus representative and one off-campus representative would serve for three years to preserve institutional memory and add consistency to the advisory board. Each advisory board member could be assigned to work closely with one or two mentoring pairs.

2. Who should be mentored? Specialists, Agents, Educators, Program Coordinators, Staff Assistants, etc.

All new Extension employees need to have the opportunity for training and mentoring if the individual desires a mentor. However, mentoring for staff assistants and program coordinators probably looks different and is not as extensive as mentoring options for tenure track faculty and Extension educators. Those automatically included in the Intentional Mentoring Plan include: 1) Tenure Track Faculty, 2) Extension Educators It has been suggested that early career faculty are stressed about finding balance between work and non-work and unrealistic self-determined expectations. New faculty needs regular feedback about how they are doing followed by recognition and rewards (Sorcinelli, 1992). Therefore, a more structured or intentional mentoring/faculty development program should be developed for tenure-track county and campus faculty coupled with other mentoring options to be described below. (See USU Intentional Mentoring Plan submitted with this document).

3. Who should do the mentoring?

Not everyone is cut out to be a mentor. Mentoring takes time, effort and the desire to help where and when needed. Linda Beane-Katner in her article *Anchoring a Mentoring Network in a New Faculty Development Program (2014)*, describes the formation of mentoring networks composed of people in their first three years that lasts for one year. The mentoring network shifts from mentoring to faculty development with an emphasis on opportunity; the opportunity to learn together for mutual benefit as individuals and peer groups and capitalizing on the opportunity to meet together when Extension gathers as a group. The network provides a variety of learning opportunities, i.e., videos, seminars, observations, social media, technology and one-on-one meetings making up a variety of methods and events from which an early career employee can choose. Also, a mentoring network can plan for reverse mentoring implying that senior faculty can periodically be invited to join the group providing an opportunity for the new employees to question and learn from experience and senior employees can learn from the “next-generation tech natives.”

It is recommended that a series of short video's be identified or created with the intent of providing a new employee essential background information or teaches a new skill that will facilitates integration into a new job or assignment. The “next generation” early career faculty are familiar with technology and routinely use technology to initiate and accomplish tasks. To facilitate development of the “next generation” faculty member, a series of on-line professional development opportunities and strategic training videos need to be identified and updated regularly. It is recommended that the Mentoring Advisory Board together generate a list of existing training

videos and suggest topics that need to be developed. eXtension is a valuable resource for early career faculty with a plethora of archived professional development webinars that can be useful to faculty. For 2014, some suggestions include:

Open Extension Work and Social Media Utilization in the 21st Century

<https://learn.extension.org/events/1508#.U4ygp4m9LCQ>

The 21st Century Extension Professional

<https://learn.extension.org/events/703#.U4yg0Ym9LCQ>

The Extension Educator's Role as 21st Century Platform Builders

<https://learn.extension.org/events/703#.U4yg74m9LCQ>

Living Social: Getting the Most Out of Your Social Media Networks

<https://learn.extension.org/conferences/eexc2012/events/679#.U4yrGYm9LCQ>

Core Competencies for Extension professionals

<https://learn.extension.org/events/87#.U4yrN4m9LCQ>

Tips and Tools on Building an Online Community

<https://learn.extension.org/events/1595#.U4yrflm9LCQ>

By automating social media processes, you can curate more efficiently, share more resources, and reach a larger audience

<http://learn.extension.org/events/1540#.U4yrpYn9KCQ>

Be Networked, Use Measurement, and Learn from Your Data: How to Measure Effective Social Media Practice

<http://learn.extension.org/events/1538#.U4yrwYm9LCQ>

Using positive messaging and social media to reach new Extension clientele in sustainability outreach

<http://learn.extension.org/events/1491#.U4ysBom9LCQ>

Incorporating Video into the Marketing Strategy

<http://learn.extension.org/events/1396#.U4ysUlm9LCQ>

Using Technology in Extension

<http://learn.extension.org/events/1384#.U4ysUlm9LCQ>

Also, YouTube video's need to be identified and/or created to introduce early career faculty to Utah State University and Extension.4. Should the best mentors be excused from serving on P&T committees?

Mentoring is a time consuming commitment. A mentor should be excused from serving on P&T committees and be outside their mentee's evaluation network. However, if the best mentors are willing to serve on P&T committees, they should be afforded the opportunity with the caveat that

mentors will be excused from serving on committees of those they are mentoring. Many times the best mentors are not the best committee members. One committee member stated, "When it comes to university service we should have the opportunity to serve in the capacity that best suits our abilities and interests, otherwise it is a chore."

5. Distinguish between the roles of P&T committee members versus mentors.

The probational years for new faculty are stressful yet vitally important to future professional development and success. However, understanding the challenges and stresses of new faculty can provide a framework for shepherding early career faculty through the system (Olsen 1992).

Roles of Mentors: (See USU Intentional Mentoring Plan)

A. Early career faculty need frequent reviews of their work and productivity. They need to know what they are doing right and what they need to do to improve (Olsen 1992).

B. The formation of mentoring networks fosters the development of positive relationships within the system leading to social support which is important especially at tenure time (Olsen 1992; Beane-Katner 2014).

C. Mentors help junior faculty understand what to do and how much is enough (Olsen 1992).

It is expected that part of a mentor's or Region Directors job would be to help a new hire learn some of the basic skills necessary to facilitate success. Some of the necessary knowledge and skills might include, soil testing, drivers and sexual harassment training, program evaluation, IRB training, and introduction to the fast track system

Roles P&T committees:

A. Early career faculty need committee and administrative review letters to be direct and evaluative in nature using less neutral language that is ambiguous and hard to interpret (Olsen 1992).

It is recommended that mentors bring issues to the mentoring advisory board for discussion and resolution. For example, if a P&T committee gives bad or inaccurate advise to a candidate, the mentor would contact the mentoring coordinator or with region director who would then take the problem before the advisory group.

6. Should mentors be invited to attend P&T meetings?

Since the major role of P&T committee members is as an evaluator, it may be a conflict of interest for a mentor to attend a P&T committee meeting. There are some who advocate for attendance of mentors at P&T committee meetings. 7. Discuss travel funding for new faculty to receive mentoring.

In many cases, county travel budgets can be used for new faculty to attend early career training, in-service training, or other trainings that might be used when reaching a group. Each county is different and the amount of travel budget varies from county to county. A training budget from a specific county would need to be decided by the county director and region director. Some funding, (\$1000 from region budget for each new employee for the first year) for travel to attend mentoring seminars or shadowing could be funded through the region budget or on-campus budgets. However, next generation employees involved in mentoring networks are “technology natives” who without much encouragement make use of technology and social media therefore decreasing social isolation felt by many junior faculty while maximizing the need for support through social interactions without traveling (Beane-Katner 2014; Mincemoyer 1998).

Some committee members recommend that travel funding be provided through Extension budgets, \$400, for mentor/mentee face-to-face meetings two times per year.

8. Should mentoring be an option or a requirement for Extension faculty?

Most agree that mentoring should be an option for both the mentors and mentees. Some individuals simply do not have the aptitude to be a good mentor; they should be excused from the formal designation, however, if mentoring networks are used, most junior and senior faculty could benefit from reverse mentoring.

Mentoring for junior faculty should be an option that is sold as an opportunity and tied to service in the role statement.

9. What kind of expectations and incentives, if any could/should be put in place for mentoring?

For mentoring to be successful, the first step needs to be buy-in at all administrative levels which creates a supportive mentoring infrastructure (Beane-Katner 2014). An annual mentoring award would be a good start. For many, being part of a supportive system is an incentive. Also, the opportunity for professional development through leadership training focusing on organizational skills, interpersonal skills, sensitivity, communication skills, skills to manage change, diplomacy, decision making skills, conflict management skills, collaborativeness, self directedness, visionary skills, and assertiveness could be an incentive (Kutilek 2001). Kutilek and Earnest (2001) also report that financial stipends are not necessary. By providing the tools necessary for a mentor to be successful the need for stipends are diminished.

10. Assuming there will not be a stipend for mentors, how can mentoring occur and be “counted under the service component of the role statement?

Increasing the service component of one’s position for the year of mentoring with corresponding decrease in other role statement domains could be an incentive with a one time “bonus” awarded for mentoring.

The retention piece has significant impact when considering mentoring and faculty development. A presenter at the 2014 the Utah Rural Summit stated that changing the mindset of retention to attraction implies that it would be in the best interest of a university to focus on environments and

incentives that make it attractive for faculty to maintain a program of excellence at a university rather than seeking an academic position at another location with a more attractive situation. The presenter went on to suggest the importance of establishing core values that create a culture of innovation where resources are mobilized to create knowledge to “achieve unique paths to their desired future” and faculty know they can make a difference (Shroeder 2014). Some suggestions to attract excellent faculty include:

- Work with faculty to make sure that grant writing efforts are rewarded.
- Create a series of video’s that educate and engage new faculty in their own development goals and provide recognition upon completion.
- Initiate an award for mentoring. A little recognition goes a long way.
- Provide for tangible rewards other than cash. Example: gym memberships, ski passes,
- Mentor/mentee training as a faculty development system.
- Encourage flexible schedules. If nights and weekends are worked, taking a day off mid-week should be supported.
- Encourage specialization.

References

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