Survey of Cohort Mentors
August 2013

Sample

Seventeen mentors completed the survey from an overall population sample of 32 mentors. Thus, this survey had a response rate of 53.1%.

Of the mentors who provided responses, nine (52.9%) identified as women, seven (41.2%) as men, and one (5.9%) mentor did not respond. Thirteen (76.5%) of the mentors identified as White, one (5.9%) identified as Asian, one (5.9%) identified as African American, and two (11.8%) did not answer the question.

Moreover, six (35.3%) mentors identified as full professors, nine (52.9%) as associate professors, and two (11.8%) did not identify their rank. Additionally, 13 (76.4%) mentors identified their race as being from STEM colleges, two (11.8%) from non-STEM colleges, and two (11.8%) did not identify the primary college to which they are assigned.

Finally, 10 (58.8%) of the respondents identified that it was their first year being a mentor for the FORWARD cohort mentoring program, two (11.8%) identified that it was their second year, two (11.8%) identified it was their third year, and two (11.8%) identified it was their fourth year. One (5.9%) mentor did not respond to the question.

Participation in the Cohort Mentoring Program

In the overall sample of 17 mentors, 15 (88.2%) reported that they did participate in the FORWARD cohort mentoring group during the 2012-2013 academic year, while one (5.9%) reported that they did not participate and one (5.9%) did not answer the question.

The member who reported not participating in the program reported the following reason for not participating:

- In the first semester, the group meetings were held when I was out of town or too short notice that I could not change prior arrangements, then I was not invited to any meetings in the Spring semester.

While the overall sample for this survey was 17 mentors, one mentor did not responded to any further questions after reporting that s/he did not participate in a cohort mentoring group. Thus, for the remainder of this report the sample will be 16 and all percentages reported will be based on a sample of 16 participants.

Previous Mentoring Experiences

Of this sample of 16 mentors, eight (50%) reported that they had been a mentor prior to the FORWARD cohort mentoring program. In particular, six (37.5%) reported they had been a mentor to a faculty member within their own department and six (37.5%) reported being a mentor as part of a campus-wide mentoring experience.

Mentors were also asked what they see as the differences, if any, between the cohort group mentoring process and previous one-on-one mentoring experiences. They provided the following responses:

- This is hard to answer because only one mentee showed up for the gathering. My guess is that one-on-one mentoring would make some people feel more comfortable asking questions.
- It's different but in the group setting there is more discussion of issues and more questions that are asked.
- Group mentoring is more lively since more people can share their experiences and there might be disagreement or confirmation.

- With cohort mentoring, the individuals involved (mentor or mentee) feel less "stuck" with the other one if the pair isn't matched well.
- The cohort mentoring keeps you on task a little better. With more people in the mix it is harder to skip it because of scheduling conflicts.
- Better opportunity for someone unsure what to ask to gain pertinent information. Opportunity for mentors to learn from the other mentor. Questions arise that wouldn't have in a one-on-one meeting.
- Beneficial for those that tend not to say much. More likely to bring up something important that may not have been thought of when one on one.
- In cohort mentoring. there is sharing of experiences and issues discussed by the mentors & collective discussion of solutions. In one-on-one mentoring, mentees are limited to experiences of only one mentor from one Department.
- We get input from more than one person. But then, scheduling is worse.
- None I can think of.
- The group mentoring is good but it would be useful if everyone had the same college (or at least related fields).
- In my experience, the one-on-one mentoring, especially when it includes classroom visits, was much more valuable to the mentee because it allowed for a more focused and individually-oriented approach.
- Cohort mentoring is far less personal.

Mentors were further asked to reflect on how the time commitment for the cohort mentoring process compared to previous mentoring experiences and shared the following answers:
- In the fall semester I organized a gathering at Jitters -- it was meant to be 1 hour long. We ended up only spending about 40 minutes with one mentee as she showed up late. I was hoping that the other mentor in the group would organize a gathering for the spring semester but it did not happen.
- Not any more time involved.
- Very low time commitment.
- Small, but I had no other mentoring experiences with faculty.
- We spent too little time together.
- I spent less time in the group mentoring than in individual mentoring.
- Not onerous.
- Similar, tried to meet once a month.
- Similar.
- Less, since we were not able to meet.
- Reasonable; not bad at all.
- Considerably more with the cohort mentoring.

Functioning of the Cohort Mentoring Groups
The functioning of the cohort mentoring groups was examined by exploring how often groups met, what topics were discussed, and mentors' perspectives on the composition of the mentoring groups.

Mentors were asked how often their cohort group met:
- 5 (31.3%) mentors responded once a month.
- 2 (12.5%) mentors responded two to three times a semester.
- 1 (6.3%) mentor responded two times per semester
- 3 (18.8%) mentors responded once a semester.
- 1 (6.3%) mentor responded twice during the fall semester and then no meetings in spring
- 2 (12.5%) mentors responded once during the academic year.

Mentors were asked about their satisfaction with the frequency of their meetings using a six-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Dissatisfied to 6 = Strongly Satisfied).

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	2	12.5	14.3
Dissatisfied	2	12.5	28.6
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	6.3	35.7
Somewhat Satisfied	2	12.5	50.0
Satisfied	7	43.8	100.0
Missing Data	2	12.5	
Total	16	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.71, SD=1.59

Mentors were also asked whether or not they discussed certain topics and how helpful they felt those discussions were to their mentees.

Topic	Have you discussed this topic?	In your opinion, how helpful was this topic for your mentees? 1= completely unhelpful 6 = very helpful
The PTE process at NDSU	13 (81.3%) = yes	Mean = 4.75, SD = 1.22 Responses Ranged from 2 to 6
Starting a research program	8 (50.0%) = yes	Mean = 4.50, SD = 0.93 Responses Ranged from 3 to 6
Networking within your department	10 (62.5%) = yes	Mean = 4.75, SD = 0.46 Responses Ranged from 4 to 5
Issues related to work family life	12 (75.0%) = yes	Mean = 4.45, SD = 0.93 Responses Ranged from 3 to 6
Formal and written policy/rules of institution	9 (56.3%) = yes	Mean = 4.13, SD = 1.13 Responses Ranged from 3 to 6
Unwritten or informal rules of the institution	8 (50.0%) = yes	Mean = 4.88, SD = 0.64 Responses Ranged from 4 to 6
Teaching effectiveness	10 (62.5%) = yes	Mean = 4.67, SD = 0.71 Responses Ranged from 4 to 6

Other topics that some of the mentors identified that their cohort mentoring group discussed were: avoiding and foreseeing conflicts, departmental dynamics, service to the University, and advising graduate students.

Mentors were further asked what their thoughts were about the composition (e.g., same gender, STEM faculty with other STEM faculty) of the cohort mentoring groups and provided the following answers:
- I think it is a good idea to have women mentoring women.
- I believe women mentoring women is very important. I don't think discipline matters as much.
- Like same gender because women's issues are different, but this naturally reduces the mentees exposure to male contacts.
- Was okay and better than mixing gender & STEM faculty.
- My group was all males so I do not have any experience with females in the group.
- Well, our composition was not ideal. There were people from completely different backgrounds. Two of those mentees actually never showed up, probably because of this.
- A requirement, it would have been even better if mentors are from the same college as the mentees.
- Needed and may need to be even more specific (same college) in order to address some of the questions.
- I'd rather have mentees from at least my college. It was somewhat challenging for me having to work with people from other colleges.

- I think it makes sense to keep a one-on-one program, and it also helps to match people with similar interests or backgrounds (depending on their preference). I think that mentors/mentees should come from different departments, however.
- Good idea to match them this way.
- I think that is okay.
- As a general mentoring cohort, I would support mixed gender mentoring groups. In my opinion, segregation by gender isn't helpful. Others may feel differently. Some things are universal and STEM or NON is not a big deal; however, for the things that were important for me in clearing the tenure mark and making a successful research program (papers, grants, hiring) a mentor in my STEM area would be more helpful than non-STEM.
- I usually believe in diversity. But it may be easier to help people who are on similar career tracks.
- Does not matter. It is important that the mentor have the best interest of the mentees.

Satisfaction with the Cohort Mentoring Process

The survey included a number of different qualitative and quantitative measures of satisfaction with the cohort mentoring process.

In terms of overall satisfaction with the quality of the cohort mentoring experience, mentors were asked to rate their satisfaction using a six-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Very Dissatisfied to 6 = Very Satisfied).

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	2	12.5	13.3
Dissatisfied	1	6.3	20.0
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	12.5	33.3
Somewhat Satisfied	4	25.0	60.0
Satisfied	5	31.3	93.3
Very Satisfied	1	6.3	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total	16	100.0	

*** Mean = 3.80, SD = 1.52

Mentors were also asked if being a part of the cohort mentoring process was a good use of their time and responded using a six-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree).

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	1	6.3	7.1
Somewhat Agree	2	12.5	21.4
Agree	9	56.3	85.7
Strongly Agree	2	12.5	100.0
Missing Data	2	12.5	
Total	16	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.79, SD= 0.98

Mentors were further asked if they wished to continue participating in the cohort mentoring program for the next year and again responded using a six-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree).

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.3	6.7
Somewhat Agree	5	31.3	40.0
Agree	7	43.8	86.7
Strongly Agree	2	12.5	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total	16	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.675, SD= .82

Another measure of satisfaction was the degree of connection to the members of their cohort mentoring group. Mentors responded to the statement "I feel connected to the members of my cohort mentoring group" using the same six-point Likert scale.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	2	12.5	13.3
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.3	20.0
Somewhat Agree	9	56.3	80.0
Agree	3	18.8	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total	16	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.87, SD= 0.92

Additionally, mentors were asked to identify the advantages of the cohort mentoring program. Their responses are below:
- This program provides junior female faculty members the opportunity to talk to other women about their professional experiences at NDSU.
- I expect that several points of view and different experiences of the mentors would provide more useful input than from a single mentor. I would expect that those being mentored would gain from each other, as much from the mentors.
- It does give a chance of new faculty to ask questions on all things related to being a faculty member to the senior faculty mentors - and they can ask questions they might not ask in their own faculty.
- It allows junior faculty to (i) get information from faculty from other departments than their own and (ii) to get unfiltered, no-BS information and first hand experiences from experienced faculty about topics which are very relevant for success but are rarely talked about.
- The group of mentees also get to know and mentor each other. It also helps them to see and hear about the concerns, both different from and similar to theirs, of others who are new to their positions.
- It was nice to meet new faculty members.
- I made a nice connection with my co-mentor.
- There were very few times we could meet. We only actually met once. The second day we finally planned ended up being a snow day -- twice actually.
- The wide array of questions. Another perspective to address questions.
- Making a difference in another person's career. Knowing the culture and issues in other units. Getting to know someone well.
- If one mentor doesn't know a question, hopefully the other will know. Also different perspectives are always good.
- Safe cohort to share & discuss freely without fear of repercussions. Learning of different issues regarding mentoring shared by members.
- Good to have informal discussions. Would like the mentees to feel like they have someone safe to run things past.
- Each of the senior faculty can bring to the table their experience and advice. The mentees can only benefit from that.

Mentors were also asked how the role they expected to play matched the role they actually played and they provided the following feedback:
- I was expecting to answer a lot of questions regarding promotion and tenure and also balancing work and family life. I spent most of my time talking with the group about tenure and promotion.
- About what I expected.
- As expected.

- It was a good match.
- It matched fairly well.
- It matched up pretty well.
- Matched well.
- It matched expectations.
- Well.
- I expected that the mentees would actually want to be mentored, but they did not. I also expected to have a small, close-knit cohort mentoring group, but one member continually invited previous members of her mentoring group, which made the group large and impersonal.
- I was supposed to mentor three junior faculty, only one responded. Other than that, the actual experience with this program matched my expectations.
- My co-mentor and I only met with our group once, and I hoped we'd meet more often. One person seemed to really enjoy the meeting, one didn't show for the meeting and the other was a little hesitant.
- I expected to play some role, but we were only able to meet once because there were always several of us who were out of town or unavailable for some other reason. I am wondering whether smaller groups may work better. Might reduce the scheduling hassle.
- Somewhat. The group is very varied with two AFSNR mentors and three mentees from three other colleges.
- Not very well.

When asked what outcomes the mentors anticipated their mentees had received from participating in the cohort mentoring program, the following responses were provided:

- Getting some questions answered and getting our perspective on being a faculty member and the ins and outs of expectations and the reality of being on the faculty.
- They get a better understanding on how NDSU and life as a faculty works. It will hopefully be useful for their promotion and tenure and how to balance research, teaching, service and personal life.
- Better understanding of the tenure/promotion process. Knowledge on how to avoid common pitfalls within the tenure/promotion process.
- We did help one of the women with a problem she had in her department and I think it helped her to have other to talk about it without having to worry about backlash.
- Hopefully tips to become successful. Work hard and smart. Don't play politics. Do not get involved in FORWARD or similar activities during tenure track years. Focus on building strong research, teaching and professional service.
- Better understanding of expectations, possible pitfalls, and how to succeed.
- Knowledge of PT&E issues and process. Confidential cohort group to go to.
- Ideas and some informal relationships with us and one another.
- I hope that they were able to learn something from my experience and avoid some of the mistakes I made when I was in their position. I'm afraid though that some of the mentees may see this program simply as an opportunity to simply add a line in their resume that'd help them later in the PTE process.
- Having a person outside their department that they can bounce things off of. This is particularly important when you need to vent about things you see as not being right or fair when there are various factions in the department itself.
- This is hard to answer because the one time that I organized a gathering at Jitters only one mentee showed up (and she was 20 minutes late). I think that mentees that put effort into the program will get more out of it than those that do not.

Impacts on the Mentor

Another goal of the cohort mentoring program was to have a positive impact on mentors' careers. To begin to assess the impact of being a mentor, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements using a six-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree).

Being in the cohort mentoring program has allowed me to form significant relationships with other faculty.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat Disagree	6	37.5	40.0
Somewhat Agree	5	31.3	73.3
Agree	3	18.8	93.3
Strongly Agree	1	6.3	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total	16	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.93, SD= 0.96

Being in the cohort mentoring program provides me with a good opportunity to network with other faculty at NDSU.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.3	6.7
Somewhat Agree	5	31.3	40.0
Agree	8	50.0	93.3
Strongly Agree	1	6.3	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total		100.0	

*** Mean= 4.60, SD= 0.74

Being in the cohort mentoring program has decreased my sense of isolation on the NDSU campus.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	7	43.8	46.7
Somewhat Disagree	4	25.0	73.3
Somewhat Agree	4	25.0	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total		100.0	

*** Mean= 2.80, SD= 0.86

Being in the cohort mentoring program has decreased my sense of isolation within the Fargo-Moorhead community.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	12.5	15.4
Disagree	6	37.5	61.5
Somewhat Disagree	4	25.0	92.3
Somewhat Agree	1	6.3	100.0
Missing Data	3	18.8	
Total		100.0	

*** Mean= 2.31, SD= 0.86

Being in the cohort mentoring program provides me with helpful social opportunities.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	12.5	13.3
Disagree	3	18.8	33.3
Somewhat Disagree	3	18.8	53.3
Somewhat Agree	5	31.3	86.7
Agree	2	12.5	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total		100.0	

*** Mean= 3.13, SD= 1.30

Due to my participation in cohort mentoring program, I have developed relationships that I expect will continue throughout my career at NDSU.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	2	12.5	13.3
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.3	20.0
Somewhat Agree	10	62.5	86.7
Agree	2	12.5	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total		100.0	

*** Mean= 3.80, SD=0.86

If applicable, being in the cohort mentoring program has had a positive impact on my own promotion process.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	6.3	6.7
Disagree	5	31.3	40.0
Somewhat Disagree	3	18.8	60.0
Somewhat Agree	6	37.5	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.3	
Total		100.0	

*** Mean= 2.93, SD= 1.03

Additionally, eight (50%) mentors identified that participating in the cohort mentoring program had a positive impact on their own experience of the climate here at NDSU. Two (12.5%) mentors felt that participating in the cohort mentoring program had an impact on their decision to remain at NDSU. Moreover, two (12.5%) mentors felt that they were mentored during the cohort mentoring process.

Mentors were also asked about what impact being a mentor had on their own leadership skills. They provided the following answers:
- It helped me to see and work with the other mentor, who is more senior.
- It's another way to help hone interpersonal communication.
- Provide a greater sense of confidence.
- Helps me organize thoughts on PTE so as to better mentor faculty within our department. Have to communicate well with co-mentor.
- Possibly a minor one.
- Hopefully helped.
- Enhanced them a little.
- I took the lead in organizing the gathering in the fall, but I don't think that had an impact on my leadership skills.
- None.
- No impact.
- None really.

All of the mentors reported that being involved in the cohort mentoring program did not provide them with greater access to academic administrators (e.g., chairs, heads, and deans). The mentors provided the following responses:
- I have good access already.
- Really no involvement of administrators.
- How? We just talked to junior faculty, why should this give me greater access?
- We met with the mentees not any administrators.
- I have all the access I want to NDSU administrators. (To clarify, I think that NDSU administrators are very accessible to faculty.)
- I have always had good access to academic administrators.

- Doubt if they even know or care.
- Because the need to meet with administrators has not arisen.
- No change.

Fifteen (93.8%) mentors reported that being involved in the cohort mentoring program <u>did not</u> provide them with increased comfort with academic administrators (e.g., chairs, heads, and deans). One mentor (6.3%) did not respond. The mentors provided the following responses:
- I am quite comfortable already.
- Already comfortable.
- I am very comfortable with administrators at NDSU.
- I have always felt very comfortable with our administrators. They helped me on many occasions.
- It hasn't decreased it either. It wasn't part of it at all.
- I never feel much comfort when dealing with people who have power over me.
- No involvement of academic administrators.
- Not sure how the academic administrators were to be involved?
- Did not affect.

<u>Improvements to the Cohort Mentoring Process</u>

Mentors were asked what changes they would recommend to the cohort mentoring program to improve its effectiveness. Their responses are below:
- Encourage mentees to participate and be more involved. It was a bit disappointing that there was a lack of engagement by the mentees.
- Better planning of meetings.
- None -- just try to foster the process.
- Maybe, it would be good if the mentors could have some input on what department their mentees are from.
- Clustering the cohort in STEM or non-STEM as appropriate. Clustering the cohort geographically on campus to facilitate meeting times and places. Mixing genders within the cohort. Perhaps allowing the mentors to self-assign to get people who have similar ideas about mentoring. For example, the other mentor in my cohort had a very loose, easy-going attitude about students and student involvement in research (doesn't do bench research). My approach is fairly pragmatic, I need to get something from the relationship as well as give something to the relationship. This last bit would probably be helped by the STEM/non-STEM clustering.
- Assign within college as best you can.
- I think that mentors should receive training or at least opportunities each semester to connect with each other as a means of showing that this is a valuable process. I have experience and knowledge about mentoring in academia, but it is not safe to assume each person who volunteers to be a mentor does.
- Need to be clear on expectations for meeting as a group. It seemed to be a low priority.
- It's hard to tell. Our problem was scheduling, which means we are all overcommitted to way too many other things. Reducing the group size may help with that. But then, we will be back to one on one and lose the group effect. A good start would be to reduce faculty overload, but I guess we are a large step away from that to happen.

Mentors were also asked what additional information related to being a mentor they would like to receive and provided the following responses:

- The expectations of those wanting to be mentored.
- Mentee's department and college PTE and other general expectations.
- The PTE documents of the departments of mentees.
- Some sort of guidelines/expectations; perhaps a manual to include topics of discussion, associated questions, worksheets, etc. It is pretty difficult to make the mentoring experience meaningful with two mentors and three folks in unrelated fields when everyone is super busy. It worked well the previous time because we were all in the same college, save one of the four mentees.
- As a faculty who has gone through tenure, there is less I can do to help people who are professors of practice. We would need to know more about career tracks that are different from our own ones.
- None.
- Nothing.
- Nothing.