

Survey of Cohort Mentors August 2011

Sample

Nineteen mentors completed the survey from an overall population sample of 38 mentors. Thus, this survey has a response rate of 50%.

This sample was equally divided between female and male mentors, with one mentor not specifying gender. The majority (89.5%) of the mentors identified as White. Moreover, 7 (36.8%) mentors identified as full professors, 11 (57.9%) as associate professors, and 1 (5.3%) did not identify her or his rank. Additionally, 14 (48.2%) mentors identified as being in STEM colleges, 4 (13.7%) from non-STEM colleges, and 1 (5.3%) did not identify the primary college in which they are assigned. Finally, for 8 (42.1%) of the respondents this was their first year being a mentor for the FORWARD cohort mentoring program and 11 (57.9%) had been a mentor for the last two academic years.

Previous Mentoring Experiences

Of this sample of 19 mentors, 12 (63.2%) reported that they had been a mentor prior to the FORWARD cohort mentoring program. In particular, 6 (31.6%) reported they had been a mentor to a faculty member within their own department and 10 (52.6%) 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:

- Both are good, and they complement each other.
- Cohort group mentoring leads to more diverse insights into and better discussions of issues being raised. Also, members of the group had an opportunity to make friends with faculty from their mentor cohort.
- I have been an informal mentor to several individuals, both at NDSU and other institutions, and feel that one-on-one I have been very successful in helping women move their careers forward, especially their research programs. Not so with this cohort program.
- I prefer the cohort. It takes the pressure off the mentor by sharing duties with another mentor. And for those being mentored they also get good advice from other pre-tenured faculty.
- I preferred the individual mentoring approach. Easier to establish a relationship, easier to maintain the relationship.
- I think both are necessary. One-on-one is needed and also the cohort situation is useful.
- It is more difficult to schedule meetings. One-to-one can cater to the specific needs of a mentee.
- More than one opinion. The cohort group mentoring program prepares mentees for the one-on-one process.
- Much broader perspective and variety of advice with a group.
- Relationships developed naturally in my departmental experience. We had more in common.
- The one-on-one mentoring allows to adapt more readily to the issues faculty are actually facing without boring some other mentee.
- The power of a group. A functioning group will outperform the brightest individual I believe.
- There are always additional ideas when there is a group. Sometimes if not all parties are engaged, it is difficult to make sure all needs are being met.
- Very little.
- What I liked about the cohort mentoring process was that there was a plurality of experiences with the processes of tenure, teaching and publishing that we discussed in our meetings.

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:

- About the same.
- About the same but more structured.
- Everything good takes time! I think to find a time that works for all was the most difficult aspect.
- I had less time to put into this experience so it is difficult to compare.
- It may vary. We planned on meeting once a month for lunch.
- It took much more time because of scheduling difficulties, and then participation was often unpredictable because other events came up.
- It was OK.
- Less.
- More engaged, thus more time consuming.
- Similar.
- Similar.
- Similar.
- This took less time.
- Time commitment was fine. We met for 1.5 hours each month. Sometimes scheduling the meeting took more time than I would have liked.
- Took more time trying to determine meeting times with the group approach.

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 feedback from the mentors on the composition of the mentoring group.

Mentors were asked how often their cohort group met:

- 12 (63.2%) mentors responded once a month.
- 2 (10.5%) mentors responded twice a semester.
- 2 (10.5%) mentors responded once a semester.
- 4 (21.0%) mentors responded once per year.
- 2 (10.5%) mentors reported never or almost never.

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
Valid	Very Dissatisfied	2	10.5	11.8
	Dissatisfied	2	10.5	23.5
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	6	31.6	58.8
	Somewhat Satisfied	2	10.5	70.6
	Satisfied	4	21.1	94.1
	Very Satisfied	1	5.3	100.0
	Missing Data	2	10.5	
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.41, SD= 1.46

Mentors were also 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:

- All mentees white and male, from different parts of the campus.

- Good to keep groups of faculty with common background and needs.
- I don't see a reason to have same gender. I don't know why this was done. This limits the types of discussions.
- I like same gender although I knew some males needing mentoring that wished they could have been in a group with women. Were STEM matched with STEM? We had a woman from architecture in our group (everyone else STEM) and also someone from education. The former dropped out of our group because she felt we did not understand her department and the problems she faced in getting tenure. I think this was a good decision on her part and I hope she found better mentoring elsewhere.
- I liked it.
- I think it is very important to have a discipline focus in the group.
- I think similar composition works better. In the past I found it less productive to mentor somebody from a very different field, and it is too easy for mentees from a different field to consider advice (like 'start publishing ASAP') as irrelevant to them.
- I thought that was fine.
- I thought this was nice.
- It was good to have faculty from the same college. Also good to have faculty from outside the college.
- It was probably helpful to have a group consisting of scientists because there are many concerns specific to this group, but that is just a hunch. Maybe expanding the circle would have had its advantages too.
- Our group really enjoyed meetings, one gender was working perfectly, composition of our group being from two different colleges also worked well.
- Same gender is advantageous as women can relate to other women's feelings and problems. Mentoring has to occur to others in the same college. Policy differences even between the college of math and science and the college of agriculture food systems and natural resources make it very difficult to adequately mentor someone from a different college.
- Same gender was important.
- STEM with STEM works well, but gender segregation limited the issues discussed.
- There is also power in diversity, but diversity is obvious in STEM (either gender) so this worked well.

Mentors were 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	18 (94.7%) = yes	Mean = 4.78, SD = 1.12 Responses Ranged from 2 to 6
Starting a research program	17 (89.5%) = yes	Mean = 3.88, SD = 1.22 Responses Ranged from 2 to 6
Networking within your department	17 (89.5%) = yes	Mean = 3.94, SD = 1.14 Responses Ranged from 2 to 6
Issues related to work family life	17 (89.5%) = yes	Mean = 4.12, SD = 1.17 Responses Ranged from 2 to 6
Unwritten or informal rules of the institution	15 (78.9%) = yes	Mean = 4.06, SD = 1.48 Responses Ranged from 1 to 6
Teaching effectiveness	17 (89.5%) = yes	Mean = 4.12, SD = 1.22 Responses Ranged from 2 to 6

Some of the mentors also identified that their cohort mentoring group discussed: “how to handle difficult faculty members and situations where spouse is also employed by NDSU,” “trends observed,” “personality issues, department politics, and the impact on promotion and tenure,” and “special cases.”

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
Valid	Very Dissatisfied	1	5.3	5.6
	Dissatisfied	1	5.3	11.1
	Somewhat Dissatisfied	4	21.1	33.3
	Somewhat Satisfied	3	15.8	50.0
	Satisfied	7	36.8	88.9
	Very Satisfied	2	10.5	100.0
	Missing Data	1	5.3	
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.11, SD= 1.37

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
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
	Disagree	2	10.5	15.8
	Somewhat Disagree	4	21.1	36.8
	Somewhat Agree	5	26.3	63.2
	Agree	7	36.8	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.79, SD= 1.23

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
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	5.3	5.3

Disagree	2	10.5	15.8
Somewhat Disagree	5	26.3	42.1
Somewhat Agree	3	15.8	57.9
Agree	6	31.6	89.5
Strongly Agree	2	10.5	100.0
Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.89, SD= 1.41

Another measure of satisfaction was the degree of connect 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
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
Disagree	3	15.8	21.1
Somewhat Disagree	3	15.8	36.8
Somewhat Agree	3	15.8	52.6
Agree	7	36.8	89.5
Strongly Agree	2	10.5	100.0
Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.95, SD= 1.47

Mentors were also asked to identify the advantages of the cohort mentoring program. Their responses are below:

- Developed good relationships with faculty across departments. Gained insight into the ways other departments function. Paid more attention to the need for mentoring within my own department.
- Discussion within a group is a clear advantage over 1 to 1 mentoring. Networking within the group of new mentees also happens.
- Freedom for mentors to set up meetings and chose topics.
- Get to meet people outside your department and college.
- Having multiple mentors can be beneficial, in that when they agree on perspectives and that can strengthen the message. Mentees can become friends when they are in a cohort.
- I learned more about other departments on campus.
- I liked having a partner to share the mentoring duties.
- I think very helpful. For mentees, it provides a second, or third, opinion on faculty performance. Also, make them better prepared for performance evaluation; I wish I had such a program years ago. As mentor, I learn from this program.
- I'm sure I learned more than anyone else. Being with a group is a definite advantage as there are more people to learn from.
- Ideally it would be that new faculty have a network of trusted people to go to for support, information, advice etc. In reality that's now how it worked out for our group.
- It encourages communication among disciplines and areas of expertise.
- It informs members about tenure expectations. It builds friendships and professional relationships.
- Mentees have the opportunity of learning from their mentors' experiences.
- Numerous: e.g., to transfer my knowledge to younger faculty, to be a role model, to help with dossier preparation, to discuss some problems younger faculty faces.

- Sharing with several people gives a better perspective than just mentoring alone.
- Time utilization should improve compared to one on one. Also good to have paired mentors when group is from more than one college/department because of policy differences.
- When a majority participate, discussions can be interesting.

Mentors were further asked to identify the disadvantages of the cohort mentoring program and provided the following feedback:

- Difficult to get a majority together (our last meeting drew only one mentor -- me -- and one mentee). Issues discussed are not always of interest to all.
- Even senior faculty do have different ways of resolving problems, so it may be difficult for mentors to present a coherent picture. Having multiple mentees be mentored together does not work well after the first year since challenges become too distinct. What may be an issue for one, is likely not an issue for anybody else.
- Finding time to meet together. Mentees were in such different places that we felt it was necessary to isolate some very bitter members from new faculty.
- Groups do take more time to manage and it can be difficult to find a meeting time. But, I believe the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.
- I feel that each discipline is different. Hard to offer advice sometimes.
- It is disconnected from administrators.
- Mentors and mentees are from different areas so the mentors' experiences may not be so relevant for the mentees. It has been difficult to arrange a time when people could meet. The purpose of the group is vague.
- No real disadvantages. However faculty members involved primarily in extension outreach find it difficult to schedule meetings on campus.
- No role in selecting mentees.
- None.
- Not much. Make sure to avoid time conflicts.
- People don't have time to dedicate to the experience. Relationships are 'forced' by virtue of pairings - people may not 'click' with one another.
- Some group members less likely to ask questions and finding a time for everyone to meet is nearly impossible.
- Sometimes not possible to find a convenient time.
- Way too hard to get 7-8 people together at one time!!
- We couldn't sustain the group this year. Participants had found mentors within their own units and were not interested in continuing with the group. Difficult to schedule group meetings, difficult to establish individual relationships.
- We had a group of five women who all had quite different situations. If you meet as a group it seems that at least one person is unhappy because the subject of the discussion is not relevant to their situation.
- When pressed for time, other service activities became priorities, i.e. it is easier to reduce the mentoring activities than it is to reduce other service commitments.

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 on these faculty members, they 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
Valid	Disagree	3	15.8	15.8
	Somewhat Disagree	1	5.3	21.1
	Somewhat Agree	7	36.8	57.9
	Agree	7	36.8	94.7
	Strongly Agree	1	5.3	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.11, SD= 1.15

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

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
	Somewhat Disagree	3	15.8	21.1
	Somewhat Agree	7	36.8	57.9
	Agree	7	36.8	94.7
	Strongly Agree	1	5.3	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.16, SD= 1.12

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

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	4	21.1	21.1
	Strongly Disagree	1	5.3	26.3
	Disagree	3	15.8	42.1
	Somewhat Disagree	2	10.5	52.6
	Somewhat Agree	5	26.3	78.9
	Agree	4	21.1	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 2.79, SD= 1.87

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

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	4	21.1	21.1
	Strongly Disagree	2	10.5	31.6
	Disagree	4	21.1	52.6
	Somewhat Disagree	2	10.5	63.2
	Somewhat Agree	5	26.3	89.5
	Agree	2	10.5	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 2.42, SD= 1.74

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

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
	Disagree	6	31.6	36.8
	Somewhat Disagree	4	21.1	57.9
	Somewhat Agree	6	31.6	89.5
	Agree	2	10.5	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.11, SD= 1.15

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
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	5.3	5.3
	Disagree	3	15.8	21.1
	Somewhat Disagree	4	21.1	42.1
	Somewhat Agree	4	21.1	63.2
	Agree	6	31.6	94.7
	Strongly Agree	1	5.3	100.0
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.74, SD= 1.37

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

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	6	31.6	33.3
	Strongly Disagree	1	5.3	38.9
	Disagree	2	10.5	50.0
	Somewhat Disagree	2	10.5	61.1
	Somewhat Agree	7	36.8	100.0
	Missing Data	1	5.3	
	Total	19	100.0	

*** Mean= 2.17, SD= 1.79

Additionally, 9 (47.4%) mentors identified that participating in the cohort mentoring program had a positive impact on their own experience of the climate here at NDSU. Three (15.8%) mentors felt that participating in the cohort mentoring program had an impact on her or his decision to remain at NDSU. Four (21.1%) 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:

- I guess I am transitioning into the mentor role. It was good to know that I have some wisdom to offer.
- I have had the experience of scheduling meetings.
- I'm probably beyond help here!!
- It has provided good opportunities to improve my leadership skills.
- It's helped some with my organizational skills. I'm not sure I was an effective leader, as our group disbanded. There wasn't much feedback in terms of leadership.

Improvements to the Cohort Mentoring Process

Mentors were asked what changes they would recommend to the cohort mentoring program to improve its effectiveness. Their responses are below:

- Although it would take more time, we could all learn from other groups if cohort groups were expected to report their significant activities/discussions. This sharing could be on Blackboard, which would spread the workload if all participants had "Builder" designations.
- I do not know how often the other groups have met. I think meeting once a month is good. It took us a while to get to know each other, but by our last few meetings things really clicked.
- Maybe talk about these "informal" rules and the fine line between the well-being of the institution and the well-being of the individual.
- Smaller groups (2-3), one mentee. More oversight of the mentors - e.g., one meeting a year of the mentors so that they can give each other advice on how to handle issues. Particularly helpful if the female mentors met separately. Event at the end of the year bringing all the groups back together again.
- None. Any program just takes time and effort to be successful.
- Good as is.
- More coordination and guidance of the cohorts.
- More communication from the organizers regarding longer-term plans for the program would be appreciated. Are we sticking with the same cohorts next year?
- Give every member a chance to select a new mentor or stick with the old one.
- Smaller groups.
- Perhaps at least one more group lunch during the semester.
- Abandon the program and go back to one-on-one mentoring, which in my extensive experience mentoring junior faculty is usually much more effective.

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

- I would like to learn what other cohort groups did.
- I've never received any information about what advice to give to new faculty facing challenging situations (e.g., not getting promised office or lab space, being asked to do too much service as a new faculty member).

- I would have liked more preparation to work with our specific group--professors of practice. Position descriptions and expectations seem to be rather vague across the board for these faculty members.
- The rationale for separating cohorts according to gender.
- Are there studies available about mentoring effectiveness?
- I would like to have the time to read more about faculty mentoring, but haven't had the time this last academic year.
- Perhaps more training regarding university-wide grant opportunities.