

Survey of Cohort Mentors August 2014

Sample

Fifteen mentors completed the survey from an overall population sample of 27 mentors. Thus, this survey had a response rate of 55.5%.

Of the mentors who provided responses, five (33.3%) identified as women, nine (60.0%) as men, and one (6.7%) did not respond. Fourteen (93.3%) of the mentors identified as White, and one (6.7%) identified as Asian.

Eleven (73.3%) mentors identified as associate professors and four (4.5%) identified as full professors. Additionally, eight (53.3%) mentors identified as being from STEM colleges, and seven (46.7%) identified as being from non-STEM colleges.

Finally, in the sample for this evaluation, one (6.7%) of the mentors had been in the FORWARD cohort mentoring program for five years, nine (60.0%) for two years, and five (33.3%) stated that they had been in a cohort mentoring group for one year.

Participation in the Cohort Mentoring Program

In the overall sample of 15 mentors, 13 (86.7%) reported that they participated in the FORWARD cohort mentoring group during the 2013-2014 academic year, while two (13.3%) reported that they did not participate. When asked what reason best explains why the mentors did not participate, one mentor responded that s/he chose not to participate this year and one responded that s/he was not assigned to a mentoring group.

Previous Mentoring Experiences

Of this sample of 15 mentors, 12 (80.0%) reported that they had been in a mentoring relationship prior to the FORWARD cohort mentoring program. In particular, seven (46.7%) reported they had been a mentor to a faculty member within their own department and six (40.0%) 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:

- One-on-one experiences are easier compared to group gatherings.
- I kind of like the one on one better, because it is more informal and can happen at any time, whenever it is that the mentee has a problem or a question.
- The ease of scheduling meetings. It was pretty most impossible to find a time that 10+ people could all meet.
- One-on-one programs are more effective but require more resources.
- The group meetings seem somewhat more formal, which I'm not sure is a good thing. It is also possible for one person to dominate much of the conversation (though I suppose this can happen one-on-one as well).
- I informally acted as a mentor for a few junior faculty members not at NDSU but they are in the disciplines related to mine. I felt I was able to help them more. I feel that for academic mentoring, it doesn't matter with cohort or one-on-one mentoring, the shared experience is more important.
- Group benefits from shared experiences.
- Mentees feel less isolated and alone in their drowning when they meet was a cohort group. "Misery loves company" can be beneficial in this regard.
- Better discussion among the various persons and more questions and ideas.
- Cohort more organized, provides peer support and seems to involve more discussion.

- One-on-one is much more job description related.
- Official programming was good. Efforts to meet with mentee group were unsuccessful.
- Not a great deal - just more questions being asked.
- Positive = multiple perspectives; Negative = often felt like a meeting or obligation rather than something beneficial.

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:

- Similar.
- About the same.
- About the same.
- Comparable. I didn't feel like the mentoring program was a large time commitment.
- Similar.
- About the same.
- Probably rather less, because we were able to meet only once.
- It's much easier to mentor one on one than in a group. My other duties, particularly chairing a college-level search committee, simply obliterated the time that I had hoped to spend mentoring.
- The actual time spent in mentoring was the same, but the scheduling was a bit of a nightmare.
- Arrangements for last time made it easier but all program lectures were during my teaching times.

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:

- 2 (13.3%) mentors responded two times a semester.
- 6 (40.0%) mentors responded once a semester.
- 6 (40.0%) 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	1	6.7	7.1
Dissatisfied	4	26.7	35.7
Somewhat Dissatisfied	4	26.7	64.3
Somewhat Satisfied	2	13.3	78.6
Satisfied	3	20.0	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.7	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.14, SD=1.29

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?	How helpful was this topic to you? 1= completely unhelpful 6 = very helpful
The PTE process at NDSU	11 (73.3%) = yes	Mean = 5.09, SD = 0.94 Responses Ranged from 4 to 6
Starting a research program	6 (40.0%) = yes	Mean = 4.17, SD = 1.47 Responses Ranged from 2 to 6
Networking within your department	5 (33.3%) = yes	Mean = 4.00, SD = 0.71 Responses Ranged from 3 to 5
Issues related to work life balance	10 (66.7%) = yes	Mean = 4.30, SD = 1.06 Responses Ranged from 2 to 6
Formal and written policy/rules	4 (26.7%) = yes	Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.84 Responses Ranged from 3 to 5
Unwritten or informal rules of the institution	8 (53.3%) = yes	Mean = 5.00, SD = 0.82 Responses Ranged from 4 to 6
Teaching effectiveness	7 (46.7%) = yes	Mean = 4.75, SD = 0.71 Responses Ranged from 4 to 6

Other topics that some of the mentors identified that their cohort mentoring group discussed were:

- How to avoid being overburdened with service.
- Difficult department.

Mentors were also asked what topics they think still need to be discussed in their cohort mentoring group:

- Advising students; working with graduate students.
- Networking.
- Since we only met once, we only discussed a problem that one faculty had. It would have been nice to meet more often and find out what the others would have liked to discuss.
- Grant seeking (becoming bigger in non-STEM fields).
- I personally feel that those topics are not always useful to the mentees, depending on the stage in which the mentees are in. Mentoring is a fluid and dynamic process and is adaptive depending on which professional stage the mentees are in. This is mentoring efforts not orientation attempts. So, more doesn't mean better. Actually, less is more if the topics of concerns are most relevant to the stage that the mentees are in. Then, the topics should be shifted as the mentees progress.
- Listed above are very good topic. More time is needed to cover all topics.
- HOW to be a mentor.

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:

- Same gender is good as men may not understand the challenges women face in an academic position.
- I would have been fine with mentoring women faculty as well, but I suspect the value of having women mentor other women is pretty high. I'm STEM and my mentees are not; there's probably value in that as well, but I think I would have had more practical advice to offer new STEM faculty, since I know more about expectations within those programs.
- Should try to maintain gender mix and STEM/non-STEM mix.
- Neutral on all levels.
- Believe within college teams are good as faculty evaluated by same unit.
- Groups should be diverse and believe they are.
- There are pros and cons to any configuration.

- I would prefer mixed gender mentoring, even if it switched back to a one-on-one format. Same gender setup sometimes felt like we were saying that women don't have anything valuable to offer junior male faculty. That said, I think it's a good idea to pair STEM faculty with STEM faculty.
- Based on my experience, I feel that the discipline match-up is the number one priority. The gender match up can be secondary.
- That is helpful.
- I think that it's useful, but there was some confusion to the mentees about the gendered division of the groups. I think what is more important is actually teaching people HOW to be mentors and not assuming people with experience will be good mentors.

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	1	6.7	7.1
Dissatisfied	1	6.7	14.3
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	6.7	21.4
Somewhat Satisfied	4	26.7	50.0
Satisfied	7	46.7	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.7	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean = 4.07, SD = 1.27

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
Somewhat Agree	5	33.3	38.5
Agree	5	33.3	76.9
Strongly Agree	3	20.0	100.0
Missing Data	2	13.3	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.85, SD= 0.80

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
Disagree	2	13.3	14.3
Somewhat Disagree	2	13.3	28.6
Somewhat Agree	4	26.7	57.1
Agree	3	20.0	78.6
Strongly Agree	3	20.0	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.7	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.21, SD= 1.37

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
Strongly Disagree	2	13.3	14.3
Disagree	2	13.3	28.6
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.7	35.7
Somewhat Agree	7	46.7	85.7
Agree	1	6.7	92.9
Strongly Agree	1	6.7	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.7	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.43, SD= 1.45

Mentors were asked how helpful the workshops geared at participants in the cohort mentoring program were using a six-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Not Helpful At All to 6 = Very Helpful).

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat Helpful	2	13.3	15.4
Helpful	5	33.3	53.8
Very Helpful	2	13.3	69.2
Did Not Attend	4	26.7	100.0
Missing Data	2	13.3	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 5.00, SD= 0.71

Mentors were asked if they would like to see the workshops continue in the next academic year using a six-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree).

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Somewhat Agree	3	20.0	21.4
Agree	7	46.7	71.4
Strongly Agree	4	26.7	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.7	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 5.07, SD= 0.73

Additionally, mentors were asked to identify the advantages of the cohort mentoring program. Their responses are below:

- It provided an opportunity to connect with other women on campus.
- It is helpful to meet colleagues from other programs who will be part of your cohort as you advance at NDSU; these are people you'll be serving on committees within the future.
- Shared experiences.
- The main advantage was that four faculty members from different departments now know each other.
- Luncheons contained very helpful information.
- Last year, I felt the group mentoring worked really well. The advantages were that everyone could learn from everyone else, there wasn't any pressure on any one mentor to know all the answers, and mentees could learn from each other.
- Just an opportunity for new faculty to talk with senior faculty about any issue they are interested in.
- The group is an advantage because the mentees get input from more than one faculty. It is also a disadvantage because it is just about impossible to meet with 5 people.
- Mentees are overwhelmed by the demands on their time. Mentors can help them stay sane.

- Opportunity to meet new(ish) faculty from other departments. Opportunity to hear how other departments approach the evaluation of teaching, research, and service. Opportunity to reflect on my own experiences as a junior faculty member.
- The advantage is getting a few new faculty together to talk to a senior faculty about their experience and suggestions for them. I think it is a good idea- but the question really needs to be answered by the new faculty.
- Very good program to help new faculty knowing about what is expected from them.
- I got to meet people outside of my college.
- At this point, I feel the advantages are somewhat random. If the mentor and the mentee are matched up well, then the advantages can be realized to a far greater extent. If the match-up is somewhat random (or constrained by the availability of the mentors from relevant disciplines), the true advantages are less likely to be realized.

Mentors were also asked how the role they expected to play matched the role they actually played, and they provided the following feedback:

- The role I am playing matches my expected role.
- Good match.
- Very close.
- About the same.
- Very similar.
- I think it pretty much worked out the way I had expected it.
- I thought that I would meet more regularly with my mentees. The fact that I haven't met with them often is partly my fault -- it's been difficult to find time -- and partly a result of getting started kind of late.
- Although I managed to arrange for myself and the other two mentors of my large group to meet with the 12 mentees initially in a large group, I ran out of time to meet with my subgroup of 3 mentees.
- This year, the role I actually played was very minimal, much less that I expected. I was not put into a group until late in the year, and then just met my mentees once, at a luncheon.
- We had general discussions about being a faculty member, none very specific with respect to females.
- Working with individual. Listening rather than mentoring.
- Sharing experiences - both positive and negative - from my time on the tenure track. Serving as a "sounding board" for my mentees.
- It has panned out less involved as I initially expected. In part, this could be because the mentees are not directly in the same discipline. The one from the same college although still from a different discipline, actually worked out better for me. Based on this experience, I feel that the match-up between mentor's and mentee's disciplines may be a critical factor. After all, they have more common experience to share.
- Unsure since there was little feedback.
- The role felt a little forced with some of my mentees and it was a natural fit with others.

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

- I do think they've gotten some very useful practical advice for dealing with specific situations in their careers. I also think they've benefitted from the opportunity to meet others across the university who are at their level of career.
- Better understanding of tenure processes.
- Better understanding of job responsibilities and what it means to be a faculty member at NDSU.
- Better decision making in how to deal with problems.

- Hopefully they learned something- just being able to ask questions with someone non-judgmental.
- Perhaps a few tips for survival.
- I hope they received some good advice from senior faculty and had a chance to see what other junior faculty are thinking.
- Learn how to improve teaching and research and to prepare for faculty evaluation and tenure process.
- Networking, value of external perspectives, sense of solidarity.
- I was hoping to help the mentees a lot more, but realized that beside general suggestions, which the mentees probably would receive elsewhere, I could not offer much value to the mentees from outside my college. I was able to help the one from my college ore although from different disciplines as we have more common experiences.
- For some of my mentees: honestly, nothing. For one of my mentees: we have established a relationship that gives her a space to be able to process her experiences with her colleagues and in her college in a confidential way.
- Those who participated probably got some useful information.

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	2	13.3	15.4
Somewhat Agree	8	53.3	76.9
Agree	2	13.3	92.3
Strongly Agree	1	6.7	100.0
Missing Data	2	13.3	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.15, SD= 0.80

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

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	6.7	7.7
Somewhat Disagree	2	13.3	23.1
Somewhat Agree	5	33.3	61.5
Agree	2	13.3	76.9
Strongly Agree	3	20.0	100.0
Missing Data	2	13.3	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 4.23, SD= 1.42

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

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	2	13.3	15.4
Somewhat Agree	7	46.7	69.2
Agree	1	6.7	76.9
N/A	3	20.0	100.0
Missing Data	2	13.3	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.70, SD= 0.95

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

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	3	20.0	23.1
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.7	30.8
Somewhat Agree	2	13.3	46.2
N/A	7	46.7	100.0
Missing Data	2	13.3	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 2.83, SD= 0.98

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

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	13.3	14.3
Disagree	3	20.0	35.7
Somewhat Agree	6	40.0	78.6
Agree	3	20.0	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.7	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.36, SD= 1.45

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
Strongly Disagree	2	13.3	14.3
Disagree	3	20.0	35.7
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.7	42.9
Somewhat Agree	6	40.0	85.7
Agree	2	13.3	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.7	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.21, 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
Strongly Disagree	1	6.7	7.1
Somewhat Disagree	3	20.0	28.6
Somewhat Agree	5	33.3	64.3
Agree	1	6.7	71.4
NA	4	26.7	100.0
Missing Data	1	6.7	
Total	15	100.0	

*** Mean= 3.50 SD= 1.08

Additionally, 12 (80.0%) mentors identified that participating in the cohort mentoring program had a positive impact on their own experience of the climate here at NDSU. Five (33.3%) mentors felt that participating in the cohort mentoring program had an impact on their decision to remain at NDSU. Moreover, two (13.3%) 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:

- Good experience mentoring.
- Some benefit, mostly CV related though.
- Dealing with issues facing new faculty and listening to them.

- I think it made me think more clearly about the fact that many young faculty see me as a role model, which is something I did not have when I was younger.
- It has shown me that I know more than I thought I knew (confidence). Also prompted me to work on my meeting facilitation skills.
- I've been allowed to reflect on my experience and remember that I have a lot of varied experiences here.
- Very little.
- None.

Fourteen (93.3%) 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:

- Nothing has come up that has required those sorts of interaction.
- My contacts are already good.
- No reason for administrators to be involved.
- I always had good access to administrators.
- How could it?
- I have been able to access my department chair and college dean in general. Participating in the mentoring program doesn't change that for better or worse.
- Got the opportunity to network with some administrators at the workshops.

Twelve (80.0%) mentors reported that being involved in the cohort mentoring program did not provide them with increased comfort with academic administrators (e.g., chairs, heads, and deans). The mentors provided the following responses:

- Not really relevant to my experience.
- My comfort level is already good.
- Administrator at my table made a somewhat inappropriate comment. I was relatively unfazed, but not sure how others (including new faculty members) felt about it.
- I have always felt comfortable with administrators.
- I have been comfortable with my department chair and college dean in general. Participating in the mentoring program doesn't change that for better or worse.
- They had nothing to do with the program that I am aware of.
- It has certainly given me more of an administrator's perspective.

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:

- It would have been really helpful to get started very early in the fall, rather than in the spring -- I think the mentees might have felt more invested in the mentoring relationship in that case.
- More senior faculty participation.
- I don't know whether there is a solution to the scheduling problem. Maybe one could make sure that mentors don't go on sabbatical, which they should know before. Likewise, mentors/mentees that are absent for a whole semester for some other reason may consider to participate some other time.
- Both mentors and mentees need sufficient time to meet. I don't foresee improvements unless the faculty to student ratio improves to its pre-2000 ratio and the faculty workload can be spread out. Ironically, until this happens, the new faculty hired to improve the ratio won't receive sufficient mentoring.

- Smaller groups (to make meeting easier). Or greater emphasis on meeting just with your mentees (rather than the whole group). I know it's mostly an issue of getting enough mentors. I wish that type of service was more valued at NDSU!
- As I mentioned above, please try the mentee's bottom-up nomination approach next time. I feel it may be the best approach theoretically, but we will never know that until we test it in reality. Using marriage as an analogy, it's hard to make it work if the match-up is not right from the start. The current system is not working to my observations.
- Support the colleges in providing their own programs.

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

- I'd like to hear more about how other mentors are approaching the experience. I'd also like to hear more about mentees' goals for the program.
- Most effective ways to help people navigate (or avoid getting involved in) department politics.
- Promoting research and teaching techniques.
- I believe anyone engaging in this program should be educated on and agree to learn basics of mentoring. The process this year was quite confusing, for both mentors and mentees.
- It would be helpful to know at the start the amount of time that mentors are expected to spend on mentoring.
- Mentoring faculty in my own department.
- Did the structure or process change this year from last year? There seemed to be much less support or information this year. Also, we were invited to luncheons, but there were usually 2 dates offered for each one, so you may not even be there at the same luncheon as other members of your mentoring group.