

## Survey of Cohort Mentors August 2010

### Sample

Sixteen mentors completed the survey from an overall population sample of 23 mentors. Thus, this survey has a response rate of 69.6%.

This sample was equally divided between female and male mentors and the majority (87.5%) of the mentors identified as White. Moreover, seven (43.8%) mentors identified as full professors, seven (43.8%) as associate professors, one (6.3%) as an assistant professor, and one (6.3%) did not identify her or his rank. Additionally, nine (56.2%) mentors identified as being in STEM colleges, five (31.3%) from non-STEM colleges, and two (12.5%) did not identify the primary college in which they are assigned.

### Previous Mentoring Experiences

Of this sample of 16 mentors, 15 (93.8%) reported that they had been a mentor prior to the FORWARD cohort mentoring program. In particular, nine (56.3%) reported they had been a mentor to a faculty member within their own department and 12 (75.0%) 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 one-on-one mentoring experiences. They provided the following responses:

- More teachers (minds) from which to learn. Greater diversity in approaches.
- Less involvement in a large group.
- I prefer the cohort model. I like the diversity and I like not being the only mentor.
- My one-on-one mentoring experience typically involved specific questions and situations. The cohort group mentoring generated discussions that would start with one question or issue and then expand into other areas.
- I much preferred the one-on-one experience. I got to know the new faculty member better, I had more in common with her, and I felt more helpful.
- The mentees have a group of people they can go to--a larger support system with the cohort group, although I'm sure there are times when an individual wishes they had one mentor focused exclusively on them. As a mentor, I really appreciated having a partner to serve as a "sounding board" for ideas and to share the management of the group (scheduling etc.).
- In a group of new faculty, they often have their own knowledge and ideas for helping each other.
- We work with another mentor so it is perhaps like working in a marriage versus as a single person; some compromise, lots of benefits.
- Because I am introverted, the cohort experience seems less awkward.
- The cohort group gives a better mix of experiences.
- We build a 'team' of collaborators, created friendship within a group that carried all of us forward through meeting new people we each already knew. Our friendship created an effect of multiplying who we know. Through this kind of support, I believe we developed self efficacy.
- I've enjoyed both types of experiences. The one-on-one within the Dept., however, doesn't give one the exposure to colleagues in other Depts. We actually had several discussions about inter-departmental collaboration, and I think that something will come from that. In some ways, the politics of a Dept. didn't have to enter the picture, and the discussion was very free. It seemed that there was more dialogue, rather than just "wisdom" being passed along.
- Seems less effective and more difficult to establish the close relationships and, especially, relate to that, the trust that is so critical to effective mentoring.

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:

- The time commitment was greater than previous mentoring experiences, but was time well spent.
- Similar.
- We met once a month and that worked fine. In past mentoring experiences we met more often.
- We spent more time together and the time spent together was more meaningful and more fun.
- More time was devoted to the cohort experience, and most of that time was devoted to scheduling meetings, rather than to mentoring.
- More time than other campus programs I have participated in, but less time than individual mentoring.
- More.
- Less so because my co-mentor liked a monthly schedule.
- Probably greater because we met more often.
- About the same.
- It was about the same.
- Since I advise doctoral students, it was light in comparison to the energy of mentoring doctoral advisees.
- Similar time commitment for me but each meeting was longer because more questions. Mentees have the ability to feed off of each other's questions - good aspect.
- Mentoring within the Dept. is more time consuming - in a way that isn't a problem - because there is more random or casual mentoring going on, not just pre-scheduled sessions.
- Much less, but, again, that probably contributed to a less effective program - very difficult to get a group like this together.

### **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:

- 7 (43.8%) mentors responded once a month.
- 2 (12.5%) mentors responded every over month.
- 3 (18.7%) mentors responded two to three times a semester.
- 1 (6.2%) mentor responded four times during the academic year.
- 2 (12.5%) mentors responded once a semester.

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 Dissatisfied    | 2         | 12.5    | 12.5               |
| Somewhat Dissatisfied | 3         | 18.8    | 31.3               |
| Somewhat Satisfied    | 5         | 31.3    | 62.5               |
| Satisfied             | 2         | 12.5    | 75.0               |
| Very Satisfied        | 4         | 25.0    | 100.0              |
| Total                 | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 4.19, SD= 1.38

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:

- Seemed to work from the view from my window.
- Good.
- I like same gender groups. Our group has both stem and non-stem and I like that more than just STEM alone. NDSU has a diverse set of faculty members and I think it is good that we understand the experiences of all faculty.
- I was part of a same gender group, which was most helpful because of several mentees shared major life events this year.
- I do like the same gender aspect (mentees came to me with issues that were specific to being a woman on campus), but the groups need to be smaller and more homogeneous (in terms of department, college, or background/training) for the mentors to be of real value to the new faculty.
- I'm not sure it matters very much.
- Either way is fine within or outside of disciplines; changes the focus of our discussions. Learn more about internal (College) workings if within same College; meet more folks if includes diversity. My thought is to keep it same gender within a group, but I am not opposed to both genders in a group.
- We had a non-STEM all male group. It was okay.
- STEM with STEM makes sense. As a male mentor, I am not yet convinced that gender separation is necessarily productive. (The female cohorts may feel differently.)
- Our group was mainly science, math, econ, and engineering faculty. I think this was quite useful since we have many common interests.
- Liked it.
- Good - had similar perceptions (same gender) and have a better understanding of tenure requirements (same or similar college).
- LOVED that the cohorts were same gender group - took out of the equation issues of political correctness. Our group came from some pretty varied disciplines - I thought that was a positive.
- OK, but not sure that gender-specific groups are good, especially if we are attempting to 'integrate' academia.

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?<br>1= completely unhelpful<br>6 = very helpful |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| The PTE process at NDSU                        | 14 (87.5%) = yes               | Mean = 5.00, SD = 1.11<br>Responses Ranged from 3 to 6   |
| Starting a research program                    | 14 (87.5%) = yes               | Mean = 4.38, SD = 1.32<br>Responses Ranged from 2 to 6   |
| Networking within your department              | 11 (68.7%) = yes               | Mean = 4.40, SD = 1.43<br>Responses Ranged from 2 to 6   |
| Issues related to work family life             | 14 (87.5%) = yes               | Mean = 4.69, SD = 1.11<br>Responses Ranged from 3 to 6   |
| Unwritten or informal rules of the institution | 14 (87.5%) = yes               | Mean = 4.77, SD = 1.23<br>Responses Ranged from 3 to 6   |
| Teaching effectiveness                         | 15 (93.7%) = yes               | Mean = 4.79, SD = 1.12<br>Responses Ranged from 3 to 6   |

Some of the mentors also identified that their cohort mentoring group discussed: “adjustment to Fargo,” “family issues,” “time management,” and “prioritizing.”

### 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 = Strongly Dissatisfied to 6 = Strongly Satisfied).

|                       | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Valid Dissatisfied    | 1         | 6.3     | 6.3                |
| Somewhat Dissatisfied | 2         | 12.5    | 18.8               |
| Somewhat Satisfied    | 2         | 12.5    | 31.3               |
| Satisfied             | 7         | 43.8    | 75.0               |
| Very Satisfied        | 4         | 25.0    | 100.0              |
| Total                 | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 4.69, SD= 1.19

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 Disagree    | 1         | 6.3     | 6.3                |
| Somewhat Disagree | 2         | 12.5    | 18.8               |
| Somewhat Agree    | 5         | 31.3    | 50.0               |
| Agree             | 3         | 18.8    | 68.8               |
| Strongly Agree    | 5         | 31.3    | 100.0              |
| Total             | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 4.56, SD= 1.26

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 Somewhat Disagree | 3         | 18.8    | 18.8               |
| Somewhat Agree          | 2         | 12.5    | 31.3               |
| Agree                   | 6         | 37.5    | 68.8               |
| Strongly Agree          | 5         | 31.3    | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 4.81, SD= 1.11

Another measure of satisfaction was the degree to which the mentors felt connected 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 Somewhat Disagree | 3         | 18.8    | 18.8               |
| Somewhat Agree          | 5         | 31.3    | 50.0               |
| Agree                   | 4         | 25.0    | 75.0               |
| Strongly Agree          | 4         | 25.0    | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 4.56, SD= 1.09

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

- Several "teachers" including those being mentored. The group learned as much (or more) from themselves as they did from the mentors.
- Getting new folks involved.
- A greater diversity of ideas and solutions.
- Group meetings were more fun and, in my opinion, it was easier to get all new faculty to participate. The group generated friendships outside their home departments, which is important because one can feel relatively isolated within a department. More ideas and questions and discussions were generated. It was also nice to be able to respond to particular individual questions once the group had established itself.
- The new faculty and the mentors can see the commonalities in challenges faced in different departments and colleges. Get to meet people you would not otherwise meet.
- It is a great way to build connections among faculty and provides a "safe place" for people to ask questions and voice concerns about things that make them uncomfortable in their home departments. Our group as a whole would strategize about how to handle different circumstances which I believe was helpful to the individuals affected.
- A lot more ideas get thrown out and more solutions found with a larger group.
- Meet more new folks; one mentee would not miss out if paired with a less involved mentor if one-on-one.
- Although we did not all meet together, I think it helps to have more people to share ideas and experiences and it is more likely to keep the initiative going to meet.
- Different perspectives emerge from both sides.
- It gave people at the same place in their careers a chance to share ideas.
- The faculty mentored would like to continue to meet in their second year. I see that we have developed a solid relationship of collegial support, which is important for the mentees, but became valuable for me as a female mentor, as well.
- Provides more flexibility for both the mentors and new faculty members. Helps to break the barrier between new faculty and the mentors. Allows new faculty to see that others may have the same anxieties.
- GREAT for all to meet faculty from other departments/colleges. These opportunities tend to be limited - often more so for women. - Because there ended up being a wider range of teaching experience, there was some good discussion about what we all brought to our departments
- I actually see it as disadvantageous as the mentees seemed to not feel 'connected' or did not get close to the mentors.

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

- Finding a time to meet as a group.
- Time.
- I see none.
- None. I found the group program much more effective.
- It was very difficult to schedule meetings with a group this size, scattered all over campus, particularly when one of the mentors was doing most of the scheduling. Also, there wasn't sufficient time to hear from each new faculty member at a 1 hour meeting. I'm not sure everyone felt comfortable speaking up about potential or actual challenges in a group that size. By the end of the year, the group seemed to disassemble, perhaps because it had served its purpose, but more likely because it was too unwieldy. I spent quite a bit of time learning about how things worked in another college, but because I knew so little, I could not offer great advice for the issues the new faculty in that college were facing. I don't feel, at the end of the year, that I got to know the new faculty very well, and I think the group size contributed to that outcome.
- People are just so busy that it is difficult to devote adequate time to the process.
- Scheduling!
- Scheduling everyone at one time is a bit difficult. Perhaps consider looking at teaching schedules before arranging groups.
- Some people may be less inclined to talk about difficult issues.
- Sometimes difficult to schedule gatherings with seven people.
- The disadvantage is the uncertainty involved in the tenure process and the relationship to mentoring.
- I would like to find a way to collaborate with other faculty on campus who are doing research in this area, given my experience this year. Doing research on mentoring would compensate for the time I spent working with the first-year faculty (even though it was pure pleasure).
- Scheduling a time to meet that works for everyone.
- It was very difficult to find times to meet that worked for everyone. The enthusiasm to meet was there, but scheduling became very difficult (disadvantage: one more thing to schedule in already busy schedules). - One year with the group is not enough - I hope that we'll keep meeting

### **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          | 1         | 6.3     | 6.3                |
|       | Somewhat Disagree | 3         | 18.8    | 25.0               |
|       | Somewhat Agree    | 3         | 18.8    | 43.8               |
|       | Agree             | 6         | 37.5    | 81.3               |
|       | Strongly Agree    | 3         | 18.8    | 100.0              |
|       | Total             | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 4.44, SD= 1.21

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

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Valid Somewhat Disagree | 1         | 6.3     | 6.3                |
| Somewhat Agree          | 7         | 43.8    | 50.0               |
| Agree                   | 5         | 31.3    | 81.3               |
| Strongly Agree          | 3         | 18.8    | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 4.63, SD= 0.88

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

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 2         | 12.5    | 12.5               |
| Somewhat Disagree       | 3         | 18.8    | 31.3               |
| Somewhat Agree          | 6         | 37.5    | 68.8               |
| Agree                   | 3         | 18.8    | 87.5               |
| Strongly Agree          | 2         | 12.5    | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 3.88, SD= 1.45

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

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 2         | 12.5    | 13.3               |
| Disagree                | 5         | 31.3    | 46.7               |
| Somewhat Disagree       | 3         | 18.8    | 66.7               |
| Somewhat Agree          | 2         | 12.5    | 80.0               |
| Agree                   | 3         | 18.8    | 100.0              |
| Missing Data            | 1         | 6.3     |                    |
| Total                   | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 2.93, SD= 1.39

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

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 1         | 6.3     | 6.3                |
| Disagree                | 4         | 25.0    | 31.3               |
| Somewhat Disagree       | 5         | 31.3    | 62.5               |
| Somewhat Agree          | 4         | 25.0    | 87.5               |
| Strongly Agree          | 2         | 12.5    | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 3.25, SD= 1.39

**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 | Somewhat Disagree | 2         | 12.5    | 12.5               |
|       | Somewhat Agree    | 7         | 43.8    | 56.3               |
|       | Agree             | 4         | 25.0    | 81.3               |
|       | Strongly Agree    | 3         | 18.8    | 100.0              |
|       | Total             | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 4.50, SD= 0.97

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

|       |                   | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 3         | 18.8    | 27.3               |
|       | Disagree          | 1         | 6.3     | 36.4               |
|       | Somewhat Disagree | 2         | 12.5    | 54.5               |
|       | Somewhat Agree    | 4         | 25.0    | 90.9               |
|       | Agree             | 1         | 6.3     | 100.0              |
|       | Missing Data      | 5         | 31.3    |                    |
| Total |                   | 16        | 100.0   |                    |

\*\*\* Mean= 2.91, SD= 1.45

Additionally, nine (56.3%) mentors identified that participating in the cohort mentoring program had an impact on their own experience of the climate here at NDSU. One (6.3%) mentor felt that participating in the cohort mentoring program had an impact on her or his decision to remain at NDSU. Moreover, one (6.3%) mentor felt that participating in the cohort mentoring program gave her or him greater access to academic administrators and increased her or his comfort with academic administrators. Eight (50%) 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:

- If leadership is defined by "stepping up to the plate", I believe this program provided opportunities for each cohort member to practice leadership.
- It has made me think about the type of information that is useful for an incoming faculty member. So maybe that makes me a better leader.
- I felt a responsibility towards the junior faculty. More frequently I asked "what is it that you want to know about x, y, z? During our last meeting, we asked "what questions do you have for us at this point, after this year?" That generated an entire discussion about PTE, work-life balance, childcare, etc.
- Helps maintain them.
- It made me more aware of how I dislike having to schedule meetings.
- I think there has been some improvement.
- It has reinforced my leadership abilities.
- Has provided the opportunity to be a role model and to consider being involved in activities to strengthen my leadership abilities.
- Haven't really thought of it in that way.



### 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.