

Mentoring for Healthcare-Oriented Faculty in Business Schools: An Eye toward Facilitating Success and Increasing Diversity

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Abstract

What will you learn? High-quality mentoring can facilitate the success of junior faculty in business schools who teach and conduct research on health care topics. In addition to internal mentoring, interuniversity mentoring can be particularly important as the mentors are not influenced by the same intraorganizational political pressures, the pool of potential mentors increases, and the size and scope of the network to facilitate outside reviewer letters increases.

What is the evidence? The authors draw on their experience in health management programs in U.S. business schools.

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Inter-University Mentoring Is Important for Junior Faculty

High-quality mentoring can facilitate the success of junior faculty anywhere in academia. A mentor, with more experience than the protégé, can act as a sounding board, provide some elements of coaching, offer access to a larger network than the protégé would have otherwise, and act as a champion for the protégé seeking to advance their career. For business school faculty conducting research related to health and healthcare, interuniversity mentoring relationships can be particularly useful. Mentoring relationships can emerge within a university when senior faculty are assigned as mentors to junior faculty protégés. The challenge for junior faculty studying health and healthcare is that in a single school, the number of senior faculty studying health and healthcare is often insufficient to mentor all junior faculty working in this area.

Mentoring relationships can also emerge when a doctoral advisor continues as a mentor and a junior faculty member meets more senior faculty at a conference and organically develops a relationship. In the future, professional organizations or school alliances might consider developing an interuniversity program to expand the opportunities for high quality mentoring relationships to emerge.

Interuniversity mentoring is valuable because internal mentors are exposed to the same daily stressors, are part of the same environment, and navigate the same politics. However, their advice might be given with the concept of what is best for the organization rather than what is best for the person being mentored. In contrast, someone from outside the immediate department, school, or university setting can take a much broader view and can ask questions to gain clarification about tradeoffs between the faculty member's success and the success of the school or the university. An internal mentor likely has their own assumptions about the relationship between the individual faculty member's success and the school's or university's success. Relevant to the tenure and promotion process, an external mentor can help facilitate connections with a broader network of faculty, improving dissemination of research by the junior faculty (for example through seminar and conference panel invitations), as well as result in a larger group of potential reference letter writers.

Mentoring Needs for Business School Junior Faculty Studying Health and

Healthcare

Business school faculty who want to conduct high-quality research on topics related to health and healthcare will often benefit from collaborating with researchers with greater knowledge of healthcare, the institutions that provide healthcare, the law specific to healthcare, and the regulations and legislative process and policy making around healthcare. At times there is sufficient expertise within a business school, but frequently the faculty at a university with the most expertise in these areas (who, in turn, benefit from collaboration with faculty who understand the business of health) will be in schools such as nursing, medicine, or public health. The junior faculty who collaborate with faculty scattered around a university in different schools will often find opportunities to publish work from these collaborations as part of a long list of authors in journals unfamiliar to business school appointment and promotion committee members. Mentoring relationships can guide how junior faculty strategically consider collaborative opportunities.

Often times, once a junior faculty member has established a few collaborative relationships and is known within the research community, a critical mentoring role helps the junior faculty member build a network and avoid participating in every collaborative opportunity. While an increasing number of appointment and promotion committees are becoming familiar with cases of faculty who span business and health, the candidates best positioned for career success will balance publishing as a first author or coauthor in the highest-level business, management, economics or other discipline-specific journals with publication in well-regarded subdisciplines (e.g., health economics rather than economics) medical, nursing, health policy, or public health journals.

Mentoring as a Key to Increasing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

The goal of achieving greater diversity in business school faculty enhances the importance of mentoring. Faculty from historically less privileged or under-represented groups have a relatively small number of demographically similar senior faculty to rely on as mentors and can find it challenging to break into well-established groups of peers they do not resemble. Junior faculty will be helped by mentors committed to promoting diversity by understanding the challenges particular to individuals in less privileged or under-represented groups. Mentoring can help these junior faculty feel engaged in an environment in which they are appreciated, valued, welcomed, and not made to feel responsible for everything having to do with diversity,

equity, inclusion, and belonging at their schools. Over time, a more diverse faculty will be better prepared to attract more diverse students to train for leadership roles in organizations serving a diverse population.

Developing a Successful Program

If a professional association or business school alliance were to facilitate an interuniversity mentoring program, the appropriate matching algorithm would be a key consideration: should it be based on demographics, disciplinary interests, even more specific research topic interests, and long-term career goals that go beyond the promotion and tenure process? There are other characteristics on which mentor matching can be built and for which a large pool of potential mentors would be useful.

Successful faculty development requires trust that can be built in many ways. It is helpful for mentors and protégés to have overlapping core values and lived experiences that accompany those values. Including an exercise for mentors and protégés to identify values to share with those facilitating the matching is likely to increase the success of individuals in the mentoring program and ultimately of the program itself. The higher probability of success may attract a larger pool of potential mentors.

A formal program can facilitate mentoring not just by outside faculty but also by industry leaders. Industry mentors will always have a more complete view of the latest issues, trends, and questions in need of answers to run organizations better. Faculty are being asked not just to produce high-quality literature in peer-reviewed journals but to have and document an impact (e.g., in the AACSB framework of engagement, innovation, and impact); industry mentors can facilitate more and higher levels of impact and engagement.

Looking Forward

While all of these suggestions for the value of external mentoring for the junior faculty demonstrate the value to the faculty members and their schools, this type of mentoring will not happen without appropriate incentives for senior faculty. In most business schools, the annual review process is typically structured with faculty receiving ratings in research, teaching, and service (to the department/school, university, and profession). Time to provide mentoring is a limited resource. Those who manage senior faculty expectations need to acknowledge the value

of interuniversity mentoring as service to the profession, especially for mentoring protégés from under-represented groups.