

# UTILIZING MENTORING IN THE DISTANCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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# THE TRADITIONAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

- A key concern in the shift to digital technologies in fully online or blended environments is the potential loss of personal attention to students.
- Traditionally, students have been provided individual guidance through mentoring relationships.
- Faculty advisors, more experienced students, and student organizations have all been involved in the mentoring relationship.

# EXPANDING THE ROLE OF THE MENTORING PROCESS

- The role of mentors is expanding and changing as the use of online technology increases.
- For example, growing online graduate programs have expanded the use of online mentoring for graduate students.



# THE TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THROUGH MENTORING

- Mentoring involves transferring knowledge and skills from a more knowledgeable participant in a field to a more junior member.
- The process offers opportunities for those skilled in an area to transfer those skills to others who are either new to the organization or who are struggling with demands.

# MORE BENEFITS OF MENTORING

- Mentoring further provides a socialization component promoting a sense of membership in an organization.
- Employees who are part of a positive mentoring experience generally exhibit greater job satisfaction and better job performance.
- These benefits easily translate to higher education environments.



# GETTING STARTED WITH MENTORING

- Orienting students to the language and professional practice of the discipline parallels socialization of an employee in a new organization.
- Given the importance of this process, issues involving how to best design and implement a mentoring program are crucial.
- A poorly designed and implemented mentoring program may be worse than none at all.
- Choosing mentors wisely and appropriately training them is crucial.

# DESIGNING THE MENTORING PROGRAM

- Support from management is necessary for the success of a mentoring program.
- A needs assessment should be performed.
  - This assists in the identification of problem areas.
  - Can be used to increase managerial support.
  - Is helpful in determining costs and benefits of training.



# DESIGNING THE MENTORING PROGRAM, CONT.

- Matching mentors with mentees is also of critical importance.
- Flowing from the needs assessment should be setting program objectives, policies, guidelines, and activities.
- Designing an evaluation of the mentoring program is another crucial part of the program.



# DEFINING VIRTUAL MENTORING

- Similar to traditional mentoring environments; but in e-mentoring, technology is responsible for facilitating the relationship between the mentor and the protégé
- Online mentoring features a flatter hierarchy and, through its structural composition, creates benefits in engagement, retention, and progression
- Aspects of the e-mentoring environment: Structure, Learning Objects, Administrative Support, Technical Support, Communication Tools, E-mentor Training, E-mentor Coaching Support, In-person E-mentor gatherings, and E-mentor Evaluation

# MAKING VIRTUAL MENTORING SUCCESSFUL

- Successful online mentors provide structure, are timely in their feedback, and deliver feedback that is valued by students
- Online mentoring communities can be developed and maintained through using the rich media provided by Web 2.0 technologies

# DESIGNING VIRTUAL MENTORSHIPS

- Technologies need to facilitate interactions and connections that enable learning in an open, unstructured environment
- Training is critical:
  - Competencies of virtual mentors: online developmental competence, social competence, cognitive competence, teaching competence, communication competence, managerial competence, and online technical competence
- Success factors of mentees: being open to feedback, effective listeners, and respectful of the mentor's input and time

# QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

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