

MENTORING ONLINE

Kijana Crawford

Mentoring is sharing: sharing power, sharing information, and sharing self. A mentor is the person who advances the acceptance of a talented individual into an inner circle. The task of the mentor is to introduce the protégé to the norms of the inner circle, to provide the protégé with opportunities to learn and practice, and to reward the protégé so that the protégé's knowledge, performance, and motivation is increased.

Mentoring is a form of adult socialization for professional roles (Moore, 1982, Educational Record). Often it involves a sponsoring relationship in which an individual is groomed or prepared for a position (Short, 1989) or, more explicitly, it is socialization to develop leaders. The primary function of a mentor is to provide a transition from the child/parent relationship to the adult/peer relationship in the course of development.

According to Darling (1985), mentoring is a process by which one is guided, taught, and influenced in one's life work in important ways. A mentor is a person who leads, guides, and advises another more junior in experience (p. 42). Mentoring involves feedback, criticism, passing on wisdom, and coaching, along with guidance and sponsorship of the protégé (Collins, 1983; Farley, 1981). It involves the sharing of power, advice, and information (Moore, 1982, Leadership in Transition). A mentor is usually an older, wiser, trusted person who guides a younger, less experienced person toward upward mobility, increased self-esteem, and greater confidence in the professional world (Collins, 1983; Dodgson, 1986).

Mentoring online creates challenges for the mentor since there is no face to face contact and a relationship has to be establish based upon what is written and how it is written to the mentee. The same challenges are presented to the faculty member who teaches an online course. Actually, the rules change when there is communication online since the mentor does not have the opportunity to look for facial expressions, hear tone of voice or pick up on other body language. What is written and how it is written and either advance the relationship or tear it down. For example, here is a response from a student who expresses her dissatisfaction with her grade, the professor and ultimately, having to take an online course as oppose to a traditional lecture course.

Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, New York 14623

Carrie writes:

I have a generalized statement to make

Out of the 65 students who are posted on the grade distribution, 93.8% received below an 84% on the test. That leaves 6.2% of the people with grades higher than that. I find it disturbing to think that these results are acceptable to a professor.

Here's a question. . . If Dr. Crawford doesn't write the tests, doesn't proctor the exams, doesn't present us with lectures or notes, didn't write the book or CD ROM, and doesn't correct the exams, a machine does that, then why couldn't a student be the professor for this class? Other than the fact she has a PHD. I do understand that we are asked to do the critical thinking questions, which I find that I am spending so much time reading, watching the videos and fiddling with the CD ROM, that I don't have time to answer the critical thinking questions. Obviously something needs to be changed if 93.8% of the students received below an 84% on the exam.

Just my own critical thinking. I'm sorry, but I am disturbed by these results. I am anticipating that these next results will be a bit higher, but it doesn't remedy the situation.

Any others who have their own critical thinking question, or response to mine, I would love to see how others in this class are feeling.

Looking forward to your responses!

~ Carrie

Such is distance learning. You have the choice to take a course of instruction at an institution with a Prof. giving lectures or the freedom to apply yourself in learning the material via distance learning. Have you asked any questions of the Prof. ? Just my two bits.

Mac

Thanks Mac for your feedback, I actually do appreciate it. Actually I didn't have a choice to take it Distance Learning or not, the lecture class was full. However I did decide to take this class anyway therefore I chose in that sense. Let me assure you I am applying myself to learn the material, I'm just retaining the information on the exams. I am understanding and retaining the concepts though. That's what really counts.

You'r welcome Carrie and by no means was I suggesting that you were not putting forth an honest effort. I just read your note about many other students having the same opinion and wanted to throw that out there for everybody. I've taken about 15 DL courses with RIT with various degrees of participation from the Profs of the classes. However, most of them have been about the same and in

fact, some are quite bad at passing grades and assignments back until it is too late. I understand the frustration of taking some of the courses DL.

Good Luck,
Mac

Here the professor allowed another student to serve as a peer pal. Sometimes, the most effective person can be another student or a peer. Blackwell places mentors, sponsors, advisors, guides and peer pals on a continuum which depicts the degree of power. On this continuum, “mentors” are the most powerful. “Sponsors” are less able than mentors to shape and promote the protégé’s career. “Guides” point out the pitfalls to be avoided and the shortcuts to be pursued. Mentors provide information to protégés while, on the other end of the continuum, “peer pals” primarily have a reciprocal helping relationship which includes sharing information and strategies. Also, “peer pals” as mutual sounding boards, advise one another, and confide and commiserate with each other.

Bibliography

Collins, N. W. (1983). Professional women and their mentors. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Darling, L. W. (1985, March). Mentors and mentoring. Journal of Nursing Administration, 19–42. Review, 28, 4–12.

Dodgson, J. (1986, Spring). Do women in education need mentors? Education Canada, 26, 28–33.

Farley, J. (1981). Sex discrimination in higher education: Strategies for equality. Cornell University. Ithaca, NY: ILR Publications.

Moore, K. M. (1982). The role of mentors in developing leaders for academe. Educational Record, 63, 23–28.

Short, P. M. (1989, March). Women professors of educational administration: A profile and salient issues. Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Educational Research Associates, San Francisco, CA.

Smith, M. A. (1983). Women getting together and getting ahead. Sex equity in educational leadership. University of Oregon, Center for Educational Policy and Management.