

Faculty Near-Peer Mentoring Exchange for Early-Career Faculty

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Research question – How does near-peer mentoring benefit early-career faculty?

A **near-peer** is a colleague who has succeeded at the next steps incoming faculty face

Context & program design

- Midsized private university; 500 full-time faculty
- Voluntary participation in program
- CTE forms year-long groups with 1 near-peer leader
- Group = 2-3 incoming + 2 near-peer faculty
- Heterogeneous disciplines in groups
- Topics suggested, but no set curriculum
- Groups meet 2-3 times/semester

Research methods

- Voluntary participation in focus groups
- 6 focus groups; 3 each, May 2015 & 2016
- Participation: 25/45 (56%) & 23/46 (50%)
- Transcription and thematic analysis
- Coding by 3 researchers (1 external to project)

Findings

1. Five interrelated benefit themes emerged.
2. Participants noted that varied disciplines and experience levels are key features.
3. Generally, group size was good.
4. Respondents noted problems and voiced solutions for better scheduling and communication.
5. Overall: *found connection in isolated world.*

Selected references

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- Margolis, J. (2008). When teachers face teachers: Listening to the resource "right down the hall." *Teaching Education*, 19(4), 293-310.
- Morgan, S. (2014). Mentoring and support for new faculty: Enhancing social capital using communities of practice. *Learning Communities Journal*, 6, 75-92.
- Sorcinielli, M. D., Yun, J., & Baldi, B. (2016). *Mutual mentoring guide*. Teaching Excellence & Faculty Development, University of Massachusetts.

Study approved by Duquesne University IRB

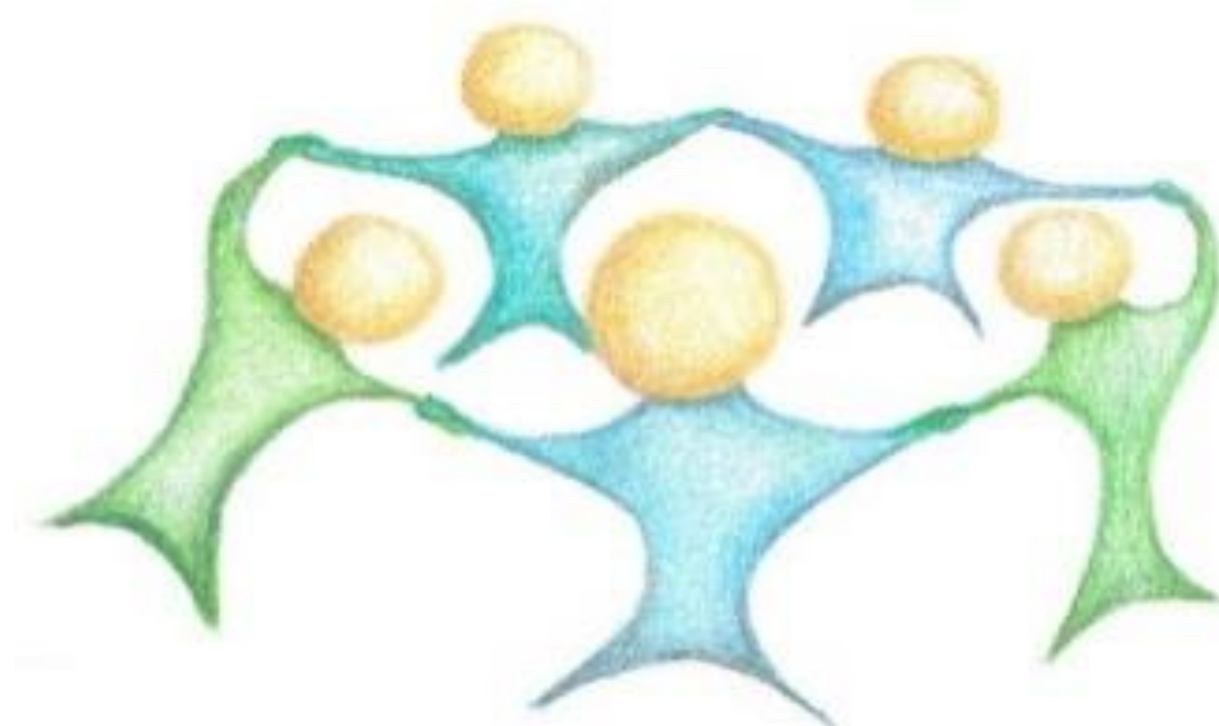
Five benefits of near-peer mentoring



Safety and support



Connection across institution



Shared experiences despite diverse backgrounds



Broadened perspective of the university



Reciprocal, horizontal mentoring

Figures drawn by Kiara Yough, Duquesne University

What really felt valuable was the support, and it was safe to talk about your deep dark fears, and your "what the heck is going on?"... The mentoring was normalizing the experience.

I had professional concerns that I couldn't necessarily talk about as openly in my department and getting feedback from people who have been here longer and from different departments was really, really helpful.

I made some connections with the people in my group for interdisciplinary research collaborations that are unexpected and pretty cool, which was really nice because I feel like I'm siloed here in my building.

It was nice to have something in the schedule that pulls you out of the office and off your floor. It makes you get with people you wouldn't talk to necessarily.

One of the things I really liked was [even] with that diversity we saw the same, common challenges we all face. Even though we all have different backgrounds, there are a lot of things we all share.

I really liked the fact that in our group two of us were new and two had been here for a while so just sharing how they navigated and how the system works and maybe how to work with the students that we have was really helpful. For example, simple things as how to respond to emails and what to think about attendance...

At first I wondered why you guys put us in these different groups, and once we started talking, I understood it better. I got a perspective that is different.

I got a sense of the overall structure of the faculty and university, just how things work... the faculty structure, committees, what is the faculty senate, the faculty handbook, what are the changes that are being made, so just getting up to speed with the university structure.

[I got] what the University is looking for in terms of progression... It's good to learn about the system. It was nice to talk about student issues and how different departments handle student issues and what different department policies are.

As a newcomer, the cross-school, cross-department, and cross-subject interactions I think add to my already established ways of knowing... I heard different perspectives. [It] opened a deeper window to see more light, more sunshine.

Those of us who had been there longer, we don't have all the answers, and we have lots of questions as well, and I felt that there was a lot of horizontal mentoring between those older participants.

We were all mentoring each other. It was at least two people who had the issue, so it didn't feel like we were all mentoring one person. 'Oh yeah, I'm in that boat as well,' and then the others would listen and provide feedback.