

CSU English Department Mentoring Best Practices: Frequently Asked Questions

The following information is intended to elaborate on the CSU English Department's mentorship program as it appears in the STF Handbook. This Q & A is intended to help mentors, mentees, the department, and anyone interested in the mentorship program. The information is organized into four sections to help guide new and veteran mentors and mentees in their mentoring journey. While certain sections focus on particular roles both the mentor and the mentee should find it helpful to read each section in order to clarify the expectations from all sides to the relationship.

Section 1 For Mentors and Mentees: General questions about mentoring

Section 2 For the Mentor: Questions about the logistics of mentoring

Section 3 For the Mentor: Questions about the mentor's role and best practices

Section 4 For the Mentee: Questions about the mentee's role and best practices

The Q & A is followed by an annotated bibliography of mentoring research. The descriptions accompanying the articles and resources should provide mentors and mentees with further information if they seek to follow up on particular aspects of the mentoring relationship that are of interest.

Section 1 For Mentors and Mentees: General questions about mentoring

Q: Why offer a mentoring program?

A: According to Gaye Luna and Deborah L. Cullen in Empowering the Faculty: Mentoring Redirected and Renewed, "The literature overwhelmingly points to benefits to the organization, the mentor, and the protégé. Mentoring is useful and powerful in understanding and advancing organizational culture, providing access to informal and formal networks of communication, and offering professional stimulation to both junior and senior faculty members." Studies also show that new faculty often feel they do not receive enough guidance. Further, new teachers quickly form lasting styles and attitudes (Boyle & Boice). A comprehensive mentorship program can provide this the guidance that many new faculty need upon joining a new department, and it can help foster positive attitudes and improved teaching (Boyle and Boice). Among other reasons for a mentoring program is the sense of belonging that mentees report as they make meaningful connections to the department. The department benefits by nurturing new talent rather than losing it to institutional disconnect. And the mentor benefits from enhanced self-esteem and revitalization in his or her work. As more universities recognize the mutually beneficial features of mentoring for new faculty, many have developed informational websites. Please consider the overview of the three benefit categories below which have been adapted from the University of Rhode Island Advanced Mentoring Handbook to fit the CSU English Department context.

Benefits for the CSU mentee include:

- Individual recognition and encouragement
- Informal feedback

- Access to informal networks of communication
- Advice on teaching and professional development
- Advice on balancing teaching and other responsibilities
- Understanding of the culture of the institution
- Knowledge of procedures and inside information about the department, college, and university
- Reduction of stress (psychosocial support)
- Feeling welcomed and valued through the initiation of mentoring

Benefits for the CSU mentor include:

- Satisfaction in enabling new faculty to begin their time at CSU with a sense of direction
- Satisfaction in assisting in the development of a colleague
- Satisfaction of contributing to overall institutional climate change
- Provides opportunities for reflection and renewal of mentor's own teaching
- Respect and recognition from others in the university as an individual who has the ability to identify, encourage and promote other colleagues
- Improves collaboration and instruction skills
- More apt to keep abreast of new knowledge and techniques
- More apt to keep abreast of institutional developments
- Satisfaction and inspiration from work with creative new colleagues

Benefits to CSU and the English Department:

- Increased commitment, productivity and satisfaction of new faculty
- Minimized attrition and turnover
- Encouraged cooperation and cohesiveness for those involved in the program
- Faculty development, enabling them to make full use of their knowledge and skills
- Contributions to the general stability and health of the institution
- Facilitates the development of future organizational leadership

Q: Doesn't mentoring happen naturally?

A: Tradition holds that mentoring happens naturally but research shows that "natural" mentoring only happens with about a third of new teachers, with women and minorities being the least likely to receive spontaneous mentoring (Boyle & Boice). A systematic mentoring program with clearly established relationships can ensure that all new faculty have the guidance they need.

Q: Isn't mentoring remedial, showing a lack of respect for the skills and education of new faculty?

A: Mentoring is a continuation of one's development as defined by life cycle and human development theorists in terms of life sequences or stages, personality development, and the concept and value of care (Luna and Cullen 1995). According to Grossman and Davis, "Like other professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and architects, teachers continue to learn on the job, especially in the crucial early years. Just as new physicians go through residency programs and new law associates often go through training offered by their law firms, new teachers benefit from structured opportunities to continue to develop their professional knowledge and skills."

Section 2 For the Mentor: Questions about the logistics of mentoring

Q: How often should I meet with my mentee?

A: As often as needed to establish and successfully work towards clear objectives. We recommend a minimum of three meetings per semester. Consistency is important in the mentor relationship; it helps to build trust, so set these meeting dates early making them as firm and regular as possible. Further, it is important to follow through. Just because you have not heard from your mentee in a while does not mean they don't need guidance. Their reticence may be born of their fear of bothering you. Reach out to let them know you are there for them.

Q: When should I begin meeting with my mentee?

A: The earlier in the semester the better. According to Boyle and Boice, successful mentors are quick to schedule meeting times with their mentees. If possible you might want to begin communicating before the semester begins. If this isn't possible, it's best to meet during the first week of the semester.

Q: How long is the mentor time commitment and is there compensation?

A: We expect that the mentoring relationship will last for up to two years. In the first semester, the mentor will receive a stipend, when the frequency of the meetings with the mentee will be at its highest. Depending on the particular characteristics of the relationship, the time commitment may lessen over the course of two years. After the first semester, if both parties desire the relationship to continue they may do so after consulting with the Assistant Chair for Scheduling.

Q: Will I be expected to evaluate my mentee for the department?

A: No. The department already has an annual reviews process to evaluate faculty. The mentor's purpose is to help the mentee professionally and guide the mentee through the transition to a new environment, not to evaluate on behalf of the department. According to Maryann Jacobi, "mentoring relationships are helpful relationships usually focused on achievement. The primary dynamic of the mentoring relationship is the assistance and support provided to the protégée by the mentor," thus it's best leave the formal evaluation to the department processes in place.

Q: Can anyone be a mentor?

A: The Assistant Chair for scheduling will oversee the pairing of experienced veteran instructors with new faculty. Mentors for instructors are drawn from the instructor ranks and typically will be those who have been in the department for at least five years. According to Boyle and Boice, exemplary mentors have at least three to five years of experience on campus.

Section 3 For the Mentor: Questions about the mentor’s role and best practices

Q: What exactly is meant by a mentor and what are some functions of a mentoring?

A: In a widely quoted passage, Anderson and Shannon define mentoring as, “a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and the protégé.” Anderson and Shannon provide the following chart about the function of mentoring:

Functions of mentoring

Teach	Sponsor	Encourage	Counsel	Befriend
Model	Protect	Affirm	Listen	Accept
Inform	Support	Inspire	Probe	Relate
Confirm/ Disconfirm	Promote	Challenge	Clarify	
Prescribe			Advise	
Question				

Q: What does effective mentoring look like?

A: According to Grossman and Davis, three features of effective mentoring are high quality mentors, a focus on content and allocated time for mentoring. Grossman and Davis explain, “These three elements interact with the specific background, strengths, and needs that the new teacher brings to the classroom, as well as the school context in which he or she is teaching.”

Q: Are there certain categories that define the content of the mentoring relationship?

A: According to Newby and Corner, the focus of the mentoring relationship should be on emphasizing skills and helping the mentee become familiar with the department and its culture. The following categories should provide the focus and content of the mentor relationship:

- *Course objectives in courses taught: The mentor should make the mentee aware of specific course objectives the department has set.*
- *Teaching/Instruction best practices: The mentor should share the best teaching practices they have developed and used with their mentee*

- *Student culture: The mentor should share their experience with the diversity of CSU students and how they may respond to particular classes and challenges*
- *Department culture: The mentor may introduce the mentee to the department culture such as the department status, history, values, vision, goals, service positions and holders.*
- *Professional development opportunities: The mentor should be sharing professional development opportunities with the mentee, such as available trainings.*
- *Annual review preparation: the mentor may be a helpful resource as someone who has been through the annual review process, though the mentor is not responsible for the mentees review.*

Q: How should I prepare for the mentoring relationship?

A: Preparation is important. Don't mentor impromptu; have a clear plan for the length of the mentor relationship. Be prepared to get to know your mentee so that you can help them set professional goals that reflect the department and course goals. To help with preparation see the categories mentioned in the preceding Q & A.

Q: Should I share materials with my mentee?

A: Sharing is not just caring, as they say, but an important tradition in the teaching professions; be prepared to share materials such as lesson plans and samples of your graded papers in order to display best teaching and evaluating practices for the mentee.

Q: What are some common characteristics of a successful mentor?

A: Stuart Haines of the University of Maryland offers the following model using the term protégé in place of mentor.

Attributes of Successful Mentor-Protégé Relationships

Mentor Qualities	Protégé (Mentee) Qualities	Relationship Qualities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong interpersonal skills • Technical competence / expertise • Knowledge of organization and profession • Status / prestige within the organization and profession • Willingness to be responsible for someone else's growth and development • Ability to share credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-perceived growth needs • A record of seeking / accepting challenging assignments • Receptivity to feedback and coaching • Willingness to assume responsibility for own growth and development • Ability to perform in more than one skill area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary • Mutual benefits perceived and derived from the relationship • No conflicts of interest / competition between mentor and protégé • Not confined to merely professional interests

• Patience		
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Q: Are there mentoring guidelines that I can follow?

A: *The following guidelines, adapted from various university mentor programs, may be helpful*

Guidelines for Mentors

- Be available. The mentor should be available to the new faculty member, must keep in contact, and be prepared to spend time discussing progress towards goals and objectives.
- Consider scheduling meetings with greater frequency in the first semester of the relationship.
- Get to know your mentee. Listen and ask questions; these are two essential skills for successful mentoring.
- Ask powerful questions, questions that are challenging in a friendly way and questions that help your mentee talk about what is important to her/him.
- The mentor should be in a position to help guide the mentee to available resources.
- Ensure that the new faculty member is included in formal and informal information flow in the department, college, university, and professional community.
- Include mentees in informal activities whenever possible and help find social support network if necessary, for instance STF and department gatherings.
- The mentor should treat all dealings and discussions in confidence, providing supportive guidance and constructive criticism. It is important that the mentee does not feel judged in this relationship.
- Maintain and respect privacy, honesty and integrity.
- Make these boundaries very clear at the beginning of the mentoring relationship in order to establish trust.
- Help familiarize the mentee with the University, administrative systems and division heads. Know campus resources and where to direct your mentee for questions you cannot answer.
- Establish priorities – help mentee with budgeting time
- Help the mentee dealing with difficulties – classroom problems, student issues.
- Know yourself. Acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses. Set a clear structure for the relationship at the beginning. Discuss expectations. Discuss time commitments. Renegotiate these time commitments as needed. Do not expect yourself to fulfill every mentoring function.
- The mentee may feel uncomfortable with the imbalance of power in the mentor/mentee relationship. Tell him or her how much you get out of the relationship, and that he/she should not feel beholden to you.

- Mentor because you enjoy it and think it is the right thing to do. Demonstrate enthusiasm and motivation for mentoring.
- Be sure to give constructive criticism as well as praise. Give suggestions for improvement privately.
- “Talk-up” your mentee’s accomplishments when appropriate to other colleagues.
- Make a list of the things that you would have wanted to know when you were in the position of the person you will be mentoring.
- Experiment with the process. Meetings with your mentee can include alternatives to meeting in your office. Consider sharing lunch, meeting at a coffee shop, or attending a special event together.
- Plan for the next meeting before you depart from each meeting. Review your progress based on your agenda and solicit ideas about what might be discussed in your next meeting.
- Clarify expectations about the extent to which you will offer personal as well as professional guidance.
- Establish expectations regarding the duration of the relationship
- Bear in mind that it is unrealistic to expect to be able to meet all of your mentee’s needs, take the time to assess your strengths.

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh offers the following checklist for mentors which might be helpful in your attempt to meet the relationship guidelines.

Mentor Checklist

Check	Activities
	Call or email mentee to set up first meeting after his/her arrival on campus
	Share information about background, professional experiences, and satisfactions. Include information about previous mentoring experiences, either as a mentor or mentee.
	Informally clarify common interests, shared work values
	Help mentee clarify goals
	Set up a schedule with your mentee for regular meetings and feedback sessions. Be sure to agree on frequency and times, and stick to them.
	Compile a list of activities with mentee which meet mutual goals
	Remember to both talk and listen
	Brush up on your communication and other skills and always remember to take the mentee seriously
	Be sensitive to gender and cross-cultural differences

Q: Trust seems to be very important in mentorship. How should I establish trust with the mentee?

A: To build trust, strive for clarity and consistency. Make suggestions, don’t give commandments. An important part of the mentor relationship is the trust that can develop when one approaches

*the mentee with experience and understanding rather than authority and power. Using **empathy** is also an important trust building tool. You might recall how it was to be new to an institution including all the challenges you faced in your first year of teaching and share your experience with the mentee.*

Q: Is there a way to assess the success of the mentorship relationship?

A: Boyle and Boice developed the following mentoring dimensions scale where the mentor and mentee rate each number on a 1-10 scale. The table might be helpful to CSU mentors/mentees in assessing their mentee relationship.

1. Pair meets regularly, persistently, in substantial fashion
2. Pair evidences enthusiasm and motivation for mentoring
3. Pair shows compatibility
4. Pair has helpful, supportive interactions
5. Pair shows reciprocity and similar perceptions of mentoring interactions
6. Mentor informs about university resources for teaching and professional development
7. Mentee follows through on utilizing resources and professional development opportunities
8. Pair interacts to improve teaching of mentee
9. Mentee eventually shows progress in comfort level and competence in new position
10. Mentor evidence own benefits from mentoring

Q: Does the mentoring relationship have a certain trajectory or timeline?

A: The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh provides a helpful explanation of the common phases and content of those phases in the following graph:

Phase	Description
Building Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mentor and mentee become acquainted and informally clarify their common interests, shared values, and professional goals -Mentoring interaction fosters mutual interest and enthusiasm -Mentor and mentee establish rapport & trust with each other -Mentee imagines mentor will support him/her in a significant way -Mentor begins to visualize mentee as coachable, enjoyable to work with, someone with potential
Developing Common Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mentor and mentee communicate initial expectations and agree upon some common procedures and expectations as a starting point -Goals and expected outcomes of the mentoring

	relationship are developed by the mentor and mentee together
Developing Mentee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gradually, needs are fulfilled. Objectives are met. Professional growth takes place. New challenges are presented and achieved -Both parties serve their maximum range of functions in their roles -Expectations are reinforced or modified through discovery of the real value of the relationship -Satisfaction and mutual exchange are at their peak -Mutual confidence develops between the mentor and mentee
Ending Formal Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The relationship and its functions change due to personal or organizational shifts -There is a sense of loss, combined with excitement about new directions -Contact frequency decreases -Since developmental tasks have changed for both parties, the relationship either evolves a new form or dissolves -The individuals redefine their relationship as colleagues, peers, and/or friends

Section 4 For the Mentee: Questions about the mentee’s role and best practices

Q: Is it imperative that I have a mentor?

A: While it is not required, all newly-appointed instructors are strongly encouraged to ask for a mentor.

Q: What are some characteristics of successful mentees?

A: Bruce Bartlett identifies the following characteristics of a successful mentee as identified by mentors

- sensitive to the mentor’s needs
- willing to learn about the new position, best practices, the department, etc.
- have a positive attitude
- show a capacity for professional leadership
- committed and able to show initiative

- have a capacity for joint decision making

Q: Are there guidelines for the mentees?

A: *The following guidelines, adapted from various university mentor programs, may be helpful*

Guidelines for Mentees

- Prioritize your needs and focus on them during each meeting.
- Prior to your first meeting with your mentor, consider your short term, immediate, and longer-term goals. For example, what upcoming lessons concern you, what difficulties are you having getting your bearings and what classes would you like to teach in future semesters.
- Allow your mentor to get to know you by discussing your experience, your professional vision or life goals. Explain the vision of your first few semesters teaching at the institution.
- Balance work and other responsibilities and set priorities.
- Challenge yourself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives.
- Set up regularly scheduled meetings with your mentor. Establish a mutually agreed upon time and commit to the relationships.
- Communicate regularly with your mentor to assure that your needs are met and to extend consideration to your mentor of his/her time.
- Ask about available resources for teaching and professional development.
- Ask to be introduced to the administrators in your department or college, who can assist you with the maze of administrative tasks and paperwork necessary to life on campus.
- Ask about the people serving on various committees in your department, particularly your STF representatives.
- Ask about your mentor's own educational, career choices and goals.
- Do not let too much time go by without seeing your mentor. Keep the relationship active.

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh offers the following checklist for mentors which might be helpful in your attempt to meet the relationship guidelines.

Mentee Checklist

Check	Activities
	Respond to mentor's request to meet
	Share information about your background, your needs and values, and your aspirations
	Informally clarify common interests, shared work values
	Discuss goals to achieve your needs and aspirations
	Set goals for yourself, and follow through on them. Don't be afraid to raise your expectations or redefine your goals as part of the ongoing process
	With your mentor, decide what steps will need to be taken to achieve your goals

	Remember to both talk and listen
	Be receptive to feedback and coaching Feedback should be perceived as an opportunity for growth
	Pay attention to changes in your life or attitudes that may call for updating your goals and expected outcomes

Q: What should I bring to my mentor relationship?

A: Preparation and your background experience. According to Grossman and Davis, “teachers who entered the classroom feeling more prepared were likely to spend more time with their mentor.”

- Prepared teachers focus more on instruction
- Prepared teachers get more out of mentorship
- Prepared teachers tend to spend less time on emotional support and basic classroom management skills and more time improving content knowledge and instructional skills
- Prepared teachers are more aware of their needs and how their mentors can help

In conclusion, the department is excited to implement the new mentorship program. We believe the program will make the department an exciting and gratifying place for new teachers, while bringing out the best in them. By offering sufficient support and guidance we are confident we can retain quality teachers and strengthen the department community by fostering fruitful relationships. We hope these guidelines will help everyone involved have a rewarding mentoring experience.

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Works Cited

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Description: *Anderson and Shannon argue that effective mentoring programs must be grounded on a carefully articulated approach to mentoring which would include a definition of the mentoring relationship, the essential functions of the mentor role, the activities through which selected mentoring functions will be expressed, and the dispositions that mentors must exhibit if they are to carry out requisite mentoring functions and activities.*

Barnett, Bruce. "Mentoring for Practising and Aspiring School Leaders: The 'SAGE' Model." APC Monographs. (2001). <http://research.acer.edu.au/apc_monographs/6>.

Description: *A great resource on the challenges of mentoring including the difficulty developing trusting relationships, finding time for the relationship, providing and accepting feedback, taking risks to try out new ideas, and assessing the progress and outcomes of the relationship.*

Boyle, Peg, and Bob Boice. "Systematic Mentoring from New Faculty Teaching and Graduate Teaching Assistants." *Innovative Higher Education* 22.3 (1998): 157-59.

Description: *Two case studies looked at in depth to come up with a replicable model for systematic mentoring with a clear picture of the styles and skills of effective mentors. Dated but informative.*

Grossman, Pam, and Emily Davis. "Mentoring That Fits." *Educational Leadership* 69.8 (2012): 54-57.

Description: *This article focuses on best mentoring practices for veteran teachers mentoring new elementary school teachers and is full of insightful suggestions about mentoring teachers in general, such as the less prepared a new teacher feels the more time she or he will want to spend on emotional support rather than on instructional matters.*

Haines, Stuart T, “The Mentor-Protégé Relationship” *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 2003; 67 (3) Article 82.

Description: *Champions effective mentoring that is grounded in social and invitational learning theories. Haines provides helpful graphs for conceptualizing mentoring, particularly the traits of the effective mentor and mentee. For a glimpse at some of these graphs, please see the FAQ’s about mentoring?*

Jacobi, Maryann, “Mentoring and Undergraduate Academic Success: A Literature Review” *Review of Educational Research* 61.4 (1991): 505-532

Description: *While this comprehensive literature review is dated it provides a time tested foundation for the elements of successful mentoring programs and relationships. Jacobi’s summary of the elements of mentoring where all the literature is in agreement is invaluable and has been drawn from ever since. Some of those agreed upon elements are the helpful foundation of the relationship, the reciprocity of the relationship, and the personal nature of the relationship.*

Jipson, Janice, and Nicholas Paley. “Because No One Gets There Alone: Collaboration as Co-Mentoring.” *Theory into Practice* 39.1 (2000): 36-42.

Description: *Two professors reflect on the support they gave each other in their first professional year and come up with the following thesis: “We see our collaborations as a*

kind of co-mentoring--a sometimes simultaneous, sometimes alternate mentoring practice. In its enactment, this co-mentoring practice creates a creative, democratic space for the formation of insights and understandings that help us search for and choose ourselves in the situation."

Kartje, V Jean "O Mentor! My Mentor!" *Peabody Journal of Education*. 70.1 *Mentors and Mentoring* (1996): 114-125.

Description: *Comments on the mentor-protégé relationships in colleges and universities in the United States. Kartje focuses on the problems involved in defining mentoring, such as the different disciplines (business, education) and their different goals in researching and applying mentoring. She also provides an analysis of interviews and some perspectives on different areas of research.*

Kram, Kathy E. "Improving the Mentoring Process." *Training & Development Journal*. 39.4 (1985): 40-43.

Description: *Kram argues for a no-nonsense approach to mentoring that gets around the usual interpersonal and organizational problems that inhibit mentoring. This is worth a look for its contrarian view as she claims that the risks of formal mentoring programs outweigh their potential. While many of her risk factors do not fit the academic context as much as the business world, some of her warnings about the unreached potential of mentoring programs due to ill-defined purpose, for instance, should be heeded.*

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Description: *A strong argument for the benefits of mentoring with an emphasis on how mentoring programs empower departments, mentees and mentors.*

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Description: *This article examines mentoring as an instructional method and explore its potential for performance improvement. Highlights include key individuals and roles in mentoring; examples of potential mentor relationships; mentoring needs; and methods of mentoring, including traditional, peer, and team mentoring.*

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Queralt, M. “The Role of the Mentor in the Career Development of University Faculty.” Paper. *Annual Meeting of the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors*. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 216 614, 1982. MF01-PC02.

Description: *A self-reporting mail questionnaire of over 250 people finds that academics with mentors showed significantly higher levels of career development than those without mentors in terms of publication record, grant record, leadership record, academic rank,*

yearly gross income from professional activities, job satisfaction, and career development satisfaction.

Reich, Murray H. "The Mentor Connection." *Personnel* 63.2 (1986): 50-56.

Description: *This article focuses on the nature and extent of the relationship between female protégés and their mentors. Results of a study of male executives concerning the nature of mentor assistance, benefits and drawbacks of the mentor relationship, the special nature of women's mentoring, and mentoring contributions to career advancement are reported.*

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Description: *Helpful information about mentoring programs for instructors teaching online course at community colleges.*

Tondeur, Jo, et al. "Preparing Pre-Service Teachers To Integrate Technology in Education: A Synthesis of Qualitative Evidence." *Computers & Education* 59.1 (2012): 134-44.

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Description: *A great faculty mentor plan from University of Rhode Island*