Academic Women’s Mentoring Programme

Guide to Mentoring

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1. Background to the Academic Women’s Mentoring Programme

Internationally it is well known that women are under-represented in senior academic positions. For example, Robinson (2006) surveyed academic staff in universities in Australia, Canada, the UK and the US, and found that women constituted a minority of full-time academic staff (ranging between 31% in Canada to 39% in the US), and they were unevenly distributed within academic hierarchies - women were mainly concentrated at the lower-end and in part-time and casual positions.

In New Zealand, as elsewhere, there has been a serious under-representation of women in senior academic positions. As Table 1 shows, on average only 22% of senior academic staff are female with a range from 16% (Lincoln) to 29% (Waikato University). Although numbers of women in senior positions have increased at the University of Otago, it slipped a ranking to be seventh out of the eight universities.

Table 1: Women in senior academic positions in within New Zealand Universities (adapted from Human Rights Commission, 2010 and 2008). Note that the numbers are for 2010 with 2008 census figures in brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Women Profs</th>
<th>Women Assoc Profs</th>
<th>Female % of Senior Academic Staff</th>
<th>Percentage Change from 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waikato</td>
<td>23 (17)</td>
<td>25 (18)</td>
<td>29 (22)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUT</td>
<td>11 (7)</td>
<td>18 (17)</td>
<td>25 (27)</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>23 (20)</td>
<td>29 (30)</td>
<td>23 (24)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massey</td>
<td>24 (19)</td>
<td>39 (28)</td>
<td>23 (19)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>42 (38)</td>
<td>68 (65)</td>
<td>22 (21)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>17 (5)</td>
<td>31 (16)</td>
<td>22 (12)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago</td>
<td>32 (25)</td>
<td>53 (28)</td>
<td>21 (16)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
<td>6 (3)</td>
<td>16 (10)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>176 (134)</td>
<td>269 (205)</td>
<td>22 (19)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons for the lack of women in senior academic positions are varied, but may include: career paths that may be different to men (Quinlan 1999); greater isolation, higher levels of stress and a lower sense of self confidence (Vasil, 1996); more difficulty in establishing relationships with colleagues and the feeling of being an ‘outsider’ (Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988 cited in Quinlan 1999); and a lack
of networking opportunities and less progress in research careers compared to male counterparts (Gardiner et al., 2007).

Given the extensive research on barrier to the advancement of women, many institutions have opted to instigate mentoring programmes – both formal and informal. For example, at Flinders University, Australia, a formal mentoring programme has been in place since 1998. Research into the effectiveness of the programme over six years (1998-2004) found that compared to a control group, mentees had a higher rate of promotion, did better on research grant income, had a higher publication rate, had higher perceptions of their capacity as an academic and had reduced concerns about research (Gardiner 2005). However this longitudinal study also found that mentoring had only a minimal impact on job and career satisfaction. Despite this mentees reported that the mentoring process was overwhelmingly positive and benefits listed included promotions, increased confidence, improved networking and having someone to talk to about their career.

Senior management at the University of Otago have long been concerned about the lack of women in senior positions. In 2001, Otago committed itself to “developing a University mentoring programme for academic staff women” in its “Statement of Objectives 2001 to 2003.” Subsequently the Staffing Advisory Committee asked the Staff Women’s Caucus to research the mentoring needs of academic women. This was done via a questionnaire and a meeting. The survey showed that 60% of academic women wanted the kind of additional support that a mentoring programme could provide. They wanted access to the experience and wisdom of more senior colleagues (male or female) to discuss career planning, to establish contacts and networks, to gain knowledge of the wider university and to address the kinds of issues which tend to affect women in particular, such as balancing work and private life.

Subsequent to the survey, a formal mentoring programme was trialled in 2002. Given the very positive evaluation, the programme continued and indeed has expanded over the years. In early 2010 about 140 participants were involved, with about 60 mentors and 80 mentees. The acting coordinator of the programme is Jenny McDonald from HEDC (jenny.mcdonald@otago.ac.nz).

2. Benefits of Mentoring

Mentees
- become aware of institutional norms and cultures
- can adapt to changing circumstances and assimilate new conditions created by change
can reflect on their professional roles and responsibilities, and perhaps see them in a new way
• can clarify their focus or refocus their direction
• can identify strategies for managing and completing specific academic tasks
• can decrease their concerns or worries about research – gain strategies for completing research related work
• make more realistic judgements of capacity as an academic, and about own achievements
• have an increase in job satisfaction
• can identify ways to access institutional support systems
• mentoring leads to an increase in the number of women applying for and succeeding in gaining grants and promotion

Mentors
• gain insight into pressures or issues faced by new academics
• build new professional relationships across the university
• gain personal satisfaction from helping someone else
• re-evaluate own approaches to prioritisation and goal setting
• help to define own goals and career plans more clearly

(Bright and Bond, 2004)

3. What is Mentoring?

• Mentoring is a sustained relationship, not one-off or casual.
• A more experienced partner assists with the professional development of a less experienced colleague, identifying both strengths and weaknesses.
• The mentor can also provide emotional and psychological support to another but in the context of a work relationship.
• Mentoring also provides an opportunity for role modelling for the less experienced partner.

Exercise: Clarifying roles and expectations

What does mentoring involve?
And what does it not involve?
Key Roles of an Academic Mentor

Mentoring works by way of role modelling, listening, reflecting, advising and coaching. The key roles are:

- Academic advisor
- Career guide
- Facilitator
- Confidant(e)
- Cultural adviser

Qualities of successful mentors

- Good listener
- Discreet
- People-oriented, sensitive to needs of others
- Developmentally minded
- Respects self and others
- Willing to share
- Flexible
- Has innate desire to help others
- Tolerates difference
- Sets challenges clearly
- Encourages risk
- Accepts failure
- Has a sense of humour

Qualities of successful mentees

- Committed to mentoring programme
- Independent - ability to take responsibility for self
- Willing to undertake personal professional growth
- With potential to perform at one or more levels above present position
- Confident and intelligent
- Creative
- Able to take risks
- Keen on new challenges
- Receptive to feedback and coaching
4. Problems Associated with Mentoring

Factors that can jeopardize the effectiveness of mentoring schemes include:

- A state of dependency of the mentee on the mentor (Messervy, 1989)
- Poor matching and/or relationship problems (Johnsrud & Wunsch, 1991)
- Time pressures on mentors who are already heavily burdened (Quinlan, 1999)
- Problems arising from the multiple roles that the mentor is likely to assume with the mentee, e.g. direct supervision, or decision making that affects the mentee directly in some capacity
- Misunderstandings about the role of mentors, mentees and mentoring
- Breakdowns in confidentiality and ethics (Bright and Bond, 2004; Harper and Sawicka, 2001).

By having clear expectations of the roles and responsibilities of the mentors and mentees, the risk of problems can be reduced.

5. Phases of a Mentoring Relationship

**INTRODUCTION/INITIATION**
Beginning to explore relationship possibilities
Identifying expectations, ground-rules and objectives

**CULTIVATION/TESTING**
Checking out the parameters of the relationship – recognising what is possible and what is not – being realistic

**DEVELOPMENT**
Building the relationship, recognizing its strengths, establishing trust, sharing achievements

**SEPARATION**
Preparing to end formal mentoring

**REDEFINITION**
Another stage – friendship
(Adapted from Chesterman, 2001)
6. Skills Development

- Generous listening
  - Active vs passive listening
    - Am I really listening to this person, or am I thinking about other things?
    - Am I really listening to this person, or am I already preparing a defence or rebuttal or contradiction of what they are talking about?
  - Understanding
    - Am I understanding what they are saying? Should I check for meaning with this person by saying something like “Could I just check out with you that you said...” or perhaps, “I thought you said.... did you really mean that?”
  - Possibilities
    - Am I listening for possibilities? Am I thinking of opportunities for action and commitment? Am I aware of opportunities to share responsibility and partnership?
  - Questioning (open/closed)
    - Am I asking sensible and appropriate questions? Do I know the difference between open and closed questions, and can I use them appropriately?
      
      | Closed | Open                  |
      |--------|-----------------------|
      | Right/wrong | ............................What could make that possible? |
      | Agree/disagree | ............................What could that allow us to do? |
      | Good/bad | ............................What could that idea lead to? |
      | Either/Or | ............................Say more about that.... |
      | Realistic/unrealistic | ............................What do you see that I don’t see? |
  - Emotional subtext
    - Am I paying sufficient attention to the emotional subtext of the discussion?
  - Body language
    - Is my body language congruent with active listening – for example, am I facing the person? Do I make sufficient eye-contact? Am I exhibiting any physical irritation or non-attendance, like tapping a finger, glancing at my watch?
  - Sensitivity
• Am I sensitive to the level of self-confidence and self-image when I give feedback?
  — Feedback on behaviour (not person)
  • Do I give feedback about the behaviour, which can be changed, rather than the person?
  — Feedback from own point of view
  • Do I give feedback from my point of view rather than making global statements e.g. “I thought that doing X was counterproductive…” rather than “Doing X was stupid”

• **Giving helpful feedback**
  — Be realistic
    • Direct your comments towards matters on which the person can act
  — Be specific
    • Give sufficient information and examples to pinpoint what you are referring to
  — Be sensitive to the person’s goals
    • Link your comments with their intentions and listen carefully to what they have to say
  — Be timely
    • Respond promptly when your feedback is requested
  — Be consciously non-judgemental
    • Give your personal views but don’t act as an authority
  — Be direct
    • Say what you mean
  — Be positive
    • Don’t just focus on what you react to negatively

**Skills Development: Receiving Feedback**

  — Be explicit
    • Make it clear what kind of feedback you are seeking
  — Be attentive
    • Focus on what the person wants you to know, not on what you would like to hear
  — Be aware
    • If the other person’s point of view is different to your own, don’t dismiss it
— Be silent
  • Don’t begin to frame a response, even in your own mind, until you have listened carefully to what has been said and have considered the implications
7. Mentoring Guidelines

1. Mentoring should be treated as a natural and integral part of personal and professional development. Mentoring is not a sign of weakness or an activity undertaken simply to redress a deficiency.

2. There should be no hidden agendas. The effectiveness of mentoring depends upon the willingness of the mentor and mentee to engage in open dialogue about the strengths, weaknesses, and goals of the mentee. The relationship must be based on mutual trust.

3. Mentorship should be treated as a two-way process, which brings about change and development in both the mentor and mentee. This is analogous to the teacher who learns from her/his students.

4. Mentorship requires a clear understanding by both mentor and mentee of each other’s roles and responsibilities. Initial meetings should clarify mutual expectations. Clutterbuck (1992) identifies the following list as a starting point for developing a contract between mentor and mentee:
   - The mentor will only enquire or intrude into the mentee’s personal life by invitation.
   - Mentors will respect the confidentiality of matters discussed with the mentee.
   - The mentor and mentee will not make excessive demands of each other’s time.
   - The mentee will not use the mentor’s authority without the mentor’s consent.
   - The mentor will assist the mentee in achieving her objectives, but will encourage the mentee to make decisions for herself.

5. Mentorship should involve periodic reviews to ensure that the relationship is still useful or productive and whether a new focus is needed. The relationship should also recognize the point of separation when the mentee no longer seeks support. It is important to identify when a relationship is not productive and allow for separation without negativity.

6. Mentors should recognize the appropriate form of mentoring activity for assisting mentees: they need to know when to listen and when to advise, when to intervene and when to stand back, when to coach and when to challenge, and when to facilitate and when to encourage self-assessment.

7. When working with new staff, mentors should consider ways of fostering the mentee’s visibility while protecting the mentee from wide-scale involvement in too many academic, administrative and professional activities.

8. Lastly, mentors should resist the temptation to become involved in matters for which they have insufficient expertise;
an effective mentor is one who knows when to be involved and when to direct the mentee to other sources.

(Hall et al., 1995)
8. Ground Rules/ Mentoring Agreement

At the outset of the mentoring relationship it is a good idea to attempt to define your expectations of each other and of the programme, and to establish an agreement to set the parameters for the relationship. As the relationship develops expectations may change, but the basic principles of the agreement should remain. The following are some suggestions as to what to include:

1. Agreed overall objectives

2. Agreed boundaries of the relationship
   a. Definition/limitation of areas both parties are prepared to discuss
   b. Duration of the relationship

3. Agreed timetable and format for meetings
   • Frequency
   • Duration
   • Time of day
   • Location
   • Who initiates meetings?

4. Agreed process for cancelling or postponing meetings

5. Agreed commitment to confidentiality

6. Agreement to seek help from the coordinator should problems arise

7. Agreement to accept a withdrawal from the programme by either party before the end of the programme. This is a no-fault agreement.

8. Agreement that the mentoring relationship does terminate at the end of the programme and that the mentor ceases to have any further obligation to the mentee.
Depending on the type of relationship sought, there may be a level of formality that can benefit from more formal agreements, such as illustrated on the next few pages. However, for others, the relationship is seen as more of a supportive sounding board, with no formal records of meetings and no set agenda. Either option, or a combined approach is fine; it is up to the individuals to determine what is appropriate. **Mentoring Agreement**

To be compiled by Mentee and Mentor.

**Name of Mentee:**
_______________________________________________

Position and work area:
______________________________________________

Email:_________________________________________ Ext: _____________

**Name of Mentor:**
_______________________________________________

Position and work area:
______________________________________________

Email:_________________________________________ Ext: _____________

**Goals of Mentoring:**

1. ________________________________________________________________
To be achieved by: _______________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________
To be achieved by: _______________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________
To be achieved by: ______________________________

*Meetings will be:*  ______________________________ time
                        ______________________________ place
                        ______________________________ frequency

Dates set:  ______________________________
Record of Mentoring

Mentees: You may find this and the Progress Form (next page) helpful as a way of recording what is discussed at meetings. Please photocopy (or request digital copy).

Name of Mentee:
____________________________________________________

Date: ________________

• Issues raised at meeting:
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

• ‘Homework’:
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

To be done by (date): ________________

Date of next meeting: ________________
**Mentoring Programme**

**Progress Form**

Name of Mentee: _________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________

Goal achieved by: _________________________________________

Development Goal: _______________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Action steps</strong></th>
<th><strong>Target date</strong></th>
<th><strong>Resources required</strong></th>
<th><strong>Status/Progress Comments</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
9. Ongoing Support

For assistance with mentoring contact Jenny McDonald at HEDC:
Phone: 479-7705 and Email: jenny.mcdonald@otago.ac.nz

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Philippa Bright and Carol Bond for the use of their collection of resource materials on mentoring.

References