

Center for the Advancement of Staff and Student Learning (CASSL)

Innovation Grant Report

Mentoring Relationships: Increasing Teaching Effectiveness

and Leadership Development

for Cosumnes River College Faculty

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This project explored aspects of the scholarship of teaching and learning through interpersonal mentor relationships. Utilizing strategies both inside and outside the classroom that increase student success, mentor relationships can influence faculty awareness of best teaching practices and classroom management techniques.

Mentor relationships may result in processes that facilitate educational equity and cultural competence. Through researching mentor relationships at CRC the results can be disseminated to the Academic Senate and CRC management to increase the effectiveness of faculty leadership professional development and FACTS. FACTS stands for faculty access to communication on teaching/learning and student services. This is a formal professional development program for new faculty and staff.

This project supports the following college goals of teaching and learning effectiveness as well as organizational effectiveness.

The Issue:

Mentoring relationships have been touted as a teaching and professional development method to cultivate new faculty and faculty campus leaders. This research explored informal and formal mentoring relationships at CRC.

The research:

A brief literature review of 10 sources includes pivotal research on mentoring in community colleges. A mentoring survey was administered to current new faculty participating in the mentoring program at CRC as well as members of the Academic Senate. The Mentoring and Communication Support 15-question Likert Scale was created by Hill, Bahniuk, Dobos, and Rouner (1989).

Hill et al. reported a Cronbach alpha of .75 to .89 for management respondents and .76-.84 for a general population. The analysis for this research will report averages per item. The convenient sample was chosen to analyze new faculty member's perception of mentoring and

faculty in leadership positions perception of mentoring. A comparison of item averages will be made between new faculty and faculty in the Academic Senate.

Anticipated Outcomes:

An understanding of faculty perception of mentoring will help to assess the mentoring program at CRC and mentoring relationships at CRC after formal mentor relationships have terminated. The results will confirm or negate mentoring relationships as an effective strategy to develop quality instructors and campus faculty leaders. This research adds to what is known about the effectiveness of the formal mentor program at CRC (FACTS), informal mentoring and the long term effects of mentoring on faculty leaders at CRC.

There is a direct and indirect impact of this research. The direct impact is in faculty's application of lessons learned from their mentor. The indirect impact is in faculty maximizing the mentor relationships established by contract, but also encouraged through the organizational culture of professional development. The organizational goal of teaching and learning effectiveness is addressed partially through mentoring relationships.

Dissemination plan:

The results will be shared with the president of the Academic Senate and disseminated through CASSL reports. The researcher of this report would be available to share or present the findings from this research during flex or future CASSL events.

Mentor Relationships in Community Colleges:

Academic literature exists on mentor relationships in community colleges. This report includes and analyzes only 10 sources relevant to mentor relationships in community colleges. Currently the majority of literature on mentoring in community colleges focuses on mentoring midlevel and senior level administrators. A mentorship relationship is an active process occurring between two individuals which is directed toward the professional advancement and personal growth of a less experienced individual. A mentor is generally a more experienced

person who commits time, energy and expertise to a person less experienced. A mentor is often seen as a leader.

Community college faculty leaders can be seen in informal and formal positions (Guy, 2006; O'Banion, 2006). Romero (2004) questions who will lead community colleges, but opines that community colleges of the 21st century are demanding more agile leaders with the ability to favor a more collaborative style. This demand includes experienced faculty leaders needed to mentor new faculty members to teaching effectiveness and organizational success.

Literature analyzing the benefits of creating effective teachers through mentor relationships has been explored, but should be expanded as the conversation of accountability in community college instruction continues. Mentor relationships are one method of professional development in creating more effective instructors in community colleges. Sydow (2000) found that long term investment in professional development was needed to see real dividends in teaching and learning. If mentor relationships are going to work there must be a real commitment to the structure of programs and the outcomes intended.

Research exists that supports the value of mentoring, however, Hopkins and Grigoriu (2005) assert that little research exists that informs colleges of the sorts of programs to offer faculty and staff. Their research found that mentor programs should maintain program informality with strong institutional support, build on relationships of trust, and increase awareness of activities that promote professional development. Additionally, mentees wanted mentors who would challenge them professionally and meet with them on a regular basis.

Research assessing the components of mentor relationships examines the traditional model (Bennetts, 2002; Chandler, 1996), perceptions of benefits (Campbell, 2000; Galbraith & James, 2004; Ignash, 2007) and opportunities and challenges (Barnett, 2008; Shore, Toyokawa & Anderson, 2008). This research opposes that there is a one size fits all approach to mentoring. Mentoring can be formal and informal. Formal relationships are often designed by the institution and informal relationships are generally voluntary by the members that form the relationships.

Addressing mentoring faculty for success, Wasburn and LaLopa (2003) evaluated a mentoring program at Purdue University. Based on their evaluation, they made recommendations applicable to four-year colleges as well as community colleges. Their recommendations include: conducting an orientation for mentors, giving clear guidelines of expectations in terms of quality and quantity of interaction, broaden criteria used to match mentor and protégés to include such factors as personality and outside interests, encourage mentor and protégés to enter into a contract of expectations, and add group sessions to the mentor program to encourage a network of mentor relationships.

Findings:

There are currently 5 new faculty members who are participating in the FACTS program at CRC. Each of the faculty members had been assigned an experienced faculty member to mentor them during the fall 2009-spring 2010 semesters. Second year faculty members were invited to participate in FACTS over the fall 2009-spring 2010 semesters. Thirteen additional new or second year faculty and staff members were invited to participate in FACTS, but were not assigned a mentor.

For this CASSL grant project, the Mentoring and Communication Support Scale (Hill, Bahniuk, Dobos, & Rouner, 1989) was distributed at the last FACTS meeting in the spring 2010 semester where there were 9 individuals in attendance. Seven FACTS participants or mentors completed the survey at this meeting.

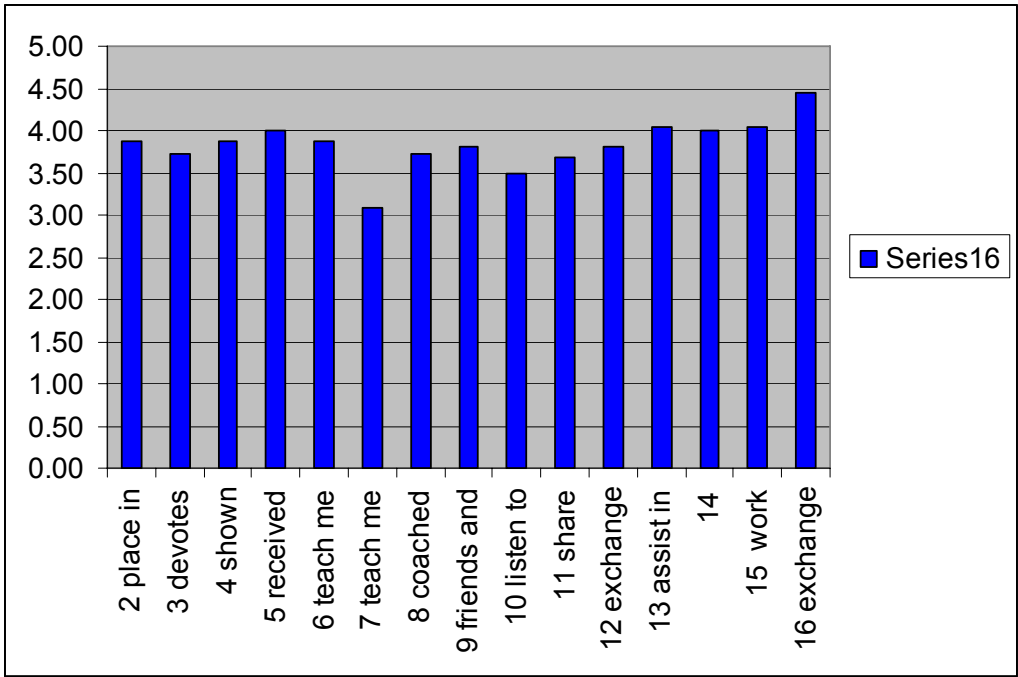
Academic Senators were also asked to complete the survey. The survey was distributed at the last Academic Senate meeting of the spring 2010 semester. Eleven Academic Senators completed the survey during this meeting. Four additional surveys were returned via interoffice mail. A total of 22 individuals completed the survey. Surveys were intentionally not sent via email as this project was to be conducted in the final meeting for FACTS and the last meeting of the Academic Senate.

The only demographic question asked in the survey was for the respondent to identify whether they were a FACTS participant, new faculty member not participating in FACTS, Academic Senator mentoring in FACTS, or an Academic Senator. No other demographic information was collected.

Eleven individuals who completed the survey were Academic Senators. Three surveys were completed by Academic Senators serving as mentors in FACTS. One person reported that they were a faculty member mentoring in FACTS. Seven new faculty members participating in FACTS completed the survey.

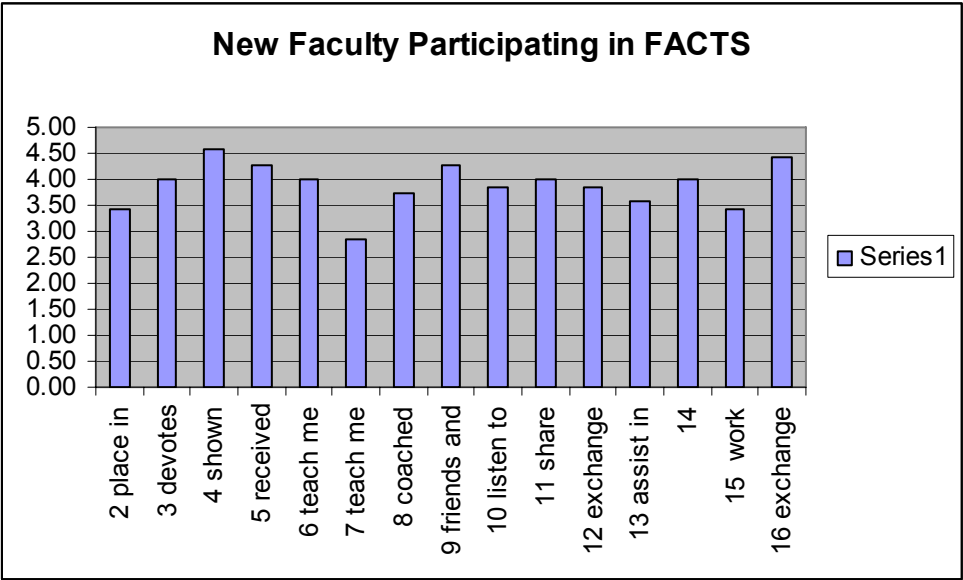
The survey was a 15 item Likert scale measuring Mentoring and Communication support. The findings are presented by reporting averages from each item in aggregate and then comparing the item averages by disaggregating groups. When analyzing the average item scores in aggregate, Item 16 which indicated that respondents were able to exchange ideas with colleagues had the highest average at 4.45. The lowest average item was question 7 which asked respondents to report whether they had had a colleague teach them strategies for influencing group or departmental meetings. The average for this item was 3.09. No item averaged less than 3.09.

Chart 1: Survey Items in Aggregate



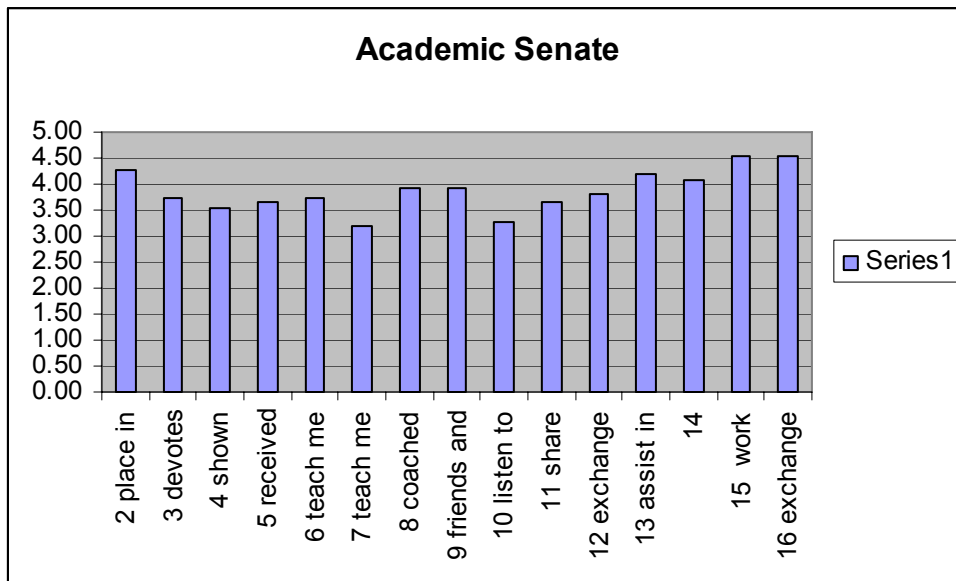
Formal mentoring at CRC is primarily intended for new faculty members. New faculty members participating in FACTS reported the highest average for item 4 which indicates that someone of higher rank or seniority has shown interest in me. The lowest averaged item was item 8 which indicated that the respondent has been coached about department or institutional politics.

Chart 2: New Faculty Participating in FACTS Survey Averages



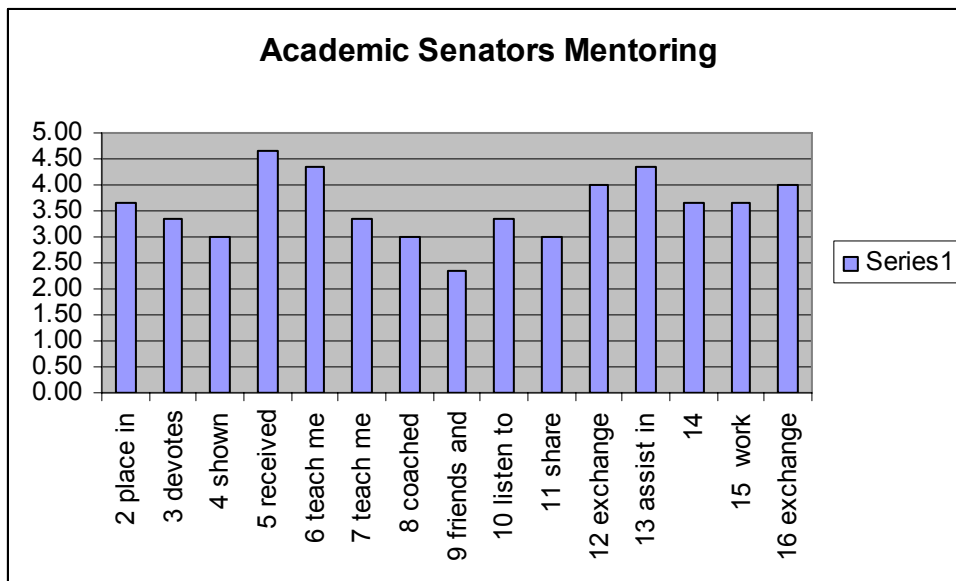
When disaggregating the data and examining Academic Senators, the highest items averages were questions 15 and 16 at 4.55. Question 15 asked respondents to self report that they work jointly on major projects and shared governance activities. Question 16 asked respondents to report if they frequently shared ideas with colleagues. Academic Senators reported as the lowest average item 7. Item 7 indicated whether colleagues had taught the respondent strategies on influencing group or departmental meetings. No item had an average below 3.18.

Chart 3: Academic Senate Survey Averages



Academic Senators mentoring in FACTS reported the highest average of 4.67 in question 5. Question 5 asked respondents if they had received special attention from someone of higher position or seniority. Items 4, 8 and 11 had the lowest averages of 3.00. Item 4 asked respondents if someone of higher rank or seniority had shown interest in me and my career. Item 8 asked if the respondent had been coached about department or institutional politics and Item 11 indicated whether respondent colleagues had shared confidences with each other.

Chart 4: Academic Senators Mentoring in FACTS



The last demographic category, faculty members mentoring in FACTS only had one respondent. The highest scores 5.0 were on items 16 and 13 and the lowest items were 2, 3, 6, 7 and 12 at 3.0.

Item 17 analysis: Qualitative Data

Item 17 was an open ended question asking respondents to describe their mentoring experience with FACTS or at Cosumnes River College. The data from this question was completed by a content analysis of the data. Direct quotes are included where relevant.

New faculty participating in FACTS indicated that their mentors were personable and informative, but many indicated that they did not see their mentor that often. One new faculty member indicated that FACTS has been consistently the most important part of their

acculturation to the college campus, faculty, administration and most importantly students. In particular the Academic Senate's President Marjorie Duffy was commended as a source of inspiration. New faculty members requested that FACTS and FACTS presenters over explain acronyms and concepts of how things work on campus because new faculty members have many challenges and distractions. Most new faculty members enjoyed the interactions with colleagues. One new faculty member specifically stated, "The mentoring process in its "official" sense was not helpful due to what appeared to be political conflicts of interest with my department. It would have been good to have someone outside of the FTE grab pool as a mentor in these times."

Academic Senators overall commented that they are at a stage in their career that they don't get mentored often. One Academic Senator reported, "I have observed the efficacy of mentoring at CRC to be "personality driven" rather than "process driven". Individual choices aside where mentoring at CRC is effective seems to be a matter of happenstance." Some senators indicated mentoring more than one individual. This is both in a formal and informal sense. One Academic Senator indicated that they found their own mentor.

An Academic Senator who is serving as a mentor in FACTS indicated that they had a mentor as a new faculty member and that was helpful. They are now serving as a mentor. Many of the comments were directed at the lack of formality of mentoring at CRC. Some respondents indicated a need for more direction in mentoring programs or what occurs beyond the first year as a faculty member. One new faculty member indicated a desire for mentoring after the first year, but was unsure if they could continue the mentoring relationship established through FACTS or seek another mentor.

Recommendations:

Mentor relationships are interpersonal relationships that should consider the individuals in the relationship and the anticipated outcomes. Most new faculty found benefit in FACTS and the mentor relationships established. However, as Wasburn and LaLopa (2003) reported and the

findings of this project suggest, criteria used to match mentors and protégés should be broadened. This may address a lack of rapport or as indicated by a new faculty member the politics of a mentor matching.

Academic Senators indicated that they are mostly serving as mentors and do not currently have a mentor. Guy (2006) researched informal faculty leaders and suggested the need for mentors at all levels of the institution to continue to develop faculty leaders considering administrative positions or informal leadership positions. Wasburn and LaLopa (2003) suggest conducting an orientation for formal mentor programs, but also encouraged mentors and protégés to enter into a contract of expectations. This would be helpful for formal mentor relationships, but informal mentor relationships should be encouraged at CRC as well. Mentor relationships are underutilized at CRC as there is a wealth of knowledge and experienced faculty who might benefit from informal mentor relationships.

A particular emphasis should be taken in inviting new faculty and tenure track faculty to CASSL events and professional development offerings. A few new faculty requested extending mentor relationships or professional development that still is needed. A couple of new faculty members particularly focused on the need for classroom instruction techniques as well as classroom management strategies. Mentoring new faculty and focusing on developing faculty leaders should be continued through individual professional development plans. Professional development plans at CRC are conducted in faculty self studies and flex activities. New faculty members have asked for help in writing their self study. Perhaps this training can be completed by LRCFT representatives or as a CASSL workshop.

Mentoring beyond FACTS was described as happenstance by an Academic Senator and personality driven. Mentoring is underutilized by CRC. More should be done to formalize our mentoring processes and encourage participation in both formal and informal mentoring relationships. Mentoring serves as a viable professional development strategy to further the quality of faculty at CRC and develop leaders on the campus. Survey data reported that most

respondents reported that they work jointly on major projects and shared governance activities with colleagues and that they freely exchanged ideas with colleagues.

I personally participated as a FACTS mentor this past academic year was given a packet of information on the expectations for FACTS and a list of the meetings. This information should be tailored to CRC as it is an ARC document. The relationship with my mentee has developed over the course of the year, but it has developed based on my interest in mentor relationships as a research topic. I have sought to find common ground with my mentee that I might not have done had I not been studying mentoring. The research supports and I also view mentor relationships as an interpersonal relationship that develops over time.

Mentoring and Communication Support

Mentoring is a communication support system designed to enhance both the individual's and organization's success. Please complete the following scale based on your mentoring experience at CRC or as part of FACTS (Faculty Access to Communication on Teaching/Learning and Student Services).

This survey is being conducted as part of Dr. Colette Harris-Mathews' Innovation Grant from the Center for Staff and Student Learning (CASSL). Your participation is voluntary. Results from the survey will be available in the CASSL and through the Academic Senate leadership.

Instructions: Focus on some specific activities in which you may have participated. For the following situations, please indicate whether or not you have engaged in the following activities. For item one circle the number that best describes you and your association to FACTS. For items 2-16 circle the number that best describes your feelings. Item 17 is an opening ended question describing your mentoring experience with FACTS or at Cosumnes River College.

1. Circle the number that best describes you and your association to FACTS.

5= New Faculty member participating in FACTS
4=New Faculty member not participating in FACTS

3=Faculty member mentoring in FACTS
2=Academic Senate member mentoring in FACTS
1= Member of the Academic Senate

2. Someone of higher rank (or seniority) has placed me in important assignments or positions.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

3. Someone of higher rank (or seniority) frequently devotes extra time and consideration to me.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

4. Someone of higher rank (or seniority) has shown interest in me and my career.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

5. I have received special attention from someone in a higher position (or seniority).

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

6. I have had a colleague teach me the informal rules of Cosumnes River College.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

7. I have had a colleague teach me strategies for influencing group or departmental meetings.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

8. I have been coached about department or institution politics.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

9. My colleagues and I are friends as well as coworkers.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

10. My colleagues and I frequently listen to each other's personal problems.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

11. My colleagues and I share confidences with each other.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

12. My colleagues and I frequently exchange constructive criticism.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

13. My colleagues and I assist each other in accomplishing assigned tasks.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

14. My colleagues and I frequently exchange compliments and positive evaluations.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

15. I work jointly on major projects or shared governance activities with my colleagues.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither

2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

16. I frequently exchange ideas with my colleagues.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neither
2=Disagree
1=Strongly disagree

17. Please describe your mentoring experience with FACTS or at Cosumnes River College.

You may use the bottom of this page and the back side of this survey for your response.

Please fill out the survey and return it to Colette L. Harris-Mathews today or return via interoffice mail. You may also receive this survey via email, but only fill out one copy of the survey.

Thank you in advance,
Dr. Colette L. Harris-Mathews

Response to Item 17:

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