

CSU EOP Staff Mentoring Resource Booklet

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Faculty Mentor Program
Professor Glenn Omatsu, Coordinator
glenn.omatsu@csun.edu
c/o CSUN Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)
www.csun.edu/eop/fmp_index.html
205 University Hall
Northridge, CA 91330-8366
(818) 677-4151

The Power of Staff Mentors

EOP professional staff know something important about student academic success that high-ranking administrators and faculty on our campuses are just now beginning to grasp. EOP staff know about the power of mentoring.

Today, administrators are scrambling to find ways to increase graduation rates and overcome the need for remediation among freshmen. Thus, they create committees to analyze student support services and the availability of resources. They reorganize advising and counseling. They provide faculty with new resources for classroom instruction. Yet, only recently have high-ranking administrators begun to discover the impact of mentoring on student academic success.

In contrast, **EOP professional staff have known about the power of mentoring for a long time.** Some of our best mentors on campus are found in the ranks of EOP professional staff. Yet, these “academic treasures” at CSU campuses have yet to be discovered by higher administration.

Consider this: For a new student — especially for a student who is the first in their family to go to college — CSU campuses can be exciting but also intimidating places. Our campuses can also be lonely places, especially for the son or daughter of immigrants or a member of a minority community. Even simple things that experienced students take for granted can be challenging for a new student, such as finding classrooms and offices on campus, understanding school policies for registration for classes, and learning the special language of the university such as “syllabus,” “office hours,” “annotations,” and “prerequisites.”

Based on both his own experience as a student and his conversations with staff and students on his campus, CSUN EOP Director José Luis Vargas found that **the single most important factor associated with high retention and graduation rates for low-income, first-generation college students was their ability to find a mentor at CSUN.** Finding a mentor not only helped students to succeed academically but also with career planning and the development of life management skills such as dealing with personal and family problems.

But finding a mentor at a big university is not easy, especially for a first-generation college student. According to prevailing thinking in the university, faculty are supposed to serve as mentors for students. But will a first-generation college student seek out a faculty mentor? A select few do, but most need the help of

others — i.e., other campus mentors — to understand how to navigate the new and unexplored corridors of the university, including developing a relationship with faculty. So where do students find these “other mentors”?

In the late 1960s, when student and community activists established programs like EOP on college campuses, one objective was to increase access to higher education for underrepresented populations such as low-income students. However, equally important was a second objective: that of providing these students with the necessary academic support services, such as mentoring, to enable them to succeed in the university. In other words, mentoring is built into the mission of EOP, and the practice of mentoring is interrelated to the mission of promoting diversity, educational equity, and inclusiveness at our university.

A mentor is defined as a knowledgeable and experienced guide, a trusted ally and advocate, and a caring role model. An effective mentor is respectful, reliable, patient, trustworthy, and a very good listener and communicator. EOP professional staff are among the best mentors at CSU campuses because we understand that our interactions with students are not simply part of our job descriptions. We see our interactions with students are opportunities **to help students discover the potential within themselves to succeed in the university and in life.** EOP staff mentors help to nurture this potential in other students.

According to Dr. Vicki Orazem, Vice Provost of the University of Alaska, mentors nurture the potential in students by **helping them make a self-assessment** of their strengths and weaknesses, by providing them **challenging new situations** to promote growth, and by **offering support** as they take up these new challenges. Mentors can become better mentors by developing deeper awareness of these three critical functions.

The following sections of this booklet cover ways that EOP staff mentors can develop greater consciousness about the mentoring we are already doing and provide suggestions for ways to educate others in CSU about the need to incorporate mentoring into strategic thinking in this period.

You're Serving as an EOP Staff Mentor When . . .

You help your students achieve the potential within themselves that is hidden to others — and perhaps even to the students themselves.

You share stories with students about your own educational career and the ways you overcame obstacles similar to theirs.

You help students overcome their fear of a professor and help them to ask questions in a class or visit the professor during office hours.

You show a student how you learned time management to succeed when you were a student like them.

You listen to a student describe a personal problem and explore resources at the university to deal with the problem.

You help a new student understand a particularly tough bureaucratic rule or procedure — and you explain it in a way that the student is willing to come back to you to learn about other difficult regulations.

You help a new student understand how to use resources at the university, such as writing labs, tutorial centers, advising offices, and counseling centers.

You know more about a student's academic performance than what they tell you.

Please add your own insights:

Misconceptions about Mentoring

Misconception: In a university, you need to be an older person with gray hair (or no hair) to be a good mentor.

Reality: In a university, mentors can be young or old. Some of the most outstanding mentors of students are fellow students, or Peer Mentors, who have been trained by EOP professional staff.

Misconception: Mentoring only happens one-to-one on a long-term basis.

Reality: At a big university, mentoring occurs in many different ways. Some mentoring relationships are traditional relationships involving a one-to-one setting over a long period of time. But effective mentoring can also occur in a group setting or even through a single encounter with a student. Dr. Gordon Nakagawa urges all of us to see each interaction with students as an opportunity for mentoring and to think about ways to infuse mentoring into our daily work as advisors, tutors and student assistants.

Misconception: Mentoring programs at universities only are for high-achieving students, especially those who are on their way to grad school.

Reality: All college students need mentors, but according to research faculty in universities spend most of their time working with high-achieving students. In the late 1960s, students and community activists created programs like EOP to open opportunities in higher education for low-income, first-generation college students and to provide students with necessary support services such as mentoring to help them succeed academically and serve their communities. Thus, central to the mission of EOP is the practice of mentoring and to ensure that the university meets this responsibility for all of its students.

Misconception: Only the person being mentored benefits from mentoring.

Reality: By definition, mentoring is a reciprocal relationship where both the mentor and mentee learn from each other. True mentors are those who have developed the wisdom to learn from those they mentor.

Misconception: EOP professional staff already have a lot of responsibilities relating to student advising and do not have the time to take on extra responsibilities relating to mentoring.

Reality: Mentoring is not a separate set of activities that is different from advising or other job responsibilities. Mentoring relates to consciousness

about one's work as advisor and trusted ally to students.. Without this consciousness, staff at big universities are perceived by students as bureaucrats focusing on rules, regulations, and procedures. Universities don't need more bureaucrats. Universities do need people who are student-centered and who can see and nurture the potential in others.

Misconception: By calling yourself a "Mentor," you become a mentor.

Reality: Not all university staff who work with students are mentors, even if they have that job title. Mentors are those who have developed consciousness about mentoring and in their interactions with students demonstrate respect, patience, trustworthiness, and strong communication skills, especially listening skills.

Misconception: To become a mentor requires a lot of time and a lot of work.

Reality: Becoming a mentor requires a change in consciousness — i.e., how you think about yourself and how you think about others. Workshops and training sessions can help experienced students to develop this consciousness. Mentoring is not a matter of working harder or longer or adding to your job responsibilities but seeing your work differently.

Misconception: At a large university, one staff mentor can help only a limited number of students. Although a mentor may want to help large numbers of students, the cold reality is that she or he can only work with a select few.

Reality: Each interaction with a student is a mentoring opportunity, even a single encounter with a student. The key is to develop consciousness about the importance of mentoring in your interactions with fellow students and to infuse this consciousness in your daily work as a tutor or advisor. Also, it's important for EOP staff to see themselves as part of a network of other mentors — as part of a Community of Mentors. To effectively help a particular student or a group of students, a staff mentor can draw upon this network or community. Mentoring occurs in a community, not in isolation.

Developing a Mentoring Perspective

Mentoring and EOP: A Shared Commitment

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) involves a large number of people who have different kinds of roles and responsibilities. EOP professional staff provide a range of administrative, advising, and support services. Peer advisors help students access academic resources. Student assistants provide a range of support services in the office and are usually the first office staff that new students encounter. While we may differ in our work and duties, **the one role, responsibility and commitment that all of us share is to serve as mentors to EOP students.**

Although EOP has undergone various changes over the years, one thing that has remained consistent is the emphasis on mentoring. Mentoring is crucial for students' academic success and their development of life management skills. Mentoring is at the heart of the mission of EOP. **As a staff member of EOP, one of your most important roles is to serve as a mentor for EOP students.** Not only are you role models exemplifying what it means to be successful students at CSU campuses, but you are also potential allies and advocates for all students you encounter.

Does being a staff mentor mean that you will have to do mentoring duties in addition to the responsibilities that you already have? No, not at all. **Mentoring is not a separate set of activities** that are different from advising or working as student assistant in the office. Instead, **mentoring involves how you think and feel about students and about yourself.** Most important, mentoring deals with **how you communicate with students** in your role as EOP staff.

Moreover, mentoring does not necessarily mean that you must spend huge amounts of time with individual students; nor does it mean that you will become a mentor for every student that you meet. **What mentoring does mean is that you make every effort to ensure that every contact that you have with a student counts** — that every interaction matters. It's the quality, not necessarily the quantity, of time that you spend with students that sets apart mentoring from other kinds of activities. You can't and won't be able to be a mentor to all students, but you can **invite the possibility** of being a mentor to each student in any contact with them.

In other words, **every time that you encounter a student is a potential opportunity for mentoring.** Mentoring does not require separate meetings where you purposely act as a role model. Think about it: does it make any sense at all to say that you're going to meet for an hour to serve as a "role model" for a student? What makes more sense is to meet for an hour for advising about a student's schedule and also talking to the student about how well that student is doing in classes. **Whatever the setting or reason for meeting a student may be, through your words and actions you have the opportunity to serve as a mentor.**

Mentoring means making a sincere effort to communicate with a student with an open heart and an open mind. But having an open heart and open mind does not guarantee that students will return your good intentions with the same feelings or with gratitude. You will find that it's a lot easier dealing with some students than others. There will be differences in personality, attitudes and values. Sometimes these differences will be obstacles and will seem to get in the way in connecting with a student. But it's vital to remember that just as often, **these differences will be an opportunity to learn about others and about yourself.**

For both the mentee and the mentor, **the mentoring relationship is one of those rare gifts that makes much of what we do in EOP worthwhile and fulfilling.** Mentoring is a **reciprocal relationship**; both the mentor and mentee benefit and learn from each other. As a staff member of EOP, you have the opportunity to make a difference in students' lives by serving as a staff mentor.

We hope that you will welcome this challenge with the same kind of excitement, energy, maturity, and dedication that first brought you to EOP. As a staff mentor, you now have the opportunity to carry on the **legacy of EOP** and to pass this legacy on to the next generation of students.

[Adapted from "Developing a Mentoring Perspective" by Dr. Gordon Nakagawa, CSUN Faculty Mentor Program, 1999]

Mentoring on the Run:

How CSUN Staff and Faculty Are Responding to the Special Challenge of Mentoring at CSUN

“Mentoring on the Run” is a concept coined by Dr. Gordon Nakagawa, CSUN Faculty Mentor Coordinator from 1997-2000, to respond to the challenges facing staff and faculty at our campus. At a series of townhall meetings in 1997 and 1998, Dr. Nakagawa asked several critical questions: How can we mentor, given the realities of a mostly commuter campus and concerns about faculty workload? How can we use existing mentoring resources effectively? How can we increase our institutional commitment to mentoring? Here are some of the gleanings from these meetings:

- At a large institution, mentoring works best when it is infused in everyday faculty and staff interactions with students (i.e., teaching and advising) rather than through formal programs.
- Mentoring can and does occur everyday, in many forms and many ways. Mentoring can take place in brief, not only extended, encounters. Brief contacts may have a powerful impact on students (not only first meetings, but incidental contacts).
- Mentoring often works well when it is done with a purpose: developing a portfolio or research project, pursuing a common interest (ranging from the political to the recreational). Just as often, mentoring without a specific purpose can and does work (e.g., being available as a “sounding board”).
- Mentoring can be encouraged by building “learning communities” within disciplines.
- Issues related to diversity and equity are central for mentoring on our campus. Sometimes diversity is seen as a problem rather than an opportunity for enriching teaching and mentoring.
- In the face of a range of competing demands — workload, budget cuts, RTP process — mentoring (and students) may come to be seen as a burden rather than as central to the mission of education.
- The timing of mentoring opportunities is often crucial: mentoring may follow a developmental arc (e.g., mentoring first-time freshmen may be different from mentoring upper-division majors).
- Students most in need of mentoring are those who “fall between the cracks” (e.g., under-prepared students). In fact, research shows that teachers spend the most time with high-achieving students.
- Effective mentoring can be characterized as:
 - a sincere desire to be open to the diverse needs of students;
 - belonging to a village where wise elders teach their children, such as to swim in a river inhabited by crocodiles;
 - requiring the efforts of only one person;
 - student-centered;
 - relationship-building;
 - related to, but not synonymous with teaching, advising, tutoring, counseling;
 - continually growing and open to ongoing learning (both the mentor and mentee);
 - collaborative, not hierarchical;
 - a passionate involvement with the well-being of students;
 - invitational rather than adversarial.

The Power of Mentoring

By Shelly Thompson, Director of Student Services Center, EOP
CSUN College of Humanities

One of our finest “academic treasures” at CSUN is the connection that staff have with students. Some of our best mentors on campus are found in the ranks of our staff. Consider this: For a new student, CSUN can be an exciting but also intimidating place. Even the simple things we take for granted on a daily basis can be challenging for a new student or as students seek assistance. The little things, like finding a classroom, locating faculty offices or campus procedures are often new to many of our students. We often speak our own “university language” and we can periodically forget that students may not have achieved fluency.

You may be asking yourself, “What is a mentor?” A mentor is defined as a knowledgeable and experienced guide, a trusted ally and advocate, and a caring role model. According to prevailing thinking in the university, only faculty serve as mentors for students. While this level of mentoring is occurring across campus, students may not always connect with a faculty member right away. Most students need the help of a team of mentors and this is where we can all play a critical role. We can approach our duties with a mentoring attitude; an overriding desire to guide students that is manifested in our behaviors toward them. We can serve as their “guides” as they learn to understand how to navigate the new and unexplored corridors of the university.

The next question you will ask is, “How can I serve as mentor to students who visit my department or program for assistance?” Once we see the value of mentoring, it takes very little effort to maintain it. Becoming a mentor requires only a change in consciousness. Dr. Gordon Nakagawa termed these types of interactions with students “Mentoring on the Run.” An effective mentor is respectful, reliable, patient, trustworthy and a good listener and communicator. Staff mentors see their interactions with students as opportunities to help students discover the potential within themselves to succeed in the university and in life. This is both empowering for the student and rewarding for the mentor. At its very core mentoring is a reciprocal relationship in which both parties grow and learn.

Here are a few examples of opportunities that are available to mentor students within our daily interactions...

You help students overcome their fears by educating them about locations, key people such as faculty or professional staff advisors, campus resources or campus procedures.

You seek to find out the question the student really needs the answer to.

You actively listen to a student and help them connect with campus resources so that they can resolve a need or concern.

You help a student understand our bureaucratic rules and procedures-and you explain it in a way that the student is willing to come back to you to learn more in the future.

You follow through on a referral and make sure that the student really understands where they need to go and whom they need to see.

For more information on mentoring, please contact Shelly Thompson at shelly.thompson@csun.edu or x4784. This handout is adapted from the *CSUN Staff Mentoring Resource Booklet* from FMP/EOP.

Mentoring Resources for EOP Staff

CSUN Faculty Mentor Program website

Learn how to “mentor on the run,” how to promote a “culture of mentoring” in your classroom, and how to build a “community of mentors” in your department

www.csun.edu/eop/fmp_index.html

Promoting good classroom dynamics in a freshman classroom

www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/bridgedemo/teachings/classdynamics.html

Power of peer mentoring

www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/peermentoring.pdf

Student leadership development booklet

www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/leadership_booklet.pdf

Recommended Books

John Bransford, Ann Brown, and Rodney Cocking, eds., *How People Learn* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000). Comprehensive summary of latest research on teaching and learning; includes practical examples of good teaching practices based on brain-compatible learning.

Chungliang Al Huang and Jerry Lynch, *Mentoring: The Tao of Giving and Receiving Wisdom* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995). The authors define mentoring as “giving your gift of wisdom and having it graciously appreciated and received by others who then carry the gift to all those within their sphere of influence.” To carry out mentoring, the authors contend that we need to move beyond the prevailing Western view of knowledge as only “external” and take the approach that “what we have learned is used not to impress others but rather as wisdom to help others benefit from our knowledge.”

Barbara Strauch, *The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries about the Teenage Brain Tell Us about Our Kids* (New York: Doubleday, 2003). Summarizes the latest research on the teenage brain and ways that parents (and educators) can effectively understand and work with youth.

Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999). Wheatley believes that our thinking about organizational structure and the process of change is mired in the “old science” of Newtonian physics — e.g., concepts of critical mass, entropy, equilibrium, incremental change, etc. She proposes a new paradigm for organizational thinking and change based on the “new science,” i.e., drawing from the insights of quantum physics and the study of complex systems, where “critical connections are more important than critical mass” and where dynamic disequilibrium, bifurcations in systems, and chaos are not only natural processes in organizations but opportunities for changes in human consciousness.

David Werner and Bill Bowers, *Helping Health Workers Learn: A Book of Methods, Aids and Ideas for Instructors at the Village Level* (Palo Alto: Hesperia Foundation, 2010). The authors use the framework of Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy as their approach to training health workers in the Third World, while cautioning people to adopt Freire’s approach but not his dense language in their work with others. This book is filled with practical advice, stories, and instructional aids such as drawings and puppet shows to help educators (and mentors) “start at the level where people are at,” to value existing knowledge in their students, and to help advance critical thinking skills.

Mentor Training Materials:

Who Are Our Mentors?

Directions: [1] **Write the names** of any and all individuals who have served as mentors in your life; [2] **circle the name of *one* person** who has been especially important or influential in your academic and/or personal growth; [3] **identify one or two characteristics** that describe your mentor(s).

Who?

Characteristics?

Based on your description of mentors and their characteristics, discuss the *process of mentoring*. What does it mean to say that we are engaged in a “mentoring” relationship? What do mentors do in practice?

Mentor Training Materials:

“Mentoring on the Run”
Recognizing the “Little Moments” of Mentoring

As an EOP Staff Member working with students, I’m mentoring when . . .

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

Mentor Training Materials:

Emphasizing a “Culture of Mentoring” in EOP Offices

Many EOP students describe their visits to EOP offices as different from their visits to other campus offices. They say that EOP staff, peer advisors, and student assistants better help them with problems than people in other offices. Many EOP staff members say that this approach to serving students is due to the “culture of mentoring” that is built into the mission of EOP. Identify three important characteristics of this EOP “culture of mentoring.”

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Based on ideas shared by others in your “community of mentors,” write down at least three more important characteristics that define EOP’s “culture of mentoring.”

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In the next week, hold a follow-up discussion with the “community of mentors” in your office (or work unit) and collectively identify the three most important mentoring characteristics that you want students who visit your office to feel.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Mentor Training Materials:

Investigating a “Culture of Mentoring” on Campus

Visit and quickly observe about three to five offices on your campus to identify both positive and negative examples of a “culture of mentoring.” Find at least one example of an office with a positive “culture of mentoring” for students and only one example of a negative “culture of mentoring.” If you cannot find any positive examples, identify offices that have “mixed” cultures with both positive and negative elements.

Campus offices with a positive “culture of mentoring” have the following characteristics:

- Students hang out in these offices regularly and visit them frequently, even when they don’t need to go there for official business.
- Staff in the office don’t have the mainstream mentoring mindset that believes mentoring of students only occurs formally through one-on-one meetings and designated “mentoring times”; instead, staff have mastered the alternative mindset that mentoring occurs in every interaction with students, no matter how brief.
- Everyone in the offices emphasizes “human interactions” in their encounters with students.
- Staff — especially student assistants — answer the phone with a smile.
- If the office has a reception area for student visitors, the space doesn’t look like a dentist’s waiting room or the DMV waiting area.
- Even though everyone in the office is busy, all staff are still able to answer students’ questions — with a smile.
- There is remarkable consistency in behaviors and attitudes between the highest-ranking person in the office (boss, manager, director, etc.) and the lowest-ranking person (e.g., student assistant).
- Staff interact with each other as a “community of mentors” — they help each other, nurture each other, and provide support without having to be told to do so.
- Visitors often hear warm laughter in the office.
- Staff working in this office — especially student assistants — seem to like working there.
- Based on your brief observations, if you were to ask a student visitor to describe the “culture of mentoring” in this office with three adjectives, what three adjectives would they say?

Mentor Training Materials:

Avoiding Mentor Burn-out

Appreciating Mentoring as a Reciprocal Activity

Mentoring is defined as a reciprocal relationship. According to Huang and Lynch, mentoring is “the giving and receiving of wisdom.” Mentors who burn out are those who see mentoring as only giving.

As an EOP Staff mentor, make a list of at least five things that you are giving those whom you mentoring.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

As an EOP Staff mentor, make a list of at least seven things that you are receiving from those whom you are mentoring.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Note: If it is easier for you to identify what you are giving than what you are receiving, take the time to reflect on what you are gaining by mentoring students to avoid “mentor burn-out.”

Mentor Training Materials:

Avoiding Mentor Burn-out

Appreciating Your Web of Mentoring Relationships

In western societies, mentoring is stereotyped as a one-to-one relationship involving one mentor interacting with a single mentee. In reality, all mentoring occurs in a web of relationships. This web provides both a network of support and a network of resources. Becoming more conscious of your web of mentoring relationships is one way to counteract “mentor burn-out,” especially when confronted with a particularly difficult problem. In your work as an EOP staff mentor, what is your “web of mentoring relationships”? How can this web help you when you are faced with a particularly challenging situation?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

CSUN EOP Staff Mentor Training Project

This pilot project will begin during the 2008 academic year and is part of ongoing efforts of EOP leaders to provide opportunities for staff development and leadership training.

Mentoring serves as the foundation for EOP's founding mission statement, and today mentoring continues to distinguish the work of EOP staff at CSUN. While other offices on our campus expect staff to focus on carrying out job duties and adhering to laws governing the university, working as a member of the EOP community requires tapping into a special quality that goes above and beyond standard job duties and legal expectations. The special quality is that of serving as a mentor for students and fellow colleagues in EOP.

This training project is designed to enhance existing mentoring skills of EOP staff. Specifically, this project emphasizes the art of "mentoring on the run" — i.e., using each interaction with a student, no matter how brief, as a mentoring opportunity. In addition, this project will help staff build EOP into a "community of mentors" so that all staff can function within a network of support and resources. Finally, this project emphasizes the key role of EOP staff in promoting a "culture of mentoring" on our campus.

This project is modeled on the existing Faculty Mentor Training Project (FMTP). Like FMTP, this project will enable participants to enhance mentoring skills while also building their networks across programs, departments, and colleges on our campus. Participants will explore best practices of mentoring by EOP staff, especially of "mentoring on the run." Participants will also examine why mentoring increases students' academic success, especially for low-income students who are the first in their families to go to college. Participants will discuss how mentoring fits into ongoing efforts to transform CSUN into a learning-centered institution, especially in terms of eliminating fragmentation between students' experiences with academics in the classroom and student services outside the classroom. Participants will look at research about the current generation of students, especially freshmen, and discuss whether mentoring approaches need to be adapted to the changing profile of our students. Participants will also develop strategies to avoid "mentor burn-out" by understanding how mentoring is a reciprocal relationship involving the giving and receiving of wisdom.

EOP Director José Luis Vargas will work with EOP leaders to make arrangements for EOP staff to participate in this training project. Each semester for six weeks, a cohort of eight to ten staff members will be chosen to participate in two-hour weekly workshops.

EOP staff interested in participating in this training project should notify the EOP Satellite Director in their College, who, in turn, will forward names to José Luis Vargas.

For more information, contact Glenn Omatsu of the Faculty Mentor Program:
glenn.omatsu@csun.edu
(818) 677-4151