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Partnership in Practice: Fostering a Mentoring Relationship to Meet the Challenges of a Large Legal Environment of Business Class

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I. INTRODUCTION

"Although the description of mentorships can be traced back to ancient Greek history," most of the empirical research on mentorships has been conducted within the past two decades.[1] Such research has tended to focus on how a relationship is formed (informal versus formal methods of mentorship),[2] the importance of trust in a mentoring relationship,[3] and how the relationship can benefit the mentee in terms of an increased understanding of institutional politics and procedures.[4] In such research, the

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[1]Georgia T. Chao & Philip D. Gardner, *Formal and Informal Mentorships: A Comparison on Mentoring Functions and Contrast with Nonmentored Counterparts*, 45 PERSONNEL PSYCHOL. 619, 619 (1992); *see also* J. Michael Lyon et al., *Mentoring of Scientists and Engineers: A Comparison of Gender*, 16 ENGINEERING MGMT. J. 17, 17 (Sept. 2004).

[2]"Informal mentorships grow out of informal relationships and interactions between senior and junior organizational members . . . In contrast, formal mentorships are typically not based on initial informal relationships or interactions between two organizational members." Chao & Gardner, *supra* note 1, at 621.

[3]"The core of mentoring is a close, developmental relationship based upon mutual trust." Jane Rymer, *Only Connect: Transforming Ourselves and Our Discipline Through Co-Mentoring*, 39 J. BUS. COMMUNICATION 342, 342 (July 2002).

[4]"Mentors are also seen as important for career success for faculty themselves. 'Academics, like other professionals, operate primarily through 'colleague systems.' Standards for professional behavior and criteria for evaluating teaching, research, and publications are largely

focus is on the relationship itself—an intense, personal bond that spans a spectrum of activities and time.[5] The idea is that the mentee will share private thoughts and concerns with a nonjudgmental, neutral, caring observer and that the mentor will help the mentee develop a course of action that will aid the mentee in his or her professional development within the institution, both from a career and psycho-social perspective.[6]

This article, however, demonstrates that there is an alternative to such an all-encompassing mentoring relationship, that there need not be such an intense connection formed between the mentor and mentee in order to achieve the professional and psycho-social benefits associated with a mentoring relationship. Indeed, this article describes what we have termed "Problem-Focused Mentoring." Here, we describe a mentoring relationship that was formed to solve one specific problem: how to handle the challenges of a large Legal Environment of Business class. This Problem-Focused Mentoring relationship was approached as a partnership, a true collaboration. Thus, this article shows that a satisfying, beneficial relationship can be formed with a specific purpose—not to provide career advice or institutional and social support but to solve a particular problem. To help describe the process more fully, we present the relationship from the perspective of both the mentee and mentor and demonstrate the positive outcomes of Problem-Focused Mentoring. We conclude with suggestions for creating successful, Problem-Focused Mentoring partnerships for those seeking such collaboration.

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determined by 'unwritten rules' handed down from one generation of scholars to the next, and communicated informally from one colleague to another.'" Susan E. Kogler Hill et al., *The Impact of Mentoring and Collegial Support on Faculty Success: An Analysis of Support, Behavior, Information Adequacy, and Communication Apprehension*, 38 COMMUNICATION EDUC. 15, 15 (1989).

[5]"The traditional relationship (from "Mentor," the wise counselor in Homer's *Odyssey*) is an experienced, senior person who facilitates the development of a younger novice in a caring relationship. Such a nurturing relationship of teaching, advising, counseling in a life-cycle framework is essential to all the major models of traditional mentorship." Rymer, *supra* note 3, at 344.

[6]"Mentors provide their protégés with advice, support, information, and professional sponsorship; they share values with their protégés and help them gain access to influential networks." Pamela J. Kalbfleisch & Andrea B. Davies, *An Interpersonal Model for Participation in Mentoring Relationships*, 57 W. J. COMMUNICATION 399, 399 (1993). *See also* Chao & Gardner, *supra* note 1, at 620. Indeed, a "mentor generally provides high amounts of both career and psychosocial assistance." Monica C. Higgins & Kathy E. Kram, *Reconceptualizing Mentoring at Work: A Developmental Network Perspective*, 26 ACAD. MGMT. REV. 264, 265 (2001).

II. An Overview of Mentoring Research

A. Mentoring and Mentoring Relationship Structures

A mentor is "anyone who provides guidance, support, knowledge, and opportunity for the protégé during periods of need and is traditionally a more senior individual who uses his or her experience and influence to help the advancement of a protégé."[7] Most researchers have struggled to find common terminology when referring to mentors and mentoring relationships. As such, "researchers employ their own idiosyncratic definitions—a practice which makes generalizations and relationships to coexisting studies difficult."[8] Indeed, various studies have described mentors as teachers, coaches, positive role models, sponsors, seminal sources, gurus, protectors, cheerleaders, pioneers, inspirations, confidantes, or counselors."[9] A large number of adjectives are used to describe mentors because mentors have several functions or roles. For example, mentors "provid[e] career development support through coaching, sponsoring advancement, providing challenging assignments, protecting protégés from adverse forces, and fostering positive visibility."[10] In addition, mentors "provid[e] psychosocial support, which includes such functions as personal support, friendship, acceptance, counseling, and role modeling." Because the duties of a mentor are so varied, some authors have suggested that mentoring should be approached as a series of relationships, because it is not possible for one person to fulfill so many roles.[11]

Regardless of whether the mentoring relationship is formed with one person or with several people, a common characterization of the relationship is that it is an intimate one predicated on mutual trust.[12] "True mentoring is not only about career development. Mentors and protégés regularly talk about many other aspects of their lives, developing close

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[7]Talya N. Bauer, *Perceived Mentoring Fairness: Relationships with Gender, Mentoring Type, Mentoring Experience, and Mentoring Needs*, 40 Sex Roles 211, 211 (1999).

[8]Cheryl N. Carmin, *Issues in Research on Mentoring: Definitional and Methodological*, 2 Int'l J. Mentoring 9, 10 (1988).

[9]*Id*. at 9.

[10]Lyon et al., *supra* note 1, at 17.

[11]Higgins & Kram, *supra* note 6, at 264.

[12]*See* Rymer, *supra* note 3, at 342.

feelings over time."[13] Indeed, mentors provide their mentees with "personal support, friendship, acceptance, counseling, and role modeling."[14] While an expectation of intimacy may attract some, for many others it may be a barrier to engaging in mentoring.

Evidence exists that suggests that people who "perceive a high risk in intimacy will be less likely to form interpersonal relationships than those who perceive less risk."[15] Thus, because mentoring relationships have the potential to be highly personal, intimate relationships, "it follows that individuals with perceptions of high risk in intimacy would be less likely to participate in mentoring relationships than those who perceive low risk in intimacy."[16] If those individuals who view mentorships as a high-risk relationship knew that there was an option such as Problem-Focused Mentoring, they may be more willing to be mentored and thereby reap the benefits.

B. Formal Versus Informal Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring relationships can be "formal" or "informal." Informal mentoring relationships "grow out of informal relationships and interactions between senior and junior organizational members."[17] In these relationships, a mentor is likely to select someone "with whom they can identify and with whom they are willing to develop and devote attention."[18] In contrast, a formal relationship is not "typically based on initial informal relationships or interactions between two organizational members. The match between mentor and protégé may range from random assignment to committee assignment to mentor selection based on protégé files."[19] Informal mentorships appear to be somewhat favored by researchers, as some authors have expressed concern over whether "something as 'personal as a mentoring relationship can be formalized in a program.'"[20]

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[13]*Id*. at 344.

[14]Lyon et al., *supra* note 1, at 18.

[15]Kalbfleisch & Davies, *supra* note 6, at 404.

[16]*Id*.

[17]Chao & Gardner, *supra* note 1, at 621.

[18]*Id*.

[19]Allen Awaya et al., *Mentoring as a Journey*, 19 Teaching & Teacher Educ. 45, 46 (2003).

[20]*Id*.

In evaluating the positive outcomes of mentoring in formal versus informal relationships, one study demonstrated that protégés in an informal relationship received more "career-related support" than their counterparts in a formal relationship.[21] However, this study also revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups on such important outcome measures as organizational socialization, job satisfaction, and salary.[22] Although this study did not demonstrate significant differences in measured outcomes between the protégés in informal versus formal mentoring relationships, there was a large difference in the measured outcomes when comparing those individuals who were *not* involved in any type of mentoring relationship to those who *were*.[23]

In order to combat the perceived inadequacies of a formal mentoring relationship, some authors have advocated a hybrid model of sorts—one that grows out of a formal program but within which the mentors and protégés have some degree of "choice" to decide with whom they will work and when they will terminate a relationship that is not deemed to be beneficial.[24] The organizational and personal dilemma as to whether to form a formal or informal mentoring relationship structure is solved with a Problem-Focused approach. This approach will yield benefits whether a formal or informal mentoring relationship exists. Indeed, by focusing on problem-solving rather than advising or care taking, the relationship dynamics are restructured to level power relationships and instead the relationship features collegiality and the products of collaboration.

C. Gender Differences

Next, the mentoring literature has focused on how men and women respond to mentoring[25] Studies are divided on whether men or women

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[21]Chao & Gardner, *supra* note 1, at 632.

[22]*Id*.

[23]*Id*.

[24]*See* Awaya, *supra* note 19, at 46. In this article, we describe the Master of Education in Teaching program at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. In this program, the student teachers and mentor teachers spend a considerable amount of time getting to know each other before a mentor relationship is formed in which the student teacher will go into the mentor's classroom. It is a formal program but one in which the participants have some degree of freedom of choice.

[25]Many studies have also focused on the "access" that women have to mentors. Most mentors are men, and these males "prefer to select protégés who are similar to themselves (namely

benefit more from mentoring, whether men and women view the mentoring process in the same light, and whether same-sex or homogeneous mentoring dyads (male/male or female/female) are better than heterogeneous dyads.[26]

The research literature "strongly suggests that individuals with mentors will be more successful than those without."[27] However, for women, having a mentor does *not* guarantee success. Indeed, one study has shown that men *without* mentors had a more successful academic career than women *with* mentors.[28] Thus, one could summarize that "having a mentor is helpful to both genders, but that being male is even more helpful in terms of scoring high on various success indicators."[29]

Men and women also view the mentoring process differently. Men usually report that mentors are valuable to them in the following ways: "developing leadership, developing the ability to take risks, giving direction, and letting them know what was going on [in the institution]."[30] Women, on the other hand, find mentors to be important to them because mentors give them confidence, give encouragement and support, provide growth opportunities, and give them visibility within the organization.[31]

Perhaps because men and women report different benefits from mentoring relationships, researchers have also focused on the gender of the participants in a mentoring relationship to determine if the gender of the mentor/protégé makes a difference in the outcomes of the relationship. Historically, the results of such research have been mixed—with some studies concluding that the gender of the participants in the mentoring

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they are also males)." Hill et al., *supra* note 4, at 17. Men and women may also shy away from cross-gender mentoring relationships due to peer perceptions—meaning, "often the relationship between the mentor and the protégé is interpreted as sexual in nature, leading to jealousy, resentment, and malicious gossip." Raymond Noe, *Women and Mentoring: A Review and Research Agenda*, 13 ACAD. MGMT. REV. 65, 67 (1988).

[26]It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss or even summarize the research that has been done on gender differences in mentoring. As such, we have discussed the gender issues and its corresponding research that are directly relevant to this article.

[27]Hill et al., *supra* note 4, at 29.

[28]*Id*.

[29]*Id*.

[30]Lyon et al., *supra* note 1, at 19.

[31]*Id*.

dyad does *not* make a difference in the outcomes of the mentorship[32] and with others concluding that gender *does* make a difference.[33]

A recent study, however, found that the gender of the mentors/mentees makes a difference in the outcomes of the mentoring relationship *only* on certain measured dimensions. Indeed, these researchers demonstrated that "the psychosocial role of friendship was significantly influenced by the gender makeup of the dyad"—the mentor and mentee in a heterogeneous dyad reported lower scores on various "friendship functions."[34] In a similar fashion, the researchers found that the mentees in a homogenous relationship reported that they were assigned more challenging assignments by their mentors than mentees in a heterogeneous relationship.[35] Although there are some differences in mentoring relationship outcomes based upon the gender of the participants, these researchers found that "[b]oth genders consider the same mentoring activities as important to protégé growth[36] . . . and both genders have the same recommendations[37] for improving their mentoring relationships."[38]

D. The Benefits of Mentoring

Benefits accrue to both mentors and protégés. For mentors, particularly in academia, the process typically results in increased professional competency, increased reflective practice in teaching, a sense of renewal in teaching, increased self-esteem, an increased valuation of collaboration, and an increased role in campus leadership.[39] For mentees, the benefits of

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[32]*See, e.g.*, *id*.

[33]*See id*.

[34]*Id*. at 21.

[35]*Id*.

[36]Both male and female protégés in this study responded that "he most important function a mentor serves is to assign responsibilities that increase the protégé's contact with people in the organization who may judge the protégé's potential for future advancement." *Id*. at 23.

[37]The male and female protégés recommended that, in order to improve the mentoring relationship, the mentor should suggest "specific strategies for achieving [the protégé's] career goals." *Id*. at 24.

[38]*Id*.

[39]*Adapted from* Leslie Huling & Virginia Resta, *Teacher Mentoring as Professional Development*, ERIC Digest, 2001, ED 460125.

mentoring are: a sense of community, assimilation into the department and wider university community, increased self-esteem as a valued member of the faculty, and a clearer sense of departmental and institutional expectations.[40] While these findings are relative to more traditional mentoring relationships, our own experience provides reason to believe that these benefits apply to Problem-Focused Mentoring relationships as well.

E. Relationship of this Article to the Existing Research

The Problem-Focused Mentoring relationship described in this article has some of the characteristics described in the literature—it is a hybrid of formal and informal mentoring qualities, it is predicated on trust, and it is a cross-gender or heterogeneous dyad. The mentee demonstrates that the relationship had a positive effect on her teaching outcomes, and the mentor states that he benefited from the relationship as well in terms of personal satisfaction and an increased understanding of the process of faculty development. However, in contrast to many research studies, it was not an all-encompassing, personal relationship that spanned many months or even one academic year. Any personal or professional risks associated with the traditional mentoring relationship were minimized if not eliminated. This Problem-Focused Mentoring relationship lasted approximately six weeks for a total of six meetings. By coming together to solve a specific problem, this relationship demonstrates that mentoring can successfully occur in a narrow, focused arena. The positive effects of mentoring can be achieved, perhaps even more effectively, when the focus of the relationship is to solve a particular problem or to address a particular issue.

III. The Problem of Teaching Large Classes

Large lecture classes are common in most universities across the country. In spite of research suggesting that the lecture method is not as effective as we often assume[41] or as effective in changing student thinking,[42] we persist

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[40]*Adapted from* Carol Stringer Cawyer et al., 15 Qualitative Stud. in Educ. 225 (2002).

[41]John Stuart & R.J.D. Rutherford, *Medical Student Concentration During Lectures*, 2 The Lancet 514 (1978).

[42]Benjamin S. Bloom, *Thought Processes in Lectures and Discussions*, J. Gen. Educ. 160 (1953).

in its use. The economic reality of the new millennium is that universities must offer large classes as a means of survival—even a large class is better than no class at all. Thus, the challenge of providing a rigorous, interactive learning environment in these cavernous classrooms falls squarely on the shoulders of the instructors.

A. Seeking Assistance and Forming the Problem-Focused Mentoring Relationship—The Mentee's Perspective

In Spring 2004, I confronted a sea of faces, namely a classroom of over ninety students in OBE 118, the Legal Environment of Business. This large class is referred to as a "megasection." There was something different about the atmosphere of this class than the atmosphere present in smaller (namely those with fifty or fewer students) classes. Students in the megasection seemed to be lulled into silence by the sheer size of the class; yet they also appeared frustrated by the large number of their peers who were forced into the room. Thus, they were quiet, but seemingly reluctantly so. I realized that I needed to institute some sort of formal processes in this class to ensure that students participated and were responsible for a large percentage of their own learning, notwithstanding the number of students in the class. It is unlikely that my students will remember all of the specifics about the law; however, it is my hope that they will remember how to analyze an issue and how to present an effective logical argument.

Placing the responsibility for learning on the shoulders of the students is consistent with the new paradigm of teaching that focuses on student and learner development.[43] Many researchers argue that, to effectively enhance learning skills, students must be closely involved in the learning process.[44] Indeed, many emphasize the greater need for direct and active student involvement in the classroom.[45] "The new concept of involving students in the learning process calls for a major change in the

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[43]*See, e.g.*, John P. Manzer & Ali Rassuli, *Teach Us to Learn: Multivariate Analysis of Perception of Success in Team Learning*, 81 J. Educ. for Business 21 (2005).

[44]*See, e.g.*, Manzer & Rassuli, *supra* note 43, *quoting* R.E. Slavin, *Cooperative Learning*, 50 Rev. Educ. Res. 315 (1980).

[45]*See, e.g.*, Manzer & Rassuli, *supra* note 43, *quoting* D.W. Johnson et al., *Cooperative Learning: Increasing College Faculty Instructional Productivity* (ASHEERIC Higher Education Rep. No. 4). Washington, DC: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development (1991).

traditional role of the instructor: In the new paradigm, the teacher becomes a facilitator for learning."[46]

Because I was not sure how to formulate a plan to achieve my goal of increasing student participation, I sought the assistance of a teaching mentor from the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The CTL is a resource for faculty at Sacramento State. In addition to holding seminars and brown bags on a variety of topics, the CTL maintains a list of faculty who are willing to mentor their colleagues. I decided to take advantage of the opportunity to talk to someone outside my department, and I called Mark. Mark offered to set up an appointment with me almost immediately, and he volunteered to come to my office or to meet me for coffee. The fact that Mark was willing to meet with me so quickly and at a location of my choice put me at ease. I had reached out for help, and my efforts were immediately acknowledged. Mark's flexibility and responsiveness helped me to feel comfortable with him and to trust him enough to call upon him with what I considered to be a complex, sensitive issue.

When I entered Mark's office, I did not have specific issues outlined for us to discuss. I only recognized a general problem in my class—a lack of student participation and interaction. I did not even have the words to describe my concerns with any sort of specificity. Consequently, our partnership was destined to have many layers. First, we would have to identify the specific issues that needed to be addressed in the classroom. Second, we would have to formulate a plan to address those issues. Third, we would have to put the plan in motion in the classroom. Fourth, we would have to meet to analyze the effectiveness of the classroom efforts. Thus, our mentoring relationship was formed to solve a problem—correcting the lack of student interaction in a large class—and we agreed that our Problem-Focused Mentoring would include planning sessions, classroom observation, and debriefing sessions throughout the semester.

B. The Mentor's Perspective

Given that Jordan had taken the initiative to call and given that she had things in mind to talk about, my job as mentor was to listen carefully to what she had to say.[47] She narrated the history of her course, explained

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[46]Manzer & Rassuli, *supra* note 43, at 21.

[47]Over the last twelve years, I have had the opportunity to work with hundreds of faculty at my institution, as well as others across the state and the nation. In the area of faculty

her goals, and described her own behavior and her observations about her students' behavior. I asked some questions to help Jordan elaborate on her descriptions or ideas, and once or twice, I provided a paraphrase summary of what she had described. The effect is a new level of mindfulness about teaching by zeroing in on and naming those parts of the teaching experience that are most significant to the *mentee*. It also provides the mentor with a rich understanding of how the mentee experiences teaching. It is a "helping interview"[48] intended to give the mentee a chance to think out loud and get a sense of whether or not the mentoring relationship holds promise.

As I talked with Jordan, I had three goals in mind: create rapport with her, create a sense of trust, and avoid evaluation of any sort. These are related behaviors, of course. By listening carefully and attentively, rapport seems to develop naturally. It helps build trust, but trust requires, at points, some explicit reassurances that confidentiality is absolute. Jordan seemed

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development, my initial training and work was in cognitive coaching, a process of mediating a colleague's thinking developed by Art Costa and Bob Garmston. *See* Arthur L. Costa & Robert J. Garmston, Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools (1994). Cognitive coaching has its structural roots in clinical supervision. *See, e.g.*, Bruce Joyce & Beverly Showers, Power in Staff Development Through Research on Training (1983); Carl D. Glickman, Developmental Supervision: Alternative Practices for Helping Teachers Improve Instruction (1981); Morris L. Cogan, Clinical Supervision (1973); Robert Goldhammer, Clinical Supervision: Special Methods for the Supervision of Teachers (1969). In addition, it is also rooted in the therapeutic work of Rogers, Erickson, Perl, and Bandler and Grinder. *See, e.g.*, Richard Bandler & John Grinder, The Structure of Magic: A Book About Language and Therapy (1975); Fritz Perls et al., Gestalt therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality (1969); Eric H. Erikson, Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight (1966); Carl R. Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy, Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory (1951). A core value that emerges from this constellation of theory and practice is the autonomy of the individual and an assumption that intelligent people are capable of solving their own problems in ways that are best suited to their own circumstances and needs. When applied to mentoring, these starting points flatten the hierarchy between mentor and mentee so the work of career development is a joint activity between peers rather than between a subordinate and her "sponsor," "counselor," "advisor," or "protector." *See* Michael Fagan, *The Term Mentor: A Review of the Literature and a Pragmatic Suggestion*, 2 Int'l J. Mentoring 5 (1988). Most of the folks with whom I have worked value this approach because they realized that the "fix" is theirs and it feels right for their style of teaching. Some folks, however, find this approach frustrating because they want or need more direction from another person. In those cases, to meet the mentee's needs, I adopt a traditional, hierarchical mentoring stance.

[48]Alfred Benjamin, The Helping Interview (1969).

comfortable with the approach and took the lead in deciding what she wanted to work on.

I do not think that Jordan's work in determining her goal of designing and implementing approaches for lessons that engaged an entire class of over ninety students in lawyerly higher order thinking skills and habits of mind was an easy process, but she was willing and able to start there. Because goals determine procedure, once Jordan had articulated her goals clearly, the means to the ends became pretty clear. The real challenge that I felt Jordan faced was confronting the risks involved in making the changes she determined were necessary to achieve her ends. Such risks are real for tenure-track faculty. From research we have done in the CTL, we have found that the single most powerful brake on instructional innovation at our institution was the fear that innovations may fail and thus jeopardize tenure.[49] In spite of the possible risks, Jordan was committed to achieving her goals.

IV. Solving the Problem of Engaging Students

A. The Debate

1. The Mentee's Perspective

With my goal of increasing student participation in mind, Mark and I continued our conversation. Rather than giving me a list of possible action items to deal with this problem, Mark continued probing how I ran my classroom, what a typical class was like, and how I would like my class to be. With this free-form conversation, I mentioned to Mark that the students kept asking me about the constitutional ramifications of same-sex marriages, as the Mayor of San Francisco had just begun to permit the city to issue same-sex marriage licenses. I realized that a discussion of that topic may be a good way to energize and engage the class.

Through more brainstorming, we decided that a debate would be a good format in which to discuss this topic. I made the announcement on a Thursday that, in the next class session (Tuesday), we would debate the actions of Mayor Newsom and the issue of same-sex marriage. I instructed my students to look at the slides that I would create to frame the debate

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[49]Mark Stoner et al., *A Proposal for Formative Assessment of Teaching*, *available at* http://www.ctl.csus.edu/downlads/LitReview.pdf.

prior to coming to class on Tuesday so that they could formulate their opinions. I admonished them that our discussion would be based solely on the law, not on religion, morality, or personal opinion. While they could espouse a moral opinion, they could do so only if they could fit it into a legal argument.

The day of the debate, I was very nervous. I was worried that the debate would fail miserably or that the students would stand up and shout at each other—each side condemning the other to hell, as this was (and is) a very emotionally charged issue. Mark agreed to observe the debate. Because of the rapport and trust that I had developed with him, I did not feel threatened or worried by his classroom visit. In fact, after the first three minutes of class, I forgot that he was there. No student asked who he was; he simply sat in the front corner and observed. It did not disrupt the class, or me, in any way.

When I walked into class, I asked the students to move into three camps, a "pro," "con," and "neutral" camp. The theory was that, as their opinion changed, they could move to another camp. To my surprise, the students participated in the debate with enthusiasm and respect for each others' opinions. At first, I tried responding to what each student said; however, it soon hit me that this was *their* debate; I was just there to help guide them through the issues, and I called on the class to respond to a student's individual comment rather than interjecting my own thoughts.

While I think that I played an instrumental role in helping the students to frame the debate, keeping them focused on the issues, and answering legal questions when asked, the debate was really supported by their own efforts. I was impressed by how well undergraduate juniors and seniors had done with important, complicated constitutional law issues. I was even more impressed by how positively they had expressed themselves; they all demonstrated a great deal of respect for the opinions of their peers.

2. The Mentor's Perspective

Purposeful listening allows the mentor to put the mentee's concerns into a frame or context that focuses attention on specific elements of the situation and make analysis of it more manageable for the mentee. As I listened to Jordan, she made it clear that she valued student engagement, that the students were very much interested in the question of same-sex marriage, and that constitutional issues were a regular part of the course content.

By simply putting those three elements together for her, the brainstorming activity was relatively quick and productive. I summed up what I heard: "You're anxious to get the students engaged and they keep hinting that they are interested in the controversy over same-sex marriage." Then I asked, "What ways come to your mind for getting the students to engage the controversy via the course content?" The frame constructed was grounded in *her* values and *her* observations; consequently, the process of brainstorming solutions was brief— "a discussion" was Jordan's first suggestion and, after a brief pause, she proposed the related idea of a debate. This is a very short list from which she would choose a solution, but because it was grounded in her values, was related to her professional repertoire (debate in the courtroom), content concerns, and students' interests, nothing more was required. The solution was *hers* and it fit *her* needs.

Jordan asked me to observe the class session, which I was able to do. When in a mentee's classroom, I try to be another set of eyes for my colleague. That is, while instructors can see a great deal of what is going on, typically there are so many mental demands made on them that subtle patterns of personal or student behavior become invisible. So, I tried to collect information for Jordan that was free of judgment. For example, rather than judging how involved the class was or judging the quality of student contributions, I chose to simply diagram and tally who spoke. (Amazingly, in the large lecture hall, Jordan knew everyone's name, so when she recognized them to speak in the debate, I could put a name on the diagram!) The data is a graphic record of who talked, and in what order. The tallies on a rough sketch of the room allowed Jordan to see pockets of activity and inactivity. The news was objective and Jordan made sense of it within the context of her own values and goals.

Later, when we met in the CTL to debrief the debate, my role was primarily to listen. Jordan talked about what she had noticed about her own actions and how she had adapted during the session. She also talked about what she saw in the class's behavior—that they were excited about the topic, that their arguments were well-grounded in the course material and readings, and that they were quite direct in their arguments while remaining civil with each other.

I gave the diagram and tally sheet to Jordan and left it to her to interpret the data and make her own judgment regarding the success of the activity. She found that her own perceptions were confirmed. She concluded that she can see pretty well what's going on in class, even when she had had so much to do in facilitating a debate among some ninety students.

We concluded our debriefing session by celebrating the effectiveness of the debate as a solution to her problem, and we noted the patterns of behavior of the students that may be repeated so as to anticipate how other classes may respond. Debriefing serves the purpose of helping mentees articulate their own successes and prescribe their own changes. The outcome is increased confidence, control, and autonomy. Over time, this pattern should work mentors out of a job. My own measure of success is when I am no longer needed and my mentee assumes the role of mentor to someone else.

B. Solving the Problem of Keeping Momentum

1. The Mentee's Perspective

Having a class period that goes so well is a double-edged sword; the problem is how to follow your own successful act. I wanted to maintain the energy level of the class, but I had no specific idea how to accomplish this goal programmatically. While we talked at our next meeting, Mark asked me about the next topic on the syllabus, which was negligence. He asked me to explain briefly the legal concept of negligence. I explained that negligence is a very element-driven cause of action, meaning that each of the five elements of negligence must exist in order for a business or individual to be found negligent under the law. Mark observed that, due to the complex nature of negligence, it would lend itself quite well to a discussion. He asked me how I had covered this topic in the past. I told him that, in the previous semester, I had found two cases that I used as examples in my lecture to discuss one of the elements of negligence. Through our conversation, we decided that, instead of presenting these cases to the class, I would have the class read them and come ready for a discussion of the differences between the two cases. Thus, through another planning session with Mark, I was able to articulate the problem, and the two of us created a plan of action that would help to sustain the momentum that I had created.

On the "negligence" day, I began the class with a brief overview of negligence and then started a discussion of the cases. The class participated with enthusiasm and the students were able to articulate even the subtle differences between the cases. At one point, there were so many hands raised that I could not call on everyone. The debate had set the stage and, with the discussion on the negligence cases, we had made significant progress moving toward increased interaction and complex analysis as a group.

2. The Mentor's Perspective

Jordan's commitment to student engagement was deepened by her success in using a debate format in a large lecture class. At our next meeting, Jordan talked about her goals, the content to be treated, and how she had dealt with the material in the past. As I did before, I tried to bring the threads together with the observation that a discussion of the negligence cases may be a way to connect her interests.

As Jordan reviewed how she had organized the class in the past, she realized that she had processed the cases *for* the students in lecture; obviously, student engagement entailed having the students think through the cases and figure out for themselves if the five elements of negligence existed in each case. To do that, she understood that the students had to read the cases prior to class, and Jordan's task was to figure out how to get students to apply the information from the text to the cases. She arrived at a kind of compromise plan that entailed presenting content through a series of questions a lawyer or judge would use to analyze the elements of negligence. Jordan then systematically discussed the cases by having students address the questions posted via PowerPoint. The advantage here was that the discussion was organized and focused while bringing forward the ambiguities of the criteria of negligence.

The students responded enthusiastically, because their creativity and rigor in thinking was necessary to construct reasonable answers. Her strategy prevented the good guessers or quicker responders from dominating the discussion. The systematic approach invited everyone to contribute to the discussion—that had the flavor of an Ivy League law class while modeling lawyerly thinking.

These two episodes—the debate and case analyses—were significant teaching events for Jordan and me. While it may seem that a great deal of time was invested, counting the planning meetings, class observations, and debriefing, we invested only 6.25 hours over the course of a fifteen-week semester. The efficiency of the project was due in large part to Jordan's ability to determine what she wanted to do and her drive to find solutions to her perceived problems. In part, the efficiency was due to my effort to avoid needlessly taxing her with suggestions, directions, or advice that were not properly fitted to her circumstances. Moreover, the efficiency of the process was rooted in the fact that, as a mentee, Jordan was not forced to try out methods or styles of teaching that were not hers only to be discarded later. We worked as a team, trying to understand the problems in

Jordan's terms and construct solutions that fit her personal style, the students' needs, and the course demands.

V. Conclusion

A. Mentee's Perspective

In sum, my collaboration with Mark was a true partnership that produced tremendous results. Mark helped me to articulate specific pedagogical problems and devise class-specific solutions. The effectiveness of the Problem-Focused Mentoring relationship that we created is evident in my student evaluations during and after our work together. The survey results are summarized below.

Dimension	Fall '03 Average	Spring '04 The Mega-section	Difference from Fall '03 to Spring '04
Course Outline & Syllabus	4.44	4.78	+.34
Clarity of Course Requirements	3.72	4.64	+.92
Preparation	4.6	4.82	+.22
Organization of Lecture/ Discussion/Class Activity	4.35	4.63	+.28
Manner of Presentation	4.22	4.70	+.48
Presentation of Concepts/Idea/ Skill Development/Opportunity	3.84	4.56	+.72
Instructor Involvement	4.52	4.85	+.33
Instructor/Student Interaction	4.18	4.67	+.49
Facilitation of Discussion	4.22	4.73	+.51
Reviewing and Summarizing	4.22	4.63	+.41
Availability	4.36	4.45	+.09
Promptness of Returning Papers/Exams	3.45	3.86	+.41
Grading—Feedback	3.55	4.04	+.49
Grading Practices	3.47	4.56	+1.09
Application of Material	4.16	4.71	+.55
Overall Rating—Instruction	3.80	4.65	+.85

The scores in several specific dimensions seem to be strong indicators that the solutions that Mark and I developed through our Problem-Focused Mentoring worked well and were well-received by the students—namely the scores in the following categories: clarity of course requirements (+.92), presentation of concepts/idea/skill development/opportunity (+.72), application of material (+.55), facilitation of discussion (.51), instructor/student interaction (+.49), and manner of presentation (+.48). The scores in these dimensions increased, dramatically at times, even in a class of over ninety students when compared to my scores from Fall semester—which were given to me by my traditional classes of fifty students.

Overall, in my mind, the improvements in my survey results from Fall 2003 to Spring 2004 are the result of our Problem-Focused Mentoring relationship. In addition to the increase in survey scores, at the end of the Spring 2004 semester, my students appeared more confident in their own skills and more energized by the learning process than they had been in any of my previous Legal Environment classes. These students took responsibility for their learning and positively contributed to the learning of their peers.

Because I believe that my mentoring experience—the Problem-Focused Mentoring relationship that Mark and I formed—led to successful, results, I offer the following ideas as a starting place for anyone who is considering working with a mentor from a Problem-Focused perspective:

1. Find someone who seems sufficiently skilled and trustworthy. Approach the person with a small problem or minor issue and work through it. If you are satisfied with the outcome, go back with a more substantial problem. If you find you are not comfortable with this person, find someone else.
2. Be prepared to discuss your classroom situation frankly with your mentor. Be willing to state when you think you are making mistakes or when you have done something well. It is only through honest self-assessment that you will truly benefit from the mentoring relationship. If your mentor insists on evaluating your work, find someone else.
3. Realize that classroom success requires that you tailor your presentation to the needs and personalities of a particular class. No two groups of students are ever the same. You have to be willing to make adjustments.
4. Keep in mind that your goal is to get better, not perfect. Mistakes are inevitable when learning new skills and approaches to teaching.

Because the context is always changing, a goal of perfection is impossible and if allowed to persist, it will block change.

B. Mentor's Perspective

Working with a mentee is a significant professional responsibility. Whether the participants wish to create an all-encompassing mentoring relationship or not must be negotiated between the partners. This case has shown that an alternative to an intense connection exists that can be exceedingly productive, namely Problem-Focused Mentoring.

With that, I offer some suggestions that may be helpful to readers who are called upon to mentor a colleague:

1. Be available and accessible for the first meeting.
2. Listen to the concerns of the mentee—help the mentee to find the language necessary to describe problems with as much detail as possible. Then, help the mentee create solutions that fit the mentee's style and personality.
3. Realize that the solutions devised by the mentee may not be as detailed or as ambitious as one that you might create for yourself.
4. Be supportive, not judgmental. Have faith in your mentee's decisions.
5. Give clear, detailed, *descriptive* feedback—not value judgments. For example, descriptive feedback may sound like this: "Your points about X generated seven questions by the students which were . . . [here you would try to script the questions as students asked them]." Avoid statements such as, "I thought your presentation confused the students quite a bit—they didn't seem to get it."

While the sort of partnership we described was all business and Problem-Focused, it was nevertheless personally fulfilling. Problem-Focused Mentoring diminishes the isolation we commonly experience as faculty. Beyond that, it serves the institution as a whole by facilitating contact between departments and colleges in regard to the core operation of most universities—*teaching*. For those universities in which the first priority is research, the patterns of interaction we described here are directly transferable to mentoring researchers. Mentoring, when approached from a Problem-Focused perspective, holds great potential for increasing professional effectiveness and satisfaction in all contexts.