Enhancing Faculty Mentorship

Provost Report
Fall 2024

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Objectives

Enhancing Faculty Mentorship: Project Objectives

The Provost Faculty Fellowship project for Fall 2024 aimed to enhance faculty mentorship across the university. The project objectives were:

1. Analyze current practices for faculty mentorship across university units.

2. Provide recommendations for programming, guidelines, and expectations for faculty mentors and mentees to improve faculty mentorship initiatives across the university

This report presents the project methodology, implementation, and findings. Based on the findings, the project proposes five recommendations to enhance faculty mentorship across the university.

Methodology

Research Design

- The project employed a convergent mixed-methods design where quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently.

Data Collection

- The quantitative data were collected through two surveys: one distributed to deans and directors and one to faculty.
- The qualitative data were collected through individual interviews with deans, directors, and faculty.

Instruments

- Questionnaires and interview guides were designed to explore mentorship models, objectives, goals, and needs, the matching process, and strategies for communicating expectations. Participants also provided insights into recognition and incentives for mentorship, the perceived benefits and successes of current practices, the barriers and challenges faced, and recommendations for improvement. Additionally, the instruments captured general perceptions of mentorship within the professional context.

Implementation

- The survey for leadership was distributed through individual invitations sent directly to deans and directors.
- The survey for faculty was disseminated using multiple communication channels to maximize reach. These included the faculty listserv, CFD's newsletter, the university mailout, and outreach through school directors.
- The interviews were conducted with participants who signed up after completing the survey. All interviews were conducted on Zoom to accommodate faculty from the Gulf Park campus and to allow for more flexibility and interest.

Project Timeline

- July and August – IRB preparation and instrument development
- September and October – data collection
- November – Data analysis and report preparation

Response Rates

Surveys
- 6 deans (86%)
- 18 directors (58%)
- 110 faculty (16.5%)

Interviews
- 7 leaders
- 10 faculty

Faculty Demographics

Colleges and Schools:
- 4 colleges (14% did not disclose)
- 17 schools (55% did not disclose)

Rank
Assistant Professor	26%
Associate Professors	13%
Assistant Teaching Professors	13%
Professor	11%
Instructor	8%
Visiting Faculty	4%
Associate Teaching Professor	4%
Lecturers	3%
Teaching Professors	2%

Mentorship Models

Leadership Survey

Deans and directors identified several types of faculty mentorship models at their colleges and schools. The most common approach involves assigning multiple mentors to a single faculty member, each focusing on specific areas of expertise such as teaching, research, or peer support. This is closely followed by a one-on-one mentorship model, where a single mentor is dedicated to an individual faculty member. Other prominent models include assigning one mentor to one faculty member, assigning one mentor to multiple faculty members but mentoring them individually, and using a combination of these models.

Mentorship Models (n = 24)	n	%
Multiple mentors are assigned to a single faculty member based on their expertise (e.g., one mentor assigned to advance the mentee's teaching skills, one for research skills, a peer or senior mentor, etc.)	8	33%
One mentor is assigned to one faculty member	7	29%
One mentor is assigned to multiple faculty members, but mentorship is provided individually	6	25%
Other models	6	25%
One mentor is assigned to multiple faculty members, but mentorship is provided in a group setting	1	4%

The open-ended responses for "other models" discussed alternative models that some colleges and schools use based on their specific contexts and needs. In some, mentorship is structured by university-level guidelines, such as a model involving both a senior and peer mentor. Others lack a formal mentorship policy, leaving mentorship assignments to individual discretion. Some support faculty development through seminars and workshops rather than direct mentor-mentee assignments. Units with active military personnel defer mentorship and feedback to Air Force processes and procedures. In some colleges, mentorship practices vary among individual units to accommodate the distinct needs of different disciplines while following a standardized model across the institution (one senior and one peer mentor).

Faculty Survey

While most faculty reported that they were formally assigned a faculty mentor within their school, a significant portion also shared that they received no formal mentorship. From this group, the majority received informal mentorship from colleagues, while a smaller portion did not receive any mentorship. Very few faculty had mentors outside their school.

Mentor Assignment (n = 107)	n	%
Yes, I was assigned a faculty mentor by my school	70	65%
No, I was not assigned a faculty mentor, but I received informal mentorship from faculty colleague(s)	19	18%
No, I was not assigned a faculty mentor, nor did I receive any mentorship at USM	14	13%
Yes, I was assigned a faculty mentor outside my school	4	4%

Most faculty reported having an individual, one-on-one mentorship model with a single faculty mentor. Other prominent models include alternative arrangements or having multiple mentors with specialized expertise. Only a few respondents shared having a group mentorship format where one mentor guided several mentees collectively.

Mentorship Models (n = 92)	n	%
Individual, one-on-one mentorship by a single faculty mentor	66	72%
Another model	18	20%
I was assigned multiple faculty mentors based on their expertise (e.g., one mentor assigned to advance teaching skills, one for research skills, a peer or senior mentor, etc.)	10	11%
Group mentorship where one faculty mentor was assigned to several mentees, and we were mentored in a group setting	3	3%

Faculty who selected "other" described a range of informal and formal mentorship experiences. Some were not assigned formal mentors and instead sought guidance informally from various colleagues or developed mentor relationships independently. Others experienced inconsistent mentorship, with mentors changing annually, or found their assigned mentors unavailable or unhelpful due to role conflicts caused by mentors' leadership positions. Some faculty reported delays in mentorship assignments or received mentorship only after requesting it.

Mentorship Goals and Needs

Leadership Survey

According to deans and directors, the primary goals of faculty mentorship are to support new faculty as they transition into their faculty roles, to ensure they understand institutional policies and practices, and to promote teaching and scholarly activity such as research, publications, and grants. Mentorship assignments are also intended to guide faculty in meeting tenure-track and promotion requirements and prepare them for annual evaluations. Additionally, faculty mentorship often emphasizes helping faculty understand the institutional culture, engage in service, and maintain work-life balance.

Mentorship Goals (n = 24)	n	%
New faculty onboarding	21	88%
Understanding university, college, or school policies	20	83%
Improving teaching	19	79%
Research, publication, grants, and other scholarly activity	18	75%
Meeting tenure-track requirements	18	75%
Meeting promotion requirements	18	75%
Preparation for annual evaluations	15	63%
Understanding university, college, or school culture	13	54%
Work-life balance and well-being	10	42%
Promoting service	10	42%
Developing career trajectory or identifying opportunities for career advancement	8	33%
Professional networking	8	33%

Leadership Interviews

Main themes:

- *Career and workplace navigation:* Mentorship should provide guidance on institutional politics, career advancement, and strategic service opportunities, ensuring junior faculty can align their efforts with long-term goals.

- *Individualized mentorship needs:* Faculty mentorship should be tailored based on one's experience, with new faculty needing more support in teaching and technology, and experienced faculty benefiting from higher-level career and institutional guidance.

- *Support for research and grants:* Faculty mentorship should focus on navigating research policies, grants management, and administrative processes, as these are often complex and time-consuming.

Faculty Survey

Faculty primarily needed mentors' support in understanding institutional policies, preparing for annual evaluations, and navigating the university culture. Other significant areas include onboarding, meeting tenure and promotion requirements, and support for research, teaching, and service responsibilities. Additionally, some faculty sought guidance on career advancement, work-life balance, and professional networking.

Mentorship Needs (n = 91)	n	%
Understanding university, college or school policies	69	76%
Preparation for annual evaluations	56	62%
Understanding university, college or school culture	47	52%
New faculty onboarding	42	46%
Meeting tenure-track requirements	37	41%
Research, publication, grants, and other scholarly activity	33	36%
Meeting promotion requirements	33	36%
Teaching	30	36%
Service	30	33%
Developing career trajectory or identifying opportunities for career advancement	24	26%
Work-life balance and well-being	23	25%
Professional networking	16	18%
Other	3	3%

The three faculty who selected "other" described unique circumstances affecting their mentorship needs. One noted a complete absence of mentoring in their current role, one shared their need for support in navigating school politics, and one revealed that due to prior experience, they were already familiar with most areas typically supported by mentorship.

Faculty Interviews

Main themes:

- *Navigating institutional systems and policies:* Faculty needed guidance on institutional-specific systems like Canvas, travel forms, IT support, and research administration processes. Understanding the "USM way" was a recurring theme.

- *Building networks and relationships:* Establishing connections with colleagues and learning department and institutional culture were significant needs. Many faculty expressed a desire for mentors to facilitate introductions and guide them in navigating complex interpersonal dynamics.

- *Research and grant management:* Faculty sought support for navigating research processes, such as grant writing and management, or accessing campus resources for research support.

- *Teaching and advising:* Faculty frequently highlighted guidance on course preparation, syllabus design, advisement procedures, and leveraging teaching materials. They emphasized the need for practical teaching resources and mentorship in graduate advising.

- *Unique roles and/or administrative assignments:* Many faculty referred to their role as "unique" in the sense that it entails more than teaching, research, and service. Examples included coordinating programs, supervising graduate assistants, coordinating co-curricular programs or community partnerships, etc.

- *Workload management and career development:* Many faculty desired mentorship on time management, prioritizing tasks, and understanding promotion processes to balance teaching, research, and service effectively.

Significant quotes:

- *I needed someone to literally take me by the hand, introduce me to people, help me understand who's who, and establish those relationships.*

- *I struggled to feel like a faculty rather than the oldest graduate student. Essentially, I needed a translator to help me understand written guidelines and navigate my role.*

- *Learning the institutional knowledge, like who to talk to about what and the norms of our institution, was important.*

- *Orientation is helpful, but it's also very overwhelming… I didn't even know what I didn't know at USM.*

Mentor-Mentee Matching

Leadership Survey

According to deans and directors, faculty mentors are assigned or matched through various approaches. Some colleges and schools prioritize matching based on mentor-mentee professional interests, such as research or teaching, or matching mentors within the same department or program. Some also consider identity factors in the matching process, while a few use a random assignment or have no formal matching system in place. However, most colleges and schools reported using alternative methods.

Mentor-Mentee Matching (n = 24)	n	%
Other	13	54%
Based on research, teaching, or other professional interests	8	33%
Based on departmental or program affiliation	7	29%
Based on mentor-mentee identity (e.g., race, gender, nationality, etc.)	3	13%
No matching system / random assignment	1	4%

Respondents who selected "other" mostly use a flexible and holistic approach. Assignments are frequently based on mutual research interests, program affiliation, or mentor's specific strengths and experience. In some cases, senior mentors are chosen for their promotion and tenure expertise, while junior mentors are matched based on discipline. Availability and the mentor's current workload also play a role in assignment decisions.

Faculty Survey

Faculty perceptions regarding the quality of mentor-mentee matching were mixed, with many rating their match as excellent or good, indicating generally positive experiences. However, a notable number also rated their match as fair or poor.

Mentor-Mentee Matching (n = 88)	n	%
Excellent	21	24%
Fair	21	24%
Good	19	22%
Very good	16	18%
Poor	11	13%

Faculty expressed a strong preference for mentor-mentee matching based on research, teaching, or professional interests, followed by departmental or program affiliation. Fewer respondents expressed a preference for matching based on identity factors, while a small number selected alternative criteria or had no specific preference.

Matching Preferences (n = 100)	n	%
Based on my research, teaching, or other professional interests	74	74%
Based on my departmental or program affiliation	53	53%
Based on my identity (e.g., race, gender, nationality, etc.)	14	14%
Other	14	14%
No preference / random assignment	3	3%

Faculty who selected "other" highlighted diverse preferences for the matching criteria. Most emphasized the importance of a good interpersonal fit, including matching based on personality, mentorship style, and specific mentorship needs. Others preferred mentors who were at a similar career stage or had recently navigated similar challenges. Other preferences included matching with experienced faculty within the same department and avoiding mentors who are new to their roles or who have supervisory responsibilities. Some respondents also valued mentors with strong mentoring skills, a collaborative attitude, or the potential for research co-authorship.

Mentorship Duration

Leadership Survey

Deans and directors shared that faculty mentors are commonly assigned to mentees for either one year or more than one year, with some colleges and schools following different timelines. One respondent was uncertain about the duration of mentor assignments in their college/school.

Mentorship Duration (n = 24)	n	%
More than one year	9	38%
Other	8	33%
One year	6	25%
I do not know	1	4%

Alternative timelines varied, where some colleges/schools assign mentors until tenure or promotion is achieved, while others set a minimum term, often around one to three years, with flexibility to extend as needed. In some cases, peer mentors are assigned for one year, while research mentors continue until the mentee reaches key career milestones. One respondent reported not having a set policy on mentorship duration.

Faculty Survey

Most faculty were uncertain about the length of their faculty mentor assignments, with "I do not know" being the most common response. Among the rest, mentor assignments typically lasted one year or more, though some had shorter, semester-long arrangements. A notable number also reported alternative timeframes.

Mentorship Duration (n = 91)	n	%
I do not know	41	45%
One year	17	19%
Other	16	18%
More than one year	13	14%
One semester	4	4%

Among the faculty who selected "other," most reiterated their unawareness regarding the duration of the mentorship assignment. Several indicated that their mentorship was informal, with no clear end date or official assignment, while others assumed it was expected to continue through tenure or promotion. Some shared that their mentorship relationships organically continued beyond their initial expectations, while a few mentioned experiencing very short mentorship experiences that lasted only briefly, such as during the welcome week.

Communicating Expectations

Leadership Survey

Most deans and directors shared that their colleges and schools lack formal mechanisms to communicate mentorship policies, expectations, or roles to mentors and mentees. Where communication does occur, it is often directed specifically to mentors and, in fewer cases, to mentees. Some colleges and schools discuss these expectations during faculty meetings, while others outline them in official documents. A few units use alternative methods.

Communicating Expectations (n = 24)	n	%
No mechanisms in place	11	48%
Provided to mentors	7	30%
Discussed in college/school faculty meetings	6	26%
Provided to mentees	5	22%
Other	4	17%
Regulated in college/school documents	3	13%

For respondents who selected "other," approaches to communicating mentorship policies and expectations vary. One school reported having a formal school policy, while another shared offering informal, beginning-of-year guidance to mentors. Additionally, one shared relying on feedback from mentees regarding their mentorship experience.

Faculty Survey

Most faculty indicated that they did not receive any formal mentorship expectations, policies, or role descriptions. Among those who did, most learned about mentorship expectations directly from their mentor or were provided with such information at the time of mentor assignment. A smaller number mentioned that expectations were regulated in school documents or discussed in school faculty meetings.

Communicating Expectations (n = 90)	n	%
I was not provided with any mentorship policies, expectations, or roles	65	72%
My faculty mentor explained these to me	12	13%
These were provided to me when I was assigned a mentor	8	9%
These are regulated in our school documents	7	8%
These were discussed in school faculty meetings	6	7%
Other	6	7%

Faculty who selected "other" noted a lack of formal communication about mentorship expectations and policies from their school leadership or during their mentor assignment. Some shared that written guidelines were introduced only recently, some received only basic information, such as the mentor's email, but no further details on expectations, and some relied on colleagues in similar roles outside their school for guidance.

Mentor Preparation and Training

Leadership Survey

The survey showed that 17 colleges/schools (71%) do not provide any training for faculty mentors, while 7 (29%) offer some type of training to their mentors before assuming mentorship responsibilities. From this group, four colleges/schools (17%) provide informal training, while three (13%) provide formal training.

Faculty Survey

Most mentors reported not receiving any training before assuming their mentorship role, with a small group receiving informal preparation from their colleagues. Formal mentorship training, whether external or provided by the institution, was rare. One respondent who selected "other" shared receiving one training session from the institution but described it as insufficient to outline their expectations.

Mentor Training (n = 59)	n	%
I did not receive any training before assuming this role	46	78%
I received informal training (e.g., exchange of best practices or experiences among colleagues)	11	19%
I received formal training externally (e.g., as a graduate student, in a prior job, an external training or certification, etc.)	4	7%
I received formal training at USM (e.g., from the school, college, or university)	2	3%
Other	2	3%

Mentorship Benefits and Best Practices

Mentorship Perceptions: Leadership Survey

Deans and directors generally expressed strong support for faculty mentorship and highly rated the statements on its importance and benefits for faculty success. They also broadly agreed with the value of ongoing mentorship and showed interest in encouraging faculty to propose mentorship practices. While they highly rated the value of faculty mentorship, there was a slightly lower agreement on its perceived effectiveness.

Perceptions of Faculty Mentorship (n = 24)	M
Having a faculty mentor is important for the success of faculty in my college/school	4.67
Faculty in my college/school should have ongoing faculty mentorship	4.48
Faculty in my college/school benefit from having a faculty mentor	4.46
I encourage faculty at my college/school to propose effective faculty mentorship practices	3.92
Faculty mentorship is valued by my college/school	3.88
I encourage faculty at my college/school to raise concerns about ineffective faculty mentorship practices	3.88
I would be interested in my faculty having a mentor outside of my college/school	3.67
Faculty mentorship is effective at my college/school	3.58

Mentorship Benefits: Leadership Interviews

Main themes:

- *Thoughtful mentor-mentee matching:* Effective mentorship most often stems from well-considered matching based on personality, goals, and areas of expertise. Flexibility in pairing can lead to more successful outcomes. Including mentors outside the college or university was also identified as beneficial.

- *Structured mentorship models:* Having a formalized mentorship structure helps ensure that mentorship happens consistently and remains a priority, even if individual engagement varies.

- *Clear guidelines and expectations:* Establishing clear expectations for mentors and mentees through written guidelines improves consistency in experiences and ensures both parties understand their roles.

- *Regular and consistent meetings:* Mentorship relationships are most effective when regular, scheduled meetings occur, allowing for proactive support rather than relying on mentees to initiate contact.

- *Recognition of mentorship's importance:* Emphasizing the value of mentorship and actively assigning mentors to new faculty members underscores the institution's commitment to faculty development.

- *Mentor training opportunities:* Training helps mentors provide relevant guidance, align their efforts with mentees' goals, and avoid offering mismatched or overwhelming information.

Significant quotes:

- *What I've seen is that when a lot of thought is put into that matching, there is the most success. One person may be enough for one faculty, but another may need two or three to really make some magic happen.*

- *Having a model and a structure in place is really a strength. It keeps mentorship front of mind and makes certain that it happens.*

- *We wrote guidelines to clarify expectations for mentors and mentees, and regular meetings make the mentorship relationship more fruitful.*

Mentorship Perceptions: Faculty Survey

With respect to faculty perceptions regarding the value of mentorship, most agreement was recorded for the statements that having a mentor is important for faculty success and that faculty would like to have an ongoing relationship with their mentors. Perceptions of mentorship value and effectiveness within individual schools were moderate, as were faculty comfort levels with proposing mentorship practices or raising concerns about ineffective mentorship. Interest in mentorship from outside the school and perceived benefits from past mentorship experiences also received moderate ratings.

Perceptions of Faculty Mentorship (n = 104)	M
Having a faculty mentor is important for my success as a faculty member	4.32
I would like to have ongoing faculty mentorship	3.91
Faculty mentorship is valued by my school	3.41
I feel comfortable proposing effective faculty mentorship practices to my school.	3.38
I benefited from having a faculty mentor	3.35
I would be interested in having a faculty mentor outside of my school	3.22
Faculty mentorship is effective at my school	3.15
I feel comfortable raising concerns to my school about ineffective faculty mentorship practices	3.07

Mentorship Benefits: Faculty Interviews

Main themes:

- *Clear and defined roles:* Mentors who set clear expectations and roles for the mentor-mentee relationship were highly valued as they ensured that both parties understood their responsibilities.

- *Accessibility and support:* Mentors who were approachable, consistently available, and willing to provide guidance created a positive mentorship experience.

- *Practical guidance:* Mentors who offered specific help, such as navigating tenure processes, understanding institutional norms, and addressing immediate faculty needs, were recognized as the most beneficial.

- *Institutional knowledge:* Mentors with longstanding experience at the institution provided invaluable insights into institutional culture, norms, and procedures.

- *Flexibility and collegiality:* Mentorship that included informal, organic interactions (e.g., coffee shop meetings or casual conversations) led to collegial and supportive relationships.

Significant quotes:

- *Managing and setting expectations might be the best way to describe it… If you can set expectations for both the mentor and mentee, it clarifies the roles beyond just a title.*

- *My mentor was really good at every step along the way with the promotion and tenure process, helping me find my voice within the faculty.*

- *I appreciated that my mentor was flexible and open to giving me more guidance once I expressed my needs.*

- *My mentor was the one who said, 'Let's grab a beer after work and talk through why you're feeling stressed and why I don't think you need to worry.*

- *Personally, I really like that my senior mentor opened it up to off-campus conversations. That takes it out of the formal realm and feels more organic.*

Motivation to Serve as a Mentor: Faculty Interviews

Main themes:

- *Altruism and care for others:* Faculty were driven by a genuine desire to support colleagues, improve their experience, and foster positive relationships.

- *Professional growth and contribution:* Mentorship was viewed as a way to strengthen annual evaluation materials and promotion and tenure portfolios, particularly in the area of service.

- *Enjoyment of mentorship:* Many faculty found mentoring inherently fulfilling, viewing it as a natural extension of their teaching or leadership roles.

Significant quotes:

- *We all need a hand sometimes… Of course, it makes sense to help your colleagues. Who else are you going to help?*

- *I want to tell you it's just totally out of the goodness of my heart, and it is, but the reality is, when I look at my promotion and tenure portfolio, I look at where I'm meeting and exceeding expectations.*

- *Motivation-wise, I saw mentoring as an opportunity to enhance my tenure dossier.*

Mentorship Barriers and Challenges

Leadership Survey

According to deans and directors, the primary barriers to effective faculty mentorship include limited time availability for both mentors and mentees and a shortage of experienced or qualified mentors. Additionally, colleges and schools face challenges due to a lack of incentives for mentors, insufficient resources to support mentorship, and the absence of mechanisms to assess the quality of mentorship relationships. Five respondents reported other barriers not listed.

Barriers to Effective Mentorship (n = 24)	n	%
Limited time availability of mentors	16	67%
Lack of experienced or qualified mentors	11	46%
Lack of incentives for mentors	9	38%
Lack of assessing the quality of the mentorship relationships	9	38%
Limited time availability of mentees	7	29%
Lack of resources (for either mentors of mentees)	7	29%
Other	5	21%

Other barriers included a perceived lack of interest in formal mentorship among early-career faculty due to a collegial environment where informal mentoring is already accessible. Some noted the absence of and the need for a formal policy on mentorship, while others pointed to time-sensitive priorities that limit opportunities for meaningful mentorship interactions. Resistance from mentors to serve in this role was not seen as a significant barrier, as noted by one respondent.

Leadership Interviews

Main themes:

- *Heavy workloads and competing priorities:* Faculty face significant demands balancing teaching, research, service, and clinical responsibilities, leaving limited time and energy for mentorship. This affects both mentors and mentees.

- *Limited pool of qualified mentors:* The loss of senior faculty and the uneven distribution of qualified mentors create challenges in providing effective mentorship, particularly in schools with diverse programs and needs.

- *Lack of mentorship training and development:* There is a need for mentorship-specific training to help faculty develop skills for both mentoring and being mentored, similar to existing training for research and teaching or for working with graduate students.

- *Insufficient recognition and incentives:* Mentorship is often seen as an unstructured service activity without clear differentiation between effective and ineffective mentors, reducing motivation and accountability.

- *Need for tailored models:* Mentorship practices need to be flexible and aligned with the unique demands of different disciplines and unique faculty positions (beyond tenure-track only) rather than relying on completely standardized guidelines.

- *Cultural and generational challenges:* Resistance from some senior faculty to embrace mentorship and prioritize the success of junior colleagues is a cultural barrier that affects mentorship effectiveness.

Significant quotes:

- *Mentorship is often seen as just another service activity without clear incentives. Whether someone does a great job meeting weekly or barely engages, they can still list mentorship as a service. That lack of differentiation and recognition is a challenge.*

- *Mentorship may fall apart because it's just another thing on the list to do… while there may be motivation, if they can't find time, then thoughtfulness is lost.*

- *The next generation has to do much better than the previous generation, but not everyone sees it that way. Some faculty focus on protecting their resources.*

- *We have research seminars and teaching seminars, so why wouldn't we also have training for being a good mentor and mentee?*

Faculty Survey

The primary factor discouraging faculty from serving as a mentor is a lack of time, which most respondents identified as a significant barrier. Additional deterrents include a lack of incentives and lack of recognition. A significant portion of the sample also noted other unspecified reasons.

Barriers to Serving as a Mentor (n = 100)	n	%
Lack of time	60	60%
Other	34	34%
Lack of incentives	33	33%
Lack of recognition	23	23%

Within the "other" category, faculty overwhelmingly reported a lack of clarity in mentorship expectations and insufficient support or guidance from their schools as the main factors that would discourage them from serving as mentors. Newer faculty, in particular, noted a lack of institutional knowledge and experience as a barrier, while some expressed concern about mismatched assignments where expertise or research interests did not align, leading to ineffective or unproductive mentorship relationships. A few faculty also raised concerns about their schools not counting faculty mentorship "toward anything."

Mentorship Challenges: Faculty Interviews

Main themes:

- *Clearer structure and expectations:* Faculty emphasized the need for a structured mentorship program with clearly defined roles, guidelines, and expectations for both mentors and mentees.

- *Formal introductions:* A formal introduction process for mentor-mentee pairs was identified as a significant gap. This process should include clarifying the duration and scope of the relationship.

- *More regular check-ins:* Faculty suggested that regularly scheduled meetings between mentors and mentees, initiated by the mentor, would lead to consistent communication and support.

- *Advocacy and support:* Faculty noted the need for mentors to act as advocates, particularly in cases involving navigating difficult conversations, interpersonal challenges or institutional barriers.

- *Centralized resources and guidelines:* Faculty shared the need for centralized resources, such as process documents and guidelines, to ensure consistent support regardless of individual experience or mentoring preferences.

- *Broader mentorship opportunities:* Faculty highlighted the value of informal mentors outside their specific program or discipline for broader guidance and support.

Significant quotes:

- *A mentor program without structure is a disaster. There need to be guidelines and expectations. Without that, it's ineffective.*

- *As far as the mentor-mentee experience, I'll have to say this is probably the most confusing, disjointed, and fragmented experience I've ever had in higher education, and I don't mean to be negative.*

- *I think the process is laid out very well, but I don't know that the expectations of the mentor or mentee are as clearly defined as they should be. Managing and setting expectations might be the best way to describe it.*

- *Maybe having some regular check-ins facilitated by the school would have been helpful. That would make it clear to the mentor and mentee that the relationship exists.*

- *Maybe some kind of more formal way of introducing the mentor and mentee. Basically, I was given an email.*

Enhancing Mentorship Practices

Desired Support: Leadership Survey

The majority of deans and directors expressed a strong interest in various resources to enhance faculty mentorship practices. Mentor training was the most preferred type of support, closely followed by accessible resources for mentors or mentees, such as mentor and mentee toolkits.

Desired Mentorship Support (n =23)	n	%
Mentor training	19	83%
Readily available resources for mentors (e.g., faculty mentor toolkit)	18	78%
Readily available resources for mentees (e.g., faculty mentee toolkit)	15	65%

Desired Support: Leadership Interviews

Main themes:

- *Guidelines and structure:*
  - Establishing clear guidelines for mentorship expectations, including meeting frequency and duration.

- *Incentives and recognition:*
  - Clear integration of mentorship into annual evaluations, service expectations, and promotion criteria could encourage participation and meaningful engagement.
  - Recognition for mentors who demonstrate exceptional commitment would help highlight mentorship as a valued role.
  - Faculty need tangible rewards such as time reassignment, financial compensation, or awards to acknowledge their mentorship efforts.

- *Training and resources:*
  - Providing training for mentors and mentees on best practices, relationship management, and specific institutional processes.
  - Resources such as toolkits, manuals, or one-time workshops could support both mentors and mentees.

- *Administrative support:*
  - Reducing administrative burdens on school directors and faculty mentors would create space for meaningful mentorship activities.
  - Decentralized decision-making and autonomy for academic units could improve mentorship alignment with specific school or program needs.

- *Cultural shift:*
  - Moving away from outdated or counterproductive mentorship models (e.g., sink-or-swim or hazing cultures) is critical for fostering a supportive academic environment.
  - Encouraging a mentorship culture focused on collaboration and mutual growth rather than obligation.

Significant quotes:

- *We need to incentivize mentorship, whether through time reassignment, awards, or financial compensation, because everyone is motivated differently.*

- *Mentorship should be recognized in evaluations and promotion criteria. It's not just a service activity but a transformative process.*

- *Providing clear guidelines for mentors, like frequency of meetings or tiered commitments, could make mentorship more manageable and effective.*

- *People mentor how they were mentored, and it's time to move away from sink-or-swim or hazing cultures in academic mentorship.*

- *The administrative burden on directors leaves little space for meaningful discussions or seeing mentorship relationships grow.*

Desired Support: Faculty Survey

Faculty indicated a strong preference for structured resources, with mentor guidelines and resources (a toolkit or guide) identified by the majority as the most beneficial resource. Peer support groups were also valued, with almost half of respondents interested in regular meetings to share mentoring experiences. While training was less emphasized overall, approximately one-third of faculty shared being interested in online asynchronous modules and a one-time in-person workshop. Preferences for ongoing in-person training and online synchronous sessions were the least prevalent.

Desired Mentorship Support (n = 100)	n	%
Mentor guidelines and resources (e.g., mentor toolkit or guide)	85	85%
Peer support groups (regular meetings with fellow mentors to share experiences)	45	45%
Online asynchronous training (e.g., self-paced modules)	30	30%
One-time in-person training (e.g., one-day workshop)	30	30%
Ongoing in-person training (e.g., one-semester micro-credential)	25	25%
Online synchronous training (e.g., online meetings)	12	12%
Other	6	6%

Faculty who selected "other" expressed a desire for flexible, informal, and tailored support. Most suggestions included small funds for mentor-mentee lunches or events to foster connection outside formal settings. Some also noted the need for a more personalized approach to mentorship, with resources suited to individual career stages, such as support for retirement planning or pairing with a research partner.

Desired Support: Faculty Interviews

Main themes:

- *Structured and clear expectations:* Clear guidelines on mentorship roles, expectations, and duration were identified as critical to improving mentorship effectiveness. Also suggested were regular check-ins.

- *Practical tools and resources:* Faculty need accessible resources like checklists, toolkits, and Canvas courses to guide mentorship. These resources should be practical, digestible, and tailored to mentoring needs.

- *Workshops and training:* Faculty valued mentoring workshops and suggested additional short training focused on faculty-to-faculty mentorship, including relationship-building and effective communication strategies.

- *Structured opportunities for connection:* Structured opportunities like peer mentor luncheons and mid-year or end-of-the-semester events were seen as valuable for building organic relationships and fostering collaboration.

- *Recognition and incentives:* Faculty appreciated relational recognition for their mentoring efforts and suggested small rewards or incentives as additional motivators (mainly meal or coffee funds).

- *Support for "unique" and broader faculty roles:* Faculty highlighted the need for mentorship resources targeting adjuncts, program coordinators, and other non-traditional roles to ensure inclusivity and reduce isolation.

Significant quotes:

- *First, clarity on the duration of the mentoring relationship would have been helpful. Second, clearer guidelines on expectations for mentors would have been useful.*

- *Having some kind of information about what you're supposed to be doing, why you're doing it, and what you're expected to provide for the mentee would help.*

- *A toolkit like that would be helpful, especially for someone mentoring for the first time, so they're not starting from scratch.*

- *The university did a really nice full-day training on mentoring students last summer. That was great, but there's room to develop similar training for faculty mentoring.*

- *Doing stuff like peer mentor luncheons, where people come together intentionally and maybe you offer a meal, is helpful.*

Mentorship Recognition: Leadership Survey

Most colleges and schools provide recognition and incentives for faculty mentors, primarily through recognition of service, positive consideration in annual evaluations, or eligibility for awards. However, a notable portion does not offer any formal incentives for mentorship, while a few provide alternative types of incentives. Only one respondent elaborated on the "other" category, highlighting the reliance on the mentor's intrinsic motivation.

Mentor Incentives	n	%
Recognition of service to the college/school	11	46%
Counted favorably for annual evaluations, college/school awards, or other purposes	10	42%
No incentives	9	38%
Other	3	13%

Mentorship Recognition: Faculty Interviews

Main themes:

- *Lack of formal recognition in evaluations:* Faculty suggested including mentorship as a recognized service component in annual evaluations and T&P processes to acknowledge the time and emotional labor involved.

- *Lack of clarity in expectations and workload:* Faculty called for clear guidance on how mentorship is weighted as a service responsibility compared to other forms of service, particularly for workload balancing.

- *Awards and events:* Faculty recommended awards and gatherings to celebrate mentoring efforts, such as beginning-of-year mixers or end-of-year closeouts, which help build community and show institutional appreciation.

- *Financial or practical incentives:* Providing small, practical incentives like dining hall or coffee shop gift cards was highlighted as a way to facilitate relationship-building while compensating mentors for their time.

- *Mentorship spaces:* Some faculty expressed the need for dedicated mentorship spaces where they could engage in private conversations. These spaces would allow them to discuss sensitive topics, such as student-related issues, relational challenges with colleagues, workload concerns, leadership matters, or other private subjects, without the risk of being overheard by colleagues or students.

Significant quotes:

- *Mentoring should be a recognized part of service, just like any committee you sit on. It should also go into our workload calculations.*

- *How does mentorship count as service, and how much weight does it carry compared to other forms of service?*

- *Right now, it counts for nothing in my annual evaluations.*

- *I don't know if being a mentor gets me service credit. If it doesn't, it should. That's another spot where I could certainly benefit.*

- *For me personally, since I'm pre-tenure, I just want everything I do to count toward my tenure package. That's my priority. I know other people put a lot of effort into this, especially if they're mentoring multiple people or doing it over many years. Everything feels like a calculation: "What is this obligation taking away from my research.*

- *I think mentoring faculty could be a part of our annual evaluation. At least in my school, it's not currently recognized as part of service, and I don't know if that's the case elsewhere. But we should be able to highlight it in our evaluations as a significant part of our roles. I think that could help improve how we mentor faculty and recognize it as an important aspect of what we do.*

- *We have faculty awards for mentoring students and projects, but I think having an equivalent award for faculty mentoring their peers, whether at the college level or university level, would raise the profile of and reinforce the significance of it. We're all here because we like to achieve and be awarded for our achievements.*

- *Dining hall gift cards, coffee gift cards - things to facilitate those relationship-building pieces - would be a great way to compensate us for our time.*

- *A thank-you coffee hour or an event at the end of the year to mark the mentoring relationship would make faculty feel valued."*

Recommendations

Based on the project findings, the following five recommendations are proposed to enhance faculty mentorship at USM:

1. **Improve Communication and Clarify Expectations**
   - Clearly define mentor-mentee roles, expectations, and guidelines, including meeting frequency and duration.
   - Establish formal mechanisms to communicate mentorship policies and expectations to both mentors and mentees.
   - Incorporate tailored mentorship approaches to address the unique needs of different disciplines and career stages.

2. **Provide Recognition and Incentives**
   - Clearly recognize mentorship contributions as part of service in annual evaluations and promotion criteria.
   - Create awards and events to celebrate mentorship efforts and foster a culture of appreciation.
   - Offer small, practical incentives (e.g., gift cards, meal funds) to support relationship-building and acknowledge time invested.
   - Offer dedicated "mentorship spaces" where mentors could engage in private conversations and discuss sensitive topics without the risk of being overheard by colleagues or students.

3. **Improve Mentor-Mentee Matching and Interactions**
   - Ensure flexibility in matching to allow for the inclusion of external mentors when beneficial
   - Prioritize matching based on professional interests (teaching, research, etc.) and interpersonal compatibility.
   - Provide an introduction process for mentor-mentee pairs to establish clarity and build rapport early.
   - Develop mechanisms for accomplishing more frequent meetings between mentors and mentees and define who will take the lead in scheduling meetings

4. **Enhance Mentor Preparation and Training**
   - Provide training for mentors and mentees on best practices, relationship management, and institutional processes.
   - Offer accessible resources such as toolkits, guidelines, and workshops for mentorship support.

5. **Promote an Institutional Culture of Mentorship**

- Foster a collaborative mentorship culture by moving away from non-inclusive models and encouraging supportive, interdisciplinary mentorship practices. Highlight mentorship as a transformative process and impactful experience rather than an obligation.

- Enhance mentorship resources and support by developing centralized resources tailored to diverse needs and career stages. Provide flexible models to accommodate various faculty roles, including adjunct and non-tenure track faculty and those with unique administrative assignments.

- Facilitate community-building opportunities by organizing structured events like luncheons, peer meetings, and other activities that enable mentors and mentees to connect and build supportive networks.