

# 9

## Mentoring Undergraduates

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Although undergraduates will always account for the largest proportion of students on campus, they are often disadvantaged when it comes to receiving mentoring functions from faculty. In contrast to graduate school, bachelor's education is relatively brief and students often postpone declaration of a major—affording fewer opportunities to interact with key faculty in a chosen field. Additionally, the faculty–undergraduate student ratio in most institutions is substantial; only the most talented and motivated students may garner faculty attention. Finally, owing to developmental immaturity and low awareness of the value of mentoring, undergraduates may be less assertive and intentional in pursuing potential mentors.

In spite of these obstacles, mentoring college students can be deeply rewarding for faculty and genuinely life-altering for undergraduates. Rarely will you have opportunity to more profoundly shape both a student's life and career path than in the context of bachelor education. College students are often undergoing a thorough transition in their sense of self; it is during the undergraduate years that ties to parents are redefined and the rudiments of adult identity are established. In this chapter, I briefly consider the prevalence of mentoring in college, review some of the key developmental models bearing on young adulthood, and summarize some of the salient mentor functions required of the effective college student mentor. Although many professors reserve resources for graduate students, I hope to convince you that time and energy allocated to promising undergraduates will often pay dramatic and enduring dividends.

### UNDERGRADUATE MENTORING PREVALENCE

In contrast to graduate students, among whom one half to two thirds report having a faculty mentor, fewer undergraduates report being mentored. Rates range from 25% in one sample of business majors (McCarthy & Mangione, 2000) to 45% among students at the United States Naval Academy (Baker et al., 2003).

Not surprisingly, advanced undergraduates are significantly more likely to have a mentor than freshmen. Packard, Walsh, and Seidenberg (2004) found that only 15% of female freshmen could identify a faculty mentor, whereas 40% of female seniors could do so. Further, the authors noted that first-year students were more inclined to prefer a single faculty mentor whereas seniors were more comfortable with mentoring constellations composed of multiple mentors. Data bearing on gender differences in undergraduate mentoring is preliminary. Although female students at Cornell University were significantly less likely than their male counterparts to be mentored (Hamilton & Darling, 1996), women at the Naval Academy were significantly more likely to be mentored (63%) than male (42%) students (Baker et al., 2003; Johnson, Lall, Holmes, Huwe & Nordlund, 2001). Although fewer than half of college students report a mentor, nearly 100% are able to identify a significant faculty role model who had an impact on them by demonstrating the kinds of commitments, skills, and qualities they found important (Erkut & Mokros, 1984).

Although I have summarized student–faculty mentoring outcomes earlier in this volume, it is worth reminding the reader that mentored undergraduates are significantly more satisfied with their academic major and the larger institution; they are more loyal alumni (Koch & Johnson, 2000). Mentored college students are also more inclined to mentor other students themselves, persist to degree completion, report higher educational aspirations, greater academic achievement, and more personal development (Baker et al., 2003; Pascarella, 1980). Finally, freshmen in one study who were actively mentored by a professor reported higher levels of both personal and spiritual well-being than matched controls who were not mentored (Cannister, 1999).

#### UNDERGRADUATE DEVELOPMENT: SOME KEY PRINCIPLES

Several theoretical models of young adult development are particularly relevant to undergraduate college students—and those who mentor them. Although a thorough background in developmental psychology is not required to mentor well, I briefly describe some key developmental models in the following section, with emphasis on the principles most relevant to college student mentors.

##### Chickering's Vector Theory of Identity Development

Chickering (1969) offered one of the most influential models of young adult identity development. The model is comprised of seven vectors of development—each with a magnitude and direction specific to an individual student—contributing to identity development. I briefly consider each vector with

emphasis on its relevance to the mentor (Evans, Formey, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Orzek, 1984).

- *Developing competence:* College students use mentors to acquire both interpersonal and intellectual competence. When a mentor communicates belief in a student, helps define the student's emerging identity, listens effectively, helps to clarify values, and serves as a reliable sounding board, the student acquires confidence and interpersonal/professional competence. Intellectual competence is stimulated by direct teaching and provision of varied learning opportunities.
- *Managing emotions:* Mentors play a crucial role in helping young adults to recognize, accept, control, and appropriately express emotions. College students learn the elements of emotional intelligence through the example of emotionally intelligent mentors; at times, more direct counsel and coaching may be required.
- *Becoming autonomous:* A salient task of young adulthood is development of freedom from requirements for constant reassurance, affection, and approval—scripts often learned in childhood. Mentors can help bridge the gap between developmental phases by offering more reassurance early on and gradually titrating back level of direction while remaining interconnected and encouraging of the protégé's progressive autonomy.
- *Developing mature interpersonal relationships:* Through a healthy mentoring connection, the mentor can promote a student's pursuit of freeing interpersonal relationships and a concomitant awareness that such relationships are important for developing a sense of self. The mentor may also promote cultural and interpersonal tolerance, appreciation of diversity, and capacity for enduring—but not enmeshed—intimate relationships.
- *Establishing identity:* Building on the previous vectors, mentors can play a crucial role in helping a protégé construct and come to terms with an enduring adult identity. Crucial identity components may include comfort with one's body and appearance, social and cultural heritage, gender and sexual orientation, and a secure sense of self in light of self-awareness, feedback from significant others, and the integration of these factors. It is here that the mentor must actively practice affirmation of who the protégé is becoming and deliberate modeling of professional behavior.
- *Developing purpose:* An essential developmental task for the college student is determining one's "life calling." The mentor must promote a student's formulation of plans and priorities that integrate vocational aspirations, lifestyle, and the development of strong and enduring commitments to a vocational path and personal relationships.

- *Developing integrity:* The final vector in Chickering's model, college students must clarify personal beliefs and values and learn to act in accordance with them. Progress along this vector hinges on movement in three subdomains (Evans et al., 1998): (a) *humanizing values*—the student moves from rigid moralizing thinking to more egalitarian and humanized values; (b) *personalizing values*—the student overtly adopts core values while respecting the beliefs and values of others; and (c) *becoming congruent*—the student's real and ideal value commitments become increasingly consistent and he or she finds a balance between personal interest and social responsibility.

### Erikson's Stage Theory: Identity Development

One of the more influential theories of psychosocial development with direct relevance to young adulthood is Erikson's Stage Theory of development (Erikson, 1959/1980). According to Erikson's theory, the preeminent developmental task of the college-age person is establishing a workable psychological identity. Of course, not all students will easily achieve identity development and mentors would do well to be familiar with the signs of both successful resolution of this stage and various alternatives to clear identity achievement. Erikson's model has also been applied specifically to women (Josselson, 1987) and ethnic minority students (Evans et al., 1998; Phinney, 1990). Here are some common identity stances or outcomes for young adults:

- *Foreclosure:* The foreclosed student quickly adopts the beliefs, values, and vocational dreams of parents or community with little or no questioning or wrestling with alternatives and options. As a protégé, this student may be less open to intellectual and personal exploration of values; his or her identity may be less securely rooted in a careful process of exploration.
- *Moratorium:* The student locked in identity moratorium may feel unsettled and even overwhelmed by the competing options available in establishing a life path and vocation. Sometimes emerging from overprotective homes or having garnered few diverse life experiences, this student can quickly feel anxious and off-balance when earlier identifications and values are challenged. Looking for the "right" way to be, the student will be disturbed by the myriad possibilities when it comes to identity. Ideally, the period of moratorium gives way to successful identity achievement. The mentor can be steadfast and reassuring during this phase, while reinforcing the value of struggling with identity.

- *Diffusion:* Unlike the student who passes through a period of moratorium, the identity-diffused student actively avoids any identity commitment and may experience rather perpetual emotional turmoil, short-lived relationships, and frequent experimentation with beliefs, values, lifestyles, relationships, and vocational plans. A less healthy stance in many ways, this student may be a challenge to mentor; he or she will require more emotional/counseling functions and may be less predictable emotionally and academically.

- *Identity achievement:* The ideal outcome of the young adult developmental period, this student weathers the crisis of identity, actively explores and critically examines beliefs, values, vocations, and lifestyles, and forms an identity that is often somewhat distinct from parental and childhood identities. Because this student is relinquishing the security of a familiar identity—defined by association with parents—he or she may need the mentor's affirmation most strongly in the early stages of the exploration process. In achieving identity, protégés must come to terms with their cultural, racial, gender, religious, and sexual backgrounds and find a workable integration of these factors as they move ahead personally and professionally.

### Levinson's Early Adult Transition

Daniel Levinson's (Levinson et al., 1978) model of adult development focused on the necessity of evolving an individual *life structure* that could sustain a person through each of the phases of adult development. One stage in the development of the life structure was called the *early adult transition* lasting from approximately 17 through 22 years of age. This transitional period between childhood and adulthood is a crucial opportunity for the college student to separate psychologically and socially from the family of origin. Levinson saw development of a life "dream" as fundamentally important during this phase. Newton (1983) noted: "The dream has the quality of a vision, an ideal imagining of the kind of person one hopes to become, the kind of life one wishes to live, and the kind of world one hopes to make one's stage" (p. 444). A time of excitement and possibility, the undergraduate years are a time when students may seek mentors who can assist them with defining, clarifying, and pursuing the dream. The excellent mentor to undergraduate students is both attentive to and supportive of the life dream. If the dream involves graduate education or an academic career, the mentor's affirmation is more than important, it is indispensable.

### Need for Autonomy

A final theoretical contribution to our understanding of the developmental needs of undergraduates comes from the work of Rice and Brown (1990). They noted that a college student's need for relational autonomy and readiness to become a protégé may be related in a curvilinear fashion during the undergraduate years. Early in college, students are often low in need for autonomy—they experience strong needs for a supportive and growth-facilitating relationship. Later, as they begin to wrestle with identity, the student may need to reject or diminish interaction with the mentor as a means for asserting autonomy and demonstrating independence (as much to self as to the mentor). Finally, after autonomy has been achieved, identity is coalescing, and the life structure is becoming clearer, the student may again be particularly receptive to mentoring—this time focused on career achievement. The stronger a student's sense of purpose and the more open he or she is to developing relationships, the more likely it is that the student will make a good protégé. Rice and Brown's model suggests that mentors to undergraduate students should be tolerant of phasic fluctuations in a protégé's developmental needs, desired mentor functions, contact frequency, and focus.

### SALIENT FUNCTIONS IN MENTORING UNDERGRADUATES

The foregoing consideration of developmental concerns of undergraduate students offers some clues regarding what undergraduates are most likely to require from you in the role of mentor. To conclude this chapter, I offer several specific recommendations for mentoring college students. In addition to the essential mentor functions covered in chapter 4, the following recommendations are designed to orient you to the most important behaviors and attitudes a mentor can offer undergraduate protégés.

- *Interact with students outside of class:* Research literature on college students' out-of-class interaction with faculty confirms that the single most important thing a professor can do for a student is to engage him or her informally (Lampert, 1993; Pascarella, 1980; Terenzini et al., 1996). Faculty are de facto socializing agents for students and student-faculty interaction outside the classroom is both a strong predictor of student success and the strongest predictor of whether a mentorship will form. Professors who encourage discussion in class, explore points of view other than their own, and remain physically accessible during the week are those most likely to foster mentorships with students

(Wilson et al., 1974). Effective mentors seek out promising students and make themselves available when they reciprocate.

- *Provide advising:* Academic advising is often the first step in developing a mentorship (McCarthy & Mangione, 2000). Helping students with course selection and career guidance early on in their college experience can help establish the rapport and trust required for disclosure, relationship development, and important growth in identity.
- *Offer psychosocial support early on:* Although advising is important, provision of encouragement and emotional support early in a student's academic program may be pivotal in helping him or her to become bonded to the institution, capable of weathering the crisis of identity that looms in young adulthood, and more effectively connected to you as mentor. Remember that undergraduates rate psychosocial functions of the mentor to be as or more important than career advising functions (Johnson et al., 2001). Both early in a mentorship, and later, after the relationship has deepened, college students express a need to talk about personal matters, family and friends, important intellectual ideas, and dreams/concerns about careers (Hamilton & Darling, 1996).
- *Be vigilant to expressions of "the dream":* Quite often, adult identity and a sense of a life dream come into view only gradually. It is the mentor's job to identify and narrate glimmers of this vision so that the student can view the early dream as reflected in the mentor's mirror. The excellent undergraduate mentor encourages protégés to pursue areas of interest, explore vocational fascinations, and discuss academic curiosities. The more attentive and deliberate the mentor is in this regard, the more quickly the student can begin the process of owning and shaping a career path. At other times, the dream may strike the student like a lightning bolt—perhaps after reading a chapter, hearing a lecture, or interacting with a professional in the field. At these times too, the mentor must affirm the possibilities, encourage further exploration and begin consideration of ways to propel the student farther along the identified vocational path.
- *Provide technical career coaching:* Keep in mind that most undergraduate students—even the brightest in the bunch—may have little understanding of the stepping stones and selection criteria relevant to your field. After a relationship has been formed, a fledgling dream identified, and clear evidence of vocational motivation established, it is time to begin active career coaching (National Academy of Sciences, 1997). If graduate school is the next step, push them to participate in research, include them in all phases of the research process, encourage detailed exploration of graduate programs, preparation for standardized exams, and accumulation of relevant field experience.

- *Remember—you can never fully avoid re-parenting:* Like it or not, all students bring with them a family and parental legacy characterized by imperfection; even the best students will have some unmet needs. As an authority figure, professional exemplar, and inevitable parental extension, it is likely that some of your protégés will use a mentorship with you for what Mehlman and Glickhauf-Hughes (1994) described as a “corrective interpersonal experience or a developmental second chance” (p. 42). These authors suggest that protégés may demonstrate three common transferences—responding to the mentor as though he or she were a parent or transferring psychodynamics from a previous relationship onto the mentorship. These include: (a) *idealizing*—a protégé attributes idealized or even grandiose personal qualities to the mentor that the protégé always desired in the imperfect parent; (b) *mirroring*—a protégé has nearly insatiable needs for mirroring or confirming/affirming responses regarding his or her worth or performance; (c) *twinsip*—a protégé selects a mentor he or she perceives to be identical or similar in important areas and the protégé’s self-assurance and well-being seem to hinge on constant affirmation of alikeness; the student desires merger with the mentor and is threatened by evidence of dissimilarity.

### SUMMARY

Although less often mentored than graduate students, undergraduates are developmentally poised to benefit markedly from a good mentor. Various models of undergraduate development reveal that students at the college stage are actively wrestling with several key developmental tasks. These include developing competence, becoming autonomous, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing an adult identity, developing a sense of purpose (“the dream”), and managing emotions effectively in relationships. An undergraduate mentor must be particularly sensitive to a student’s identity and recognize that successful identity achievement may only occur after lengthy periods of moratorium or diffusion. When mentoring college students, professors should be particularly deliberate about interacting with students outside of class, providing direct advising and coaching for success in college, graduate school, and career. Mentors should also offer strong psychosocial support (especially early on), nurture fledgling expressions of the dream, and tolerate inevitable parental transferences.

# 10

## Mentoring Graduate Students

The traditional mentor—apprentice model in academe is most closely associated with the unique intellectual and emotional relationship between an established academic and a neophyte professional—a graduate student. In nearly all fields and disciplines, the interpersonal bond between professor and student is an essential characteristic of the graduate school experience (Edem & Ozen, 2003; Shivvy et al., 2003). Research confirms that graduate students’ satisfaction with doctoral training—particularly the dissertation experience—hinges on satisfaction with the primary advisor. Although mentoring is among the most important elements of graduate training, it is also conspicuously absent or disappointing in the eyes of many graduate students (Heinrich, 1991). Some have suggested that the success of graduate education depends thoroughly on the availability of willing and effective mentors (Ellis, 1992).

Although professors in higher education are increasingly pressured to acquire funding, produce scholarship, and demonstrate professional service, it is essential that graduate school faculty assume collective responsibility for addressing the needs of graduate students (Weil, 2001). It is the premise of this chapter that mentoring should be central to the graduate school experience and that establishing a firm professional identity often depends on the availability of an effective mentor. In this chapter, I consider the prevalence of mentoring and some obstacles to getting mentored in graduate school. I then summarize some salient needs and stressors experienced by graduate students and outline some particularly relevant mentoring functions for graduate school faculty. I conclude by considering the range of formats and options for mentoring in graduate programs.

### PREVALENCE OF MENTORING IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

The majority of prevalence rate research in graduate settings comes from the field of psychology. In general, between 50% and 70% of graduate students

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# On Being a Mentor

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