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## **Mentoring for Success: Best Practices to Support Our Students and Colleagues— A Message From the Guest Editors**

Claire McLeod  
*Miami University*

Spencer Benson  
*University of Maryland*  
*Education Innovations International Consulting*

This special issue of the *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* focuses on highlighting the roles that intentional and impactful mentoring, and mentorship training, have in education. The word *mentor* originates from Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus entrusts the care of his household to his friend Mentor. In this role, Mentor serves as teacher and overseer for Odysseus's son, Telemachus. Being a mentor is often attributed to existing responsibilities inherent to the roles of coaches, trainers, advisors, tutors, confidants, and friends, to name but a few. While individuals in these roles certainly can (and often do) contribute positively to a mentorship role, mentoring is a working alliance in which individuals work together over time to support the personal and professional growth, development, and success of mentee partners through career and psychosocial support (National Academies of Sciences, 2019). Mentors serve as a catalyst in unleashing the potential for discovery, curiosity, and personal and professional development of mentees, helping mentees to discover their potential, and facilitating their successes (National Academies of Sciences, 2019).

The facilitation of intentional mentoring, through increased awareness, structured mentorship training, and mentor pairings has allowed informed mentoring practices to evolve in higher education from informal, impromptu, and traditional mentor-mentee apprentice

occurrences within the hidden curriculum to center stage. This shift has led to improvements in addressing mentoring needs at numerous stages of an individual's career progression. For example, the importance and value of high-quality mentor training in support of the next generation of practitioners and educators in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Medicine (STEMM) has been recently highlighted by the National Academies of Science and other STEMM-related agencies. In addition, the role of high-impact practices within these mentoring contexts has been shown to be particularly impactful for minoritized and historically excluded populations. This is true for students entering their first year of college as well as faculty in various career and leadership positions within higher education. Furthermore, the importance of mentoring in higher education is increasingly reflected in the request for mentoring statements in research grants, job, and fellowship applications, and throughout appointment, promotion, and tenure processes.

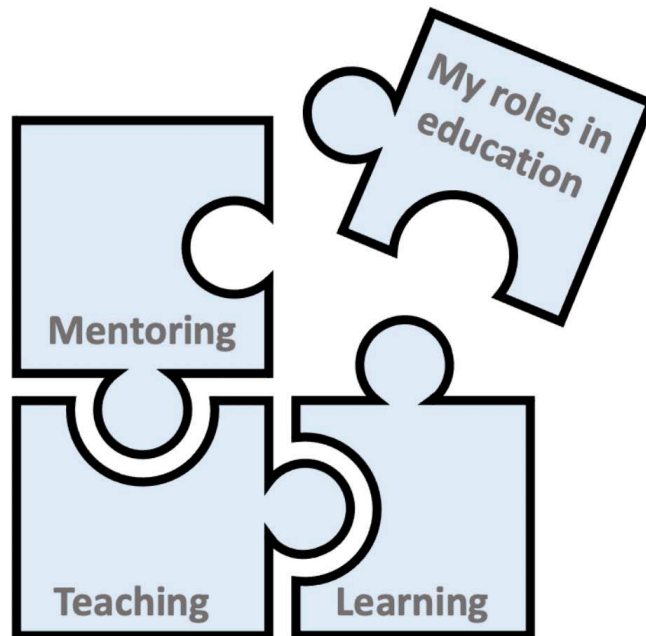
Mentoring is the third component of the triumvirate (teaching, learning, and mentoring) of the present-day educational landscape (see Figure 1). As is highlighted in a number of this issue's articles, a variety of definitions for mentoring exist, and sometimes advising, coaching, and counseling (among others) are used interchangeably as synonyms. Advising, however, is often limited to providing specific information to students, peers, and/or colleagues regarding pathways for a particular course of study or action (for example, degree requirements or promotion guidelines), whereas coaching is broadly focused on the development of a specific skill or attribute (for example, athleticism, artistry, musical performance). Mentoring goes beyond each of these and involves the development of an ongoing dynamic, personal connection between the mentor and mentee that allows both individuals to learn and grow from each other. As the mentor-mentee relationship evolves, an exchange of experiences occurs, and both have the potential to gain new perspectives on their academic, professional, and personal lives.

Many university faculty lack formal knowledge and/or training on how to mentor students, junior faculty, and peer colleagues. As a result, their approaches to mentoring are often highly dependent on how they were mentored instead of being informed by the significant knowledge base and research that supports and facilitates effective mentoring. As with effective and impactful teaching and learning, effective mentoring can be learned, refined, informed, and improved upon through intentionally structured training that encourages reflection and promotes conversations among peers.

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Figure 1  
**Envisioning How Teaching, Learning, and Mentoring  
Contribute to Our Multifaceted Roles as Educators**

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As described in several of the articles, mentoring is a high-impact practice that facilitates the learning, development, and career pathways of students, whether they are in high school or pursuing higher education as undergraduate or graduate students (Beane-Katner, 2014; Becker, 2019; Palmer et al., 2015). For undergraduate students, mentoring provides an avenue for relationship building, which can promote a sense of belonging and, thereby, improve retention and persistence, all while facilitating career connections and professional network building. In addition, the establishment of these mentoring relationships supports the advancement of critical career skills, allows for increased self-awareness, supports the development of cultural

competencies, and encourages success in academic, professional, and personal contexts. For graduate students, mentoring is often seen as an apprentice association between the mentor and mentee. However, student mentees need more than this dyad type of relationship, and it is unwise to assume that a single mentor can provide the full range of mentoring needs for individual students (de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Terry & Ghosh, 2015).

As is highlighted and explored in several of the articles, there is a strong need for a variety of approaches and mechanisms to facilitate faculty mentor training. These approaches need to be effective and efficient and ensure that faculty are prepared to mentor increasingly diverse student cohorts. As is often the case with teaching, many university faculty lack formal knowledge or training on how to be an effective mentor. As a result, they will often base their approach to mentoring (at least initially) on how they were mentored rather than utilize the significant knowledge base and evidence-based research that supports and defines effective mentoring. Like effective teaching and learning, effective and impactful mentoring can be learned and continuously improved upon through training, enhanced communication, reflection, and conversations with peers, as well as through institutional support.

The articles in this special issue of the *Journal* provide opportunities for reflection, discussion, and consideration of institutional changes with respect to faculty responsibilities and whole person education.

The issue begins with definitions and insights regarding the various types of mentoring environments in support of mentee professional development. **April Duckworth's** "Mentorship: Practices and Support for Our Students" provides a narrative overview and context for the roles of mentoring as well as summarizing key concepts and definitions of mentoring practices and their impacts.

The next three articles address mentoring within the context of undergraduate student education. **Laura Cruz et al.** examine the role of mentoring and study abroad practices using open-ended survey responses from practitioners from a range of institutional types in "Mentoring Undergraduate Research in Global Contexts: Insights From a National Study." Through this data, psychosocial, instructional, and rational mentoring practices are described and analyzed.

**Steffano Oyanader Sandoval et al.'s** "The Holistic FUEL Program: A Renaissance Foundry-Design Mentoring Approach for Underrepresented Populations in STEM" describes a novel program approach that connects co-learning and mentoring and is designed to support

populations from historically under-represented groups. The year-long program involves both undergraduate and graduate students and highlights the importance of peer and co-mentoring.

In “Mentoring as the Third Space: A Narrative Inquiry on Pre-Service Teachers at a Chinese Comprehensive University,” **Pang Hashaio & Wang Qing** envision mentorship as the third space bridging the concrete with the imaginary spaces using two compelling narratives from pre-service teachers. The article illustrates the role of reflection, transformation, and hybridity in mentor-mentee relationships resulting in new insights and growth by both the mentor and mentee.

The issue concludes with three articles describing different faculty mentor training approaches. These include virtual, traditional, and hybrid methodologies that can be implemented at a variety of institutional types throughout higher education. In “Preparing Faculty to Mentor Students for Success in Undergraduate Research,” **Anton Tolman & Benjamin Johnson** trace the evolution and successes of a grass roots institutional approach for faculty mentorship training at a large regional university with open access and a large population of first-generation students. This work illustrates how a faculty-driven initiative can begin to transform mentoring and facilitate institutional change.

**Jennifer Aumiller & Blessing Enekwe’s** “Collaboration Through a Pandemic: A Virtual Inter-Institutional Collaborative Faculty Mentoring Training Workshop Model” describes a collaborative virtual faculty mentorship training program at two R1 research-intensive universities. The authors share evidence-based best practices developed from nationally sponsored mentoring programs that focused on mentoring training of STEM faculty, post-docs, and graduate students. They introduce readers to a number of important and useful resources that can be drawn upon in developing and instituting faculty mentor training in their own institutions.

A hybrid program for faculty training that involves online video modules and synchronous faculty discussion at a large R2 institution is the focus of the issue’s final article, **Kelly Young et al.’s** “Faculty Mentor Training to Change Mentoring Practices at a Diverse R2 University.” A detailed program assessment documents the positive impacts that mentor training has and provides insights and models for online adaptation by other institutions, an approach that includes faculty discussions and reflections.

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**Claire McLeod** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geology and Environmental Earth Science at Miami University. She has worked extensively with undergraduate and graduate students for over a decade and has participated in a variety of institutional and discipline-wide mentoring programs both as a mentor and a mentee, including, most recently, Cross Cultural Mentoring through Miami University's Graduate School and Miami University Regionals Empowerment for Determined Women. She is the Principal Investigator on a current National Science Foundation (NSF) Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (IUSE) GEOPATHs award, which focuses on undergraduate student professional development. Through this, she supports students as they begin to establish their multi-mentor networks and explore their identities as scientists. Claire is the current Chair of Miami University's Center for Teaching Excellence Senate Committee and a current Naus Family Faculty Scholar at Miami University. She also serves on the Ohio Academy of Science's Board of Trustees, and she has served as a Geoscience Division Councilor for the Council on Undergraduate Research since 2016. **Spencer Benson** is a twice-retired Professor (University of Maryland College Park, 2014, and University of Macau, 2017), where he directed centers for teaching and learning. He currently is a consultant with the University of Maryland Graduate School focusing on professional development for graduate students and postdocs. He is the Founder and Director of Education Innovations International Consulting, LLC, and consults nationally and internationally on faculty development, mentoring, and improving teaching and learning for all. He has given teaching and learning workshops and talks in more than 15 countries, both in-person and virtually. He serves on the editorial board for several teaching and learning journals and is a board member for Women's Empowerment in Voice (WEAV), a non-profit that supports education for girls in need in the Mekong Delta. He often works with the United Board for Christian Education in Asia to foster 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning through whole person education. He is the recipient of numerous teaching awards and was a Fulbright Scholar (2008-2009) at the University of Hong Kong. Spencer is a microbial geneticist by training and has a longstanding interest and activity in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within STEM disciplines as well as improving learning for all students, especially those from underserved populations.