

Definitions of Mentoring

Findings from the focus groups with STEM faculty, students, and others indicated that definitions and perceptions of mentoring varied widely. In general, students and faculty indicated that they made a distinction between academic advising and mentoring. Students viewed the mentor relationship as a personal one. In the focus group, participants generally agreed with the definition developed by Marilyn Suiter, National Science Foundation Program Director, Presidential Awards of Excellence in Science, Engineering and Mathematics Mentoring (PAESMEM) that:

Mentoring is an interaction between a more experienced person and a less experienced person; it provides guidance that motivates the mentored person to take action.

Becky Wai-Ling Packard from Mount Holyoke College, whose primary research centers on mentoring, provided us with a similar definition for mentoring.

Mentoring is a term generally used to describe a relationship between a less experienced individual, called a mentee or protégé, and a more experienced individual known as a mentor. It is important to acknowledge that the term “mentor” is borrowed from the male guide, Mentor, in Greek mythology, and this historical context has informed traditional manifestations of mentoring.

More current definitions of mentoring suggest that mentoring is a *two-way, mutually beneficial relationship*, particularly in the employment sector.

<http://www.coachingandmentoring.com/mentsurvey.htm>

Mentoring can be formal or informal; short or long term; and may vary in time. The function of mentoring generally includes:

- Psychosocial mentoring;
- Role modeling, which can be viewed as psychosocial mentoring; and
- Career related mentoring.

Mentoring is structured in a variety of the ways including:

- One-to-one relationships;
- Peer group mentoring; and
- Electronic mentoring.

In addition, mentoring structures include:

- A network of multiple mentors and
- Cascade mentoring.

Cascade mentoring is often used in STEM research laboratories, where a professor may supervise graduate students or advanced undergraduates in research, who in turn, supervise lower division undergraduates.

Other types of mentoring include:

- Informal mentoring. *Informal mentoring occurs when two people establish a developmental alliance without the assistance or guidance from the organization* -- www.mentorcanada.ca/en/en_keynote/dclutterbuck2.doc
- Enhanced informal mentoring - *Enhanced informal mentoring falls somewhere between formal and informal mentoring. Mentors and mentees typically find each other on their own (rather than become matched by a coordinator or committee), and the pair follows a somewhat structured process. At least one of the pair has learned mentoring structure, protocol, and skills and gently manages the process.*
http://www.mentoringgroup.com/html/idea_25.htm
- Reverse mentoring is peer mentoring usually centered around gaining technical expertise and understanding different perspectives.
<http://www.coachingandmentoring.com/reversementoringresults.htm>

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