Turning Prospects Into Superstars: The Department Chair’s Role in Mentoring Junior Faculty

New Orleans, LA, February 9, 2017

Christian K. Hansen, PhD
Professor and Associate Dean, Eastern Washington University

New Orleans, LA, February 9, 2017
Disclaimer

• This is NOT a research-based presentation. (after all how many of us went to college to study how to be a department chair?)
• Some further reading and resources will be provided near the end
• Case studies (unless otherwise indicated) are inspired by real world experiences and intended as conversation starters

They are not:
- Documentaries
- “Reality Academia”
- Pure Fiction
(maybe somewhere in between)
Setting the Stage for this Workshop

“We know a thing or two because we’ve seen a thing or two”

My personal “thing or two”:

• 24 years in Higher Education.
• Assistant/Associate/Full Professor
• Department Chair (8 years)
• Associate Dean (5+ years)
• Search Committee Chair, DPC Chair, Faculty Mentor …
Workshop Overview

- What Makes a Good Prospect?
- The Mentoring Process: Who Does What? Who is Responsible?
- Mentoring vs Evaluation
- Things To Consider in Mentoring
  - Teaching
  - Scholarship
  - Service
  - Obstacles
Shared Goals in Hiring Faculty?

**Faculty Candidate:**
- Get a Job
- Get Tenure
- Get Promoted
- Enjoy Life/Job

**Faculty Colleague:**
- Have Productive/Contributing Colleagues
- Maintain High Teaching Standards
- Develop Research Collaborations

**The Sweet Spot:**
A Good Fit

**Chair/Dean:**
- Promote Department/College
- Foster Student Success
- Return on Investment

*Eastern Washington University*
Hiring Right – The Million Dollar Question

Poor Hiring Decision => Loss of Investment
Good Hiring Decision ⇆ Return on Investment
There is no best practice for turning poor prospects into superstars!
A good hiring decision is a necessary but not sufficient condition for success
The Hiring Decision

**Good Hiring Decision**
- Strong Candidate/Excellent Fit
- Strong Candidate/Good Fit
- Acceptable Candidate/Excellent Fit

**Challenges**
- Timing is Everything
- HR Policies are designed for hiring “best candidates” not necessarily “best fit”
- Criteria for “acceptable fit” must be decided in advance

**Bad Hiring Decision**
- Weak Candidate/Poor Fit
- Strong Candidate/Poor Fit
- Weak Candidate/Good Fit

**Poor Excuses for a Bad Decision**
- This was the least worst candidate!
- We don’t want to lose our position
- The best we could do with low salaries. We do not want to create inequity
- We are not a competitive institution
How Are We Doing?

• 18 years of longitudinal data
• 18 T/T faculty hired (average 1/year)
• 10 still actively employed (56%)
• 6 resigned (33%)
• 1 not retained for tenure (6%)
• 1 died prematurely
• Poor fit or weak candidate(s)??

Reference: Hansen (2011)
Common Reasons for Not Earning Tenure

- Poor Teaching
- Insufficient Scholarship
- Lack of Contributions to Department
- Unclear Expectations
- Lack of Adequate and Meaningful Feedback
- Poor Time Management

Effective Mentoring?
Common Reasons for Resignations

- High Teaching Loads – Lack of Opportunity for Scholarship
- Pressure to Publish and Write Grants – Lack of Appreciation of Teaching
- Lack of Belonging
- Conflict with Chair or Colleagues
- Low Pay – Better Offer Available
- Lack of Spousal Accommodation
- Other Family Related Issues

Effective Mentoring?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Take a moment to introduce yourself: Name, Position, Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Share with your table: Who is responsible for new faculty mentoring in your department/college? (e.g. Chair, Personnel Committee, Senior Faculty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who assigns mentors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you have a formal mentoring program or formal department policies/procedures or is it informal? Strengths/weaknesses of your mentoring program/practice?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mentoring/Evaluation at EWU (Mathematics)

- Mentors are assigned by the Departmental Personnel Committee (DPC) made up of all tenured faculty except the department chair (currently 7).
- Mentors assist with writing the Faculty Activity Plan (FAP).
- Mentors may rotate over the probationary period.
- Department Chair and DPC do independent evaluations.
- DPC Evaluations are mostly done by the mentors (recommendations voted on by the DPC).
- Frequent classroom observations are required by P&P Manual.
- Generally feedback is communicated effectively to the candidate in a timely manner.
- Sometimes things fall through the cracks.
The Who is Who in Evaluation and Mentoring

Evaluators
- Personnel Committee
- Department Chair
- Dean
- Provost
- President

Successful mentoring requires Evaluators and Mentors to Be on the “Same Page”
Mentoring versus Evaluation

**Mentoring**
- Coach
- Proactive (before the fact)
- Stimulate Progress
- Failure Prevention
- Continuous
- Colleague
- Experience
- Calling

**Evaluation**
- Referee
- Reactive (after the fact)
- Assess Progress
- Failure Detection
- Discrete
- Boss
- Authority
- Chore
Objectives of Evaluation

- Tenure/Promotion Decision
- Faculty Retention
- Document Achievements
- Document Productivity
- Maintain Program Excellence
Objectives of Mentoring

- Inspire Professional Growth
- Understanding the Rules of Evaluation
- Showing Where the Mines are Buried
- Sharing Best Practices
- Avoiding Surprises
- Making Evaluation Trivial
Mentoring and Evaluation is a Two-way Street

• Classroom observations:
  I will visit your class
  Please come visit mine too

• Scholarly Collaboration
  I will help you with your grant writing
  Would you like to join me in my project?

• Service Load
  I want to protect you from service “overload”
  We got this!

• Feedback
  Here is how you are doing
  What can I/we do to better support you?
Case: It’s all good. Or is it?

Questions to discuss:
What could a chairperson have done differently to avoid this situation?

How can effective faculty mentoring help avoid issues like this one?
Mentoring Teaching: Things to Consider

- What student population are you serving?
  Most institutions are not like the one your new faculty member came from

- Student evaluations: What do they mean?

- Student success: What does it mean?

- Are students your customers? Or your product?

- Expectations to student performance? Dealing with low exam scores.

- Dealing with plagiarism, cheating and class disruptions.

- Assessment of student learning
What a Department Chair Might Hear from Students

- Professor X does not know how to teach
- Professor Y does not speak English/ I cannot understand his/her accent
- I am teaching myself
- Exams are nothing like the homework
- I am paying for this class so I should …
- I work really hard so I should …
How to Talk to Students

• Tell me more. I am listening.
• What have you tried so far?
• Here are some of our resources: …
• I am here to help you. It is my job
• Your success is my success (we are on the same team)
• Why exams are different from homework
• We don’t score points during practice. Only on game day.
• On practice days I am your coach. On game day I am only the score keeper.
• Let’s try this … and then let’s meet again on …
Mentoring Scholarship: Things to Consider

- What kind of institution are you at?
  Most institutions are not R-1 institutions

- What is a realistic level of scholarship?
  What is required?
  An FAP (or faculty handbook/P&P) is an important document
  This conversation should take place ASAP after hiring.

- Don’t reinvent the wheel
  Build on something you know.

- Establish collaborations
  A mentor can be of great help.

- Pursue Funding
  A small summer grant can make a world of difference.

- Involve your students
Scholarship: What Can a Chair Do to Help?

• Provide Start-up Funds
  This is part of your $M investment.

• Travel Funds
  Prioritize junior faculty. Support accepted presentations

• Share Funding Opportunities
  Facilitate grant-writing training.

• Recognize Achievements
  Never miss an opportunity to brag.

• Be an Advocate for Your Faculty
Mentoring Service: Things to Consider

• What is a realistic level of service? What is required?
  An FAP (or faculty handbook/P&P) is an important document

• Learn when to say no
  Don’t volunteer for everything.

• Be a Team Player
  Not a workaholic.

• Engage in Meaningful Service

• Find a way to combine service and scholarship
  Serve on a professional board
  Serve on a conference organizing committee
Service: What Can a Chair Do to Help?

• Limit University Service for the First Few Years
• Ask Senior Faculty to Chair Committees
• Help Identify Meaningful Service Activities
• Recognize Achievements
Case: Scheduling Challenges

Questions to discuss:
Did the chairperson provide adequate accommodations for this faculty member?

How can effective faculty mentoring help avoid issues like this one?
Table Discussion

• Case: Keeping the Family Together

• Questions to discuss:

Did the chairperson provide adequate accommodations for this faculty member?

Does faculty mentoring play a role in family issues like this one?
Stephen Covey: Put the BIG rocks in first, then the smaller rocks, then the sand …

- Learn the art of prioritizing
- Scholarship procrastination is a common obstacle
- Help faculty create balance.
Closing Remarks and Recommendations

- Faculty Mentoring and Evaluation Processes are equally important and must be aligned.
- Hiring faculty is a Million Dollar investment. Treat your investment with care.
- There are no best practices for turning bad prospects into superstars.
- Mentoring and evaluation are two-way streets.
- Time Management Matters.
Further Reading
Internet Resources

• Maryellen Weimer: Faculty Mentoring Faculty: Relationships that Work
  http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/faculty-mentoring-faculty-relationships-that-work/

• Marjorie A. Olmstead: Mentoring New Faculty: Advice to Department Chairs
  http://faculty.washington.edu/olmstd/research/Mentoring.html

• University of Michigan-Dearborn: Faculty Mentoring
  http://umdearborn.edu/107701/
Comments, Questions, Final Thoughts?
Thank You For Your Time

Don’t forget to fill out your evaluation!

Christian K. Hansen
Mentoring@ChristianKHansen.com
Presentation available at: