



Mentoring and Coaching: The Tools for a Great Faculty Coach and a Great Faculty Mentor

SPEAKERS

Tierney King, Ken Alford and Tyler Griffin, Nicki Monahan

Tierney King 00:01

This is the Faculty Focus Live podcast sponsored by the Teaching Professor. I'm your host, Tierney King, and I'm here to bring you inspiration, energy, and creative strategies that you can utilize in your every day teaching. Maybe it's your coach from high school, an instructor from college, a colleague who helped mentor you - no matter who it is, having someone to mentor you, coach you, motivate you, and help you be the best version of yourself is priceless. In this episode, we'll talk about mentoring programs, the value of having a mentor or coach, and finally, the difference between a mentor and coach. To start Ken Alford and Tyler Griffin talk about what mentoring entails in their program, Creating and Maintaining a Robust Faculty Mentoring Program.

Ken Alford and Tyler Griffin 00:53

So if you think about this, when you're assigned someone as a mentor, or when you're just joining a new faculty as a mentee, both sides of that equation are daunting. And it seems like it's just too tough. Many people have read *Outliers*, and if you haven't, I highly recommend it. But Malcolm Gladwell, in that book *Outliers*, put something into the consciousness of our society that stuck. One of the concepts that comes out of his book is that it takes about 10,000 hours to achieve mastery in something. And people read that and they thought, good heavens, this is just a bridge too far. Because some of your faculty, if you're hiring them right out of a graduate program, they may be coming in with very few hours in this program. And it's just overwhelming to think it's going to take 10,000 hours before they're going to be proficient. Well, if you look at on YouTube, and the TED talks, there's a TED Talk by Josh Kaufman - highly recommend watching this sometime. This is a great thing to do with students that you're mentoring as well. But Josh says, and he's also put this into an excellent short read book, but he says in his experience, 20 hours of practice is all that's required to break through what he calls the frustration barrier. That's when you go from knowing nothing about a subject to being reasonably competent. And if you think about it, even our two credit hour classes provide students with more experience than that. And during one of those classes, they become reasonably competent in the new area. And so this is the approach, this is the view rather than that 10,000 hours from Gladwell, we would recommend and suggest that this 20 hour approach from Josh is the right mindset to go into kind of a mentoring environment and recognize that a mentor and a mentee over time will spend approximately 20 hours together during the course of that mentoring experience. So this quote from Carol Moen, who's a leading researcher in mentoring, she says mentoring sometimes has to be formalized, even mandated or simply will not occur. I'm guessing that everybody in the audience has

enough things on their calendar, enough things on their plate, that you're not spending a lot of time sitting in your office twiddling your thumbs thinking, "Gee, I've got nothing to do right now." And if your department chair or a university representative comes and says, "We want you to spend extra time mentoring," most people aren't saying, "Oh, good, I was hoping you would ask me to do that." And so it has to sometimes be mandated to get that ball rolling, and to start getting some momentum in this direction.

Tierney King 03:23

So once you get faculty on board with a mentoring program, what are the next steps? This four step model of show them, help them, watch them, and let them will be key for mentoring success.

Ken Alford and Tyler Griffin 03:36

I'm going to proceed with some mentoring principles. So here's something that you can tangibly put into practice, as a mentor, as an administrator, or as a teacher - in any setting. I learned this from my dissertation chair, David Merrill, in instructional technology. And he has this nice little model. It starts with, when you're helping people to grow into a skill or a newfound ability or a new responsibility, step one is show them. If they can't see what it looks like, what you're asking them to do, then you might be spending a whole bunch of time explaining things and they're not getting it. But if they can see it, because you've demonstrated it for them, they see what it looks like, that speaks volumes compared to definitions and explanations. Step two, after you show them is to help them. Now the baton starts to get passed to them. You've shown them, now you give them the reins, so to speak, but you're standing right there, you help them, whether it be in teaching or scholarship and research or in citizenship assignment. You don't abandon them just because they saw you do it once or twice and think, okay, they've got it. You observe, and you've noticed what they do well, what they don't do well, and then you help them with it. And then you step back. Now, this is the real observer, and this is hard for some mentors to do, which is to allow people to actually do it without you standing right beside them or holding their hand along the way. You watch them, you let them be in charge, the baton is fully in their hand. Whereas in step two, you're both holding on to it. Now they've got it, but you're watching them. And if all things go well, then you can end with step four, which is let them. And that involves trust. Trust them, follow up occasionally and give them encouragement, but let them do it. Which means you have to be okay with them occasionally getting some things wrong, and needing to give corrective formative kind and candid feedback to guide them along the way, but you're letting them own it. So this little stepwise progression here is extremely valuable, not just for mentoring, but for teaching in general, for leading in general: show them, help them, watch them, then let them.

Tierney King 05:48

So, a mentoring program isn't the only solution, though. Nicki Monahan explains the difference between coaching and mentoring, and what coaching can do for your faculty in this 20 Minute Mentor, How Do I Move from Mentoring to Coaching in Faculty Development?

Nicki Monahan 06:03

Many colleges and universities have had mentoring programs for quite some time. And they're really a valuable resource for faculty who are new to an institution. But these days coaching is a common buzzword. And so there's a lot of confusion between what's faculty mentoring and faculty coaching.

People get them confused, but they're actually very different processes. Coaching, however, is a different skill set. So I want you to take a minute, and think about a coach that you had an experience of either watching or working with yourself. And when most of us think about coaching, we think about sports. So one of my favorite coaches of all time was Phil Jackson, a great basketball coach. Some people say he was the greatest coach of all times, other people say he just had the greatest players to work with. But when I was a kid, I wanted to be a tennis player. And I had a fabulous coach. I was a small, scrawny kid, not too strong. But my coach helped me use the talents and the abilities I had to reach my peak potential. My tennis coach saw that I was a lefty, then he helped me learn how to use a kick out serve wide on the ad court. And he really helped me achieve my potential. So take a minute right now and think about a coach that you've known. Maybe somebody you've watched on TV, or at a game, or coach that you've worked with yourself. If you think about that coach, you probably come up with some ideas about how coaches do different things than mentors do. And I've also seen some pretty bad coaches at my kids' hockey game who scream and antagonize other coaches and antagonize referees, but the best coaches are really positive role models, they inspire, they motivate, they observe and analyze. And this is a really important element of coaching. And they really focus on skill development. A coach's primary responsibility is to observe their coaches skills, to look at what's happening, to take a peek at what's going well, and what's going not so well, to give some feedback. And finally, and this is the most important thing, to have really high expectations for improvement. And if you think about that list, and you think about a mentor that you may have had, you'll see that coaches really have a different role. And their role is to make you be the best performer that you can be. And so one of the important things that coaches, faculty coaches do is that very early on in their working relationship, they focus in with a laser like focus. And if you look at that image of the dart at the center of the board, we're really looking for a target. And we're really looking for goal orientation. What is it that you as an early career faculty member or a mid career faculty member or even a late career faculty member want to get better at? So maybe your teaching is feeling stale? Or you're brand new, and you're not sure what the best strategies are? So one of the goal orientations of faculty coaching is teaching strategies, and in particular using evidence based teaching strategies. We have a scholarship of teaching and learning, which tells us which strategies work better in which situations. Or maybe you're struggling with getting research grants. And you know that in order to be successful in tenure, you need to do more research, you could work with a faculty coach, to focus on your research, or on your writing. And we know that even those of us who write professionally, can sometimes get stuck. We get stuck in procrastination, we get stuck in spending all kinds of time doing our research. And we never actually get to writing, we don't finish our writing. Sometimes what looks like personal goals can actually move into the faculty coaching arena. So something like time management, or work life balance might be the goals of a faculty coach, and coachee. Because those things might be interfering with your peak performance in the classroom, or the lecture hall or the lab. And finally, faculty coaches, like faculty mentors, also focus in on the tenure and promotion process. But coaches might do it in a very different way. A mentor might give you some advice, and tips and suggestions on how to be successful at tenure and promotion. But a coach is going to really work with you for targeted goals, and how to achieve those goals, so that you are successful in the tenure and promotion process.

Tierney King 11:37

So you know the difference between coaching and mentoring now, but what are the requirements for a coaching program? What does it entail? What will you need to kick start coaching at your own

university, and who can be a coach - a good coach? In this program, Is Coaching a Good Fit for My Faculty Development Program?, you'll go through all the steps you may need to take to implement coaching at your own university.

Nicki Monahan 12:00

So there are really five basic requirements for coaching program, and they're all important. And some of them may be more difficult to achieve than others. But as I go through these, I want you to think about your institution, your current role in faculty development, what's currently being offered or not being offered, and that will help you make a decision about whether or not coaching is right for your program. So the five elements are the institutional culture: what's the culture like at your college or university and how that might contribute to making coaching work? And do you have administrative support? And always having support from the top makes it a whole lot easier to implement a new initiative for coaching program to work, some small physical resources are needed, not a lot. But they are important, probably the biggest thing that's needed is human resources, the people factor. And finally, I'm a strong believer in good coach training if you're going to implement coaching in your faculty development program. Another thing that helps to lay the groundwork for coaching is some focus on evidence-based practices. So if at your institution, you have faculty who are deeply immersed in the scholarship of teaching and learning, who are having conversations already about what are the best methodologies or pedagogies to use, then you may already have some solid foundation for coaching program. Some faculty development programs already use learning communities, or communities of practice. And these are peer based models where faculty members come together to talk about specific aspects of teaching and learning, to have conversations, peer conversations, about teaching and learning. Maybe peers observe each other's classrooms, maybe they share their syllabi, maybe they talk together about their research projects, maybe they get together for lunch and learns or book clubs or casual informal conversations. And if those sorts of things are happening already at your institution, then again, you may be already well along the way to adding in coaching. And now take a moment and think about your institution. Who would be the leaders? Do I have a director of a Center for Teaching and Learning? Who's willing to allocate faculty developers to coaching? Or do I have colleagues who work in faculty development, one of whom might be willing to take the lead and have those people who's willing to commit to training to actually learn the skills that are involved in effective faculty coaching? And I know, these days, anybody can call themselves a coach. Anybody can print up a card and say I'm a coach. But really for effective faculty coaching, you need effective training. So think in your institution, who might lead, who might coach, who might train other coaches, and who might want to be coached? And how would I bring those people into a program? The next element is to think about who makes a great coach. And before I started coaching, I thought I was a pretty good teacher. I had been a mentor to younger faculty. I facilitated faculty learning, and I had my own scholarship. And I thought that would make me a great coach. Here's the bad news. Great teachers don't necessarily make great coaches. Great mentors don't necessarily make great coaches. Great facilitators don't necessarily make great coaches. And great scholars sometimes make really bad coaches. But if you want to have great coaches in your group coaching program, you need to think seriously about what makes a great coach. And again, take a minute to think back to your own life experience of great coaches, maybe coaches that you've watched, coaches that you've observed, coaches that you've been coached by great coaches are typically people who know how to inspire. They know how to motivate. They know how to observe carefully, and analyze, they know how to listen. They know how to

ask good questions, and they know how to help people through the change process. And sometimes that's a hard process. And I would suggest that great coaches aren't born, but they're made and one of the things that makes great coaching is great coach training.

Tierney King 17:05

Whether you're driving to work, or you just need a 15-minute think session. We hope the fact the focus life podcast will inspire your teaching, and offer ideas that you can integrate into your own course. For more information on the resources included in this episode, please check out the links provided in the episode description.