

Leadership Learning Collaborative Teleconference: Mentorship

Call Summary

October 8, 2013

Moderator:

- **Dr. Eileene Shake**, DNP, RN, NEA-BC Senior Strategic Policy Advisor to the Center to Champion Nursing in America (CCNA)

Presenters:

- **Barbara Given**, PhD, RN, FAAN University Distinguished Professor, Director of the PhD program and Interim Director of the Center for Innovation and Research at Michigan State University, College of Nursing
- **Wanda Montalvo**, MSN, RN, Former Clinical Director for the New York State Diabetes Campaign. Innovative executive nurse leader whose work is aimed at improving quality, access and reducing health disparities. She was a 2012 Jonas Nurse Leaders Scholar
- **Cynthia Vlasich**, MBA, BSN, RN Director, Education and Leadership, The Honor Society of Nursing Sigma Theta Tau International in Indianapolis.

Goals of the Call:

- To learn about the various aspects of mentorship, its value and relevance to nurse leadership
- To examine the different elements of starting a mentorship program and the characteristics of a good mentor/mentee relationship

Call Summary:

Dr. Shake introduced the speakers who will share their experiences on mentorship. She said a metric that is closely tied with the work of the Action Coalitions are the leadership outcomes from CCNAs 2013 budget work plan, which measures how many ACs implement proven and successful leadership programs that will prepare nurses to lead. Mentorship is a key element of this.

In her remarks entitled, "There is No Magic to Mentoring," **Barbara Given** of Michigan State University, College of Nursing said "We have to become savvy on how best to develop mentoring." In today's competitive world, mentoring is crucial.

In her own career, Given said that a new President at the University six years ago charged her with developing a mentorship program for the faculty. With a National Science Foundation grant, the focus was on women in science. She also recounted the importance in her life of having a mentor when she served on a board of all men. The mentor taught her how to navigate the workings of the board.

"I'm a believer," Given said.

Why Mentor?

It is important to have mentoring programs at a University to meet higher standards, understand institutional values, improve retention of faculty and better prepare the faculty. Other reasons for mentorship:

- ✓ Faculty competitiveness for tenure
- ✓ New and early investigator opportunities
- ✓ Foster faculty development, enhance academic excellence
- ✓ Develop the next scientists/future scientists
- ✓ Develop faculty, quicker time to productivity
- ✓ Build a stronger faculty with increased productivity
- ✓ Encourage and support high flyers
- ✓ Support ethnic minorities and disadvantaged
- ✓ Support women – through glass ceiling
- ✓ When organization changes or new leadership, new roles (helps with transitions)
- ✓ Facilitate progression and career advancement in rank – promotions, tenure, merit
- ✓ Leadership development
- ✓ Faculty member satisfaction / morale
- ✓ Develop or enhance areas of excellence

Principles of the Role and the Roles of a Mentor

There is a different kind of mentoring needed at different stages of a career – pre-tenure, tenure and post tenure. **Given** says that most of the time they do well with the junior faculty and lead them into the middle group but do not do as good a job with the mid-level faculty in raising them to the senior level. “We need to think about the different stages of a career.”

A mentor should be an advisor, a role model, a coach, a protector, supportive, advocate, challenger/motivator, a companion, resource, teacher, counselor and someone who can navigate the unwritten rules.

Desirable Characteristics of a Mentor

“It is key that people choose to be mentors,” said **Given**. Appointing someone as a mentor hardly ever works because it was not their choice. Mentors should also:

- Believe in importance of development
- Commit to next generation of scientists
- Exemplify excellence and integrity
- Ability to give constructive feedback
- Be accessible / commits time
- Have sustained optimism
- Listens actively/responds, hearing, interprets
- Has organizational skills
- Has interpersonal skills
- Has the respect of others
- Has knowledge and influence
- Willing to share
- Trust worthy (consistent, competent, confidentiality)
- Encourages independent behavior
- Provides constructive feedback

What are the Challenges of Being a Mentor?

Given said that one of the challenges mentors face is to “stay motivated and think about days in the past when you were in the early stages of your career.”

Other challenges mentors have are to assess mentee's background (knowledge and skills), identify mentee's motivation, dealing with mentee's inexperience (knowledge and skills), addressing mentee's misconceptions, setting reasonable goals, keeping mentees engaged, fostering mentee's independence, setting limits and boundaries, giving negative feedback to the mentee on lack of progress, allocating time and finding resources.

It is not easy to give a person negative feedback but if the mentee is not performing, the mentor can't "mince words," **Given** said. Criticism should be done constructively and early in the process.

What are the characteristics of a Mentee?

Given cited eagerness and desire to learn as key characteristics of a good mentee. Also, seriousness in the relationship, flexibility and an understanding of the mentor's schedule, promptness for all appointments, provides feedback (a report) even if nothing is requested, discusses personal and professional life, has respect for mentor, and is motivated.

Mentees say they perform better and feel like they are growing professionally, says **Given**. Other benefits are:

- Leads to personal and professional growth
- Job enrichment
- Technical skills and expertise
- Develops self confidence
- Protected relationship
- Development of ideas and learning

The Mentee role includes understanding of tenure and promotion, policies of institution and the unwritten rules of behavior.

Mentees also should sort out priorities and achieve a balance in life. They should also be aware of the culture of the community in which they are operating and learn to say "no" when something is not in their best interest.

Research Mentor Program at Michigan State University

Each faculty member at MSU gets a research and a teaching mentor until they're tenured. Each faculty writes one, three and five year goals. Reappointment is at three years and tenure in six years. Mentors meet twice a month with junior faculty and the external mentor for two years is primarily for research, grant reviews and manuscripts. Goals are used at annual review with performance indicators. The internal mentor is not a supervisor but more a senior faculty member. **Given** said the mentorship program focuses on both professional and personal growth.

Cynthia Vlasich of Sigma Theta Tau International notes the organization has a long history and was established with a focus on leadership, research, scholarship, and service. Their International Leadership Institute hosts a variety of programs to develop leadership, knowledge, skills and abilities.

The International Leadership Institute includes academies and institutes that address different areas (Maternal-Child Health, Geriatric Nursing Leadership Academy, Nurse Faculty Leadership Academy, Board Leadership Institute and others.)

“Mentoring is a key element of all Sigma Theta Tau International Leadership Institute programs, whether it is addressed via dyads and triads in the academies, or via direct faculty mentorship in institutes.” said **Vlasich**.

You do not need to be a member of STTI to participate in the leadership programs.

The leadership programs have been in existence long enough for research to show their effectiveness in the last year and a half. The research shows the mentoring model works extremely well for the leadership institute.

One of the mentoring structures focuses on spiraling up someone so they are more effective in various daily activities like socialization, collaboration, operations, validation, expectation, transformation, reputation/inspiration, documentation, generation and perfection. “Those are areas we hope to spiral up people,” as leaders, **Vlasich** said. She also referenced a new book “Mentoring Today’s Nurses.”

Christie Oaks, the manager of the International Leadership Institute, said the mentoring model includes a faculty member, a mentor and a fellow scholar. The fellows are asked to choose mentors outside their own school or institution. The mentoring model includes a project which is a systems change agent. It’s about the leadership skills they acquire as they are going through the quality improvement or change agent systems.

Dr. Shake presented remarks of **Wanda Montalvo** who was unable to be on the call.

Montalvo used the concept of a "Pledge" as a way for a group of individuals coming together to make social change happen by using PledgeBank. “I knew I needed to identify a simple way to motivate people to "yes", I'm willing to sign a pledge and be part of a movement.” The pledge committed nurse leaders to becoming mentors.

“Of course, lots of work went on behind the scenes in bringing people together to learn about the Future of Nursing report and Campaign for Action. I leveraged resources from a small grant from the RWJF Executive Nurse Fellowship (\$3,500) to host two meetings in New York City. I would not have been able to pull this off without the generous support of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York who allowed me to use their space for free to host the meeting.”

Goals for the Pledge

The February 1 meeting was the catalyst to launch the Pledge and motivate people to sign the pledge, encouraged participants to identify an emerging nurse leader and mentor that person for at least one hour a month for six months.

The goal was 150 people to sign the pledge by June 30, 2013. And most thought I was crazy but I challenged the group. "We're in New York with a large portion of academic and health delivery sites across the state, how can we NOT achieve this goal? "

The pledge closed on June 30th with 177 signed pledges, exceeding its original goal.

While some people might think this is a short time frame, in order to cultivate a mentoring relationship and confirm if you have the right "fit" it takes 6-12 months.

"My research in this area shows that informal mentoring relationships tend to have better results as compared to formalized mentoring process where people are matched by an organization."

A major component has been bridging the effort to professional membership organizations, for example Greater New York Nassau Suffolk Organization of Nurse Executives. Their membership represents all five boroughs and membership represents key leaders across practice settings. The second was connecting the Pledge under one umbrella to reach the various regions in NY.

Mentoring Toolkit

I'm currently working on a simple mentoring toolkit to be used by the Metro Acton Coalition "Pass the Torch".

"One amazing observation has been that many seasoned nurses do not see themselves ready to mentor another nurse. I conducted interviews as part of a qualitative research study and learned nurse leaders had a "sense of readiness" before deciding to mentor leadership development in another nurse.

" I would like the Pledge to "live" on an interactive website, move the names of those who have Pledged to the new site and post mentoring success stories," said **Montalvo**.

Near the end of the teleconference, listeners and presenters offered further insight into mentorship programs.

Given said with the future of nursing, "we have to take every advantage" for mentoring. It can be two people or five people, informally put together by the mentee or an informal relationship with mentors.

North Carolina said The East Carolina Center for Nursing Leadership and the Action Coalition have an electronic matching board to match mentors to mentees. **Cynthia Vlasich** says the

volunteer aspect of mentoring is important. “We discourage mentors from being drafted into the role.”

At the University of Minnesota the book “Strength-based Leadership” can be a resource for mentees to engage their mentors about identifying a person’s strengths, instead of focusing on what is wrong with you.

Given said having a compendium of tools for mentorship would be a valuable resource for those organizations developing mentorship programs.

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For more information from the Center to Champion Nursing in America about this teleconference, technical assistance or other questions related to the Future of Nursing, Campaign for Action contact Michael Pheulpin at MPheulpin@aarp.org or 202-434-3882 or Andrew Bianco at abianco@aarp.org

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