EXPLORING MENTORSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION: INTRODUCTION TO THE FIFTH VOLUME OF PAPERS ON POSTSECONDARY LEARNING AND TEACHING

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The fifth volume of Papers on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching (PPLT) is a collection of papers from the 2021 University of Calgary Conference focused on the theme of Mentorship in Higher Education. Since the 2020 conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PPLT heartily welcomes back authors this year for its fifth volume. Although the pandemic has caused disruptions and transitions in postsecondary research, learning and teaching, it has revealed insights for both students and academics.

The papers in the volume are organized to reflect the stages of the academic lifespan, from student to professor emeritus. Perspectives from multiple disciplines present the shared common theme that all forms of mentorship in higher education are beneficial to students, instructors, the institution, and graduates.

Mentorship Models

Lorelli Nowell (2022), one of the conference keynote speakers, presents in her paper, "Beyond tradition: Innovative mentorship models for higher education", a comprehensive overview and description of the various models of mentorship, which includes peer, group, distance, and constellation models. Her introduction sets the stage for the rest of the papers in this volume as they explore various models from diverse perspectives and disciplines to further our understanding and practice of mentorship in higher education.

Mentoring and Student Life

Mardjetko and White Prosser (2022) provide a reflective paper on "Reciprocal mentoring as a method to enhance doctoral success". As a group of peer-mentors, they describe the process of working together as doctoral students and the reciprocal mentorship that developed. Their insights show the benefits of reducing isolation, navigating through doctoral studies, and sustaining relationships beyond degree completion.

Also focused on student life, Aparicio-Ting et al. (2022) explore how a mentorship model working with graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) shifts the focus from students as supporters to students as partners in "Disrupting the hierarchy: Mentoring graduate students as co-educators". They intentionally recruit GTAs to be co-instructors in a course and provide mentorship to the GTAs. Aparicio-Ting et al. (2022) demonstrate and report the benefits of skill development for the GTAs, such as creating a supportive environment for students and enhancing instructors teaching practice.

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Transitioning from Student to Professional

The following papers focus on mentorship and the transition from education to the workplace. In "Exploring the transition of health workers from students to professionals", Hirst et al. (2022) raise a salient issue about "transition shock" from student life to practicing professional. They focus on the health care student and provide evidence that higher education could mitigate the transition by investing in mentorship models. Hirst et al. (2022) suggest that, as educators, we can begin by identifying the unique characteristics of our students to better support their mentorship as they transition to professional practice.

Johnston and Glancey (2022) provide a model for the faculty mentorship of students in work-integrated learning courses. In their paper, "Integrating mentorship in a workplace-integrated learning curriculum", they explore the viability of introducing a faculty-student mentorship model. Their experience with students, workplace partnership, and peer feedback led to the conclusion that mentorship is "critical to support successful workplace readiness" (p. 40).

On the same topic of work-integrated learning, McDonald and Wilson-Mah (2022) demonstrate how mentors in the workplace influence and support student learning to practice in "The role of mentorship in internships". They conclude that the most influential workplace mentors exhibit characteristics of expertise, positive attitudes, and the encouragement of teamwork.

Peer Mentorship Models

The next papers explore several peer mentorship models within higher education. Whidden and Main (2022) in "Unstable ground: How mentorship altered our view of experiential and active education on student learning", describe the processes and outcomes of a faculty peer-to-peer mentorship model. They remark that despite a significant time commitment for the faculty peer-to-peer mentorship model, it is well worth the effort, given outcomes of improved student engagement and improved content retention. Whidden and Main (2022) remind us, as educators, that a "resource that is often overlooked: our fellow faculty members" (p. 54).

The student-to-student peer mentorship model is presented by Robinson and Wilson (2022) in "Building assistive communities: The potential of Liberating Structures for in-class peer mentorship". Robinson and Wilson (2022) introduce and describe how Liberating Structures, as a technique, can enhance an informal in-class peer mentorship model. Potential benefits of this adaptable approach include enhancing students' engagement and development of peer mentoring skills.

Friedman et al. (2022) demonstrate another form of collaborative mentorship in "Making teaching communal: Peer-mentoring through teaching squares". They suggest that a teaching square model is ideally suited to include a peer-mentorship opportunity. Friedman et al.'s (2022) participation in a teaching square evolved into a richer, beneficial learning experience with the inclusion of mentoring principles. The authors are generous with describing their experience and providing suggestions on how to establish a teaching square to include the practice of intentional mentorship.

Bene and Murphy (2022) likewise describe a successful peer-mentorship experience in "Co-teaching as mentors: Maximizing instructor and librarian collaboration for teaching information literacy skills". In their collaboration as co-teachers from two disciplines, Bene and

Murphy (2022) discovered the value of leveraging each other's strengths as they planned and prepared for teaching an academic course. Their commitment to a common goal of improving student learning led to their peer-mentorship relationship that developed "mutual respect, trust, and a shared focus" (p. 82). By making their expectations intentional and transparent, Bene and Murphy (2022) offer an adaptable process that includes mentorship and co-teaching.

Collaborative Mentorship

Armos and Chasse (2022) present their perspective of collaborative mentorship in "Performing mentorship in collaborative research teams" as expanding on the practice of teaching and learning to research teaching and learning. They propose a performative lens that guides their reflections and mentorship as they overcome the challenges of distance and disruption and their process to move to a digital platform. The value of collaborative mentorship can be adapted and applied to any team to move forward a research or planning agenda, and at the same time to build trust and relationships within a flexible model.

Din et al. (2022) share their collaborative mentorship experience in "Leadership, SoTL, and mentorship in a teaching scholars community of practice". As a formal structure of the University of Calgary, the Teachers Scholars Program supports the discovery and application of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Each scholar from various disciplines leads a SoTL research project. In turn, they share their expertise through leadership and opportunities for peer and group mentorship. Scholars mentor and learn from one another and they provide mentorship across the university campus. Readers will be inspired by Din et al.'s (2022) projects and descriptions of their mentorship examples.

Mentorship Beyond the Academy

Wrapping up the exploration of mentoring models and practices within the academy is Hirst and LeNavenec (2022) paper on "Professor Emeritus: A "neglected" mentor on University Campuses". They provide evidence of Professor Emeritus being a mentorship resource, having the potential to benefit faculty, students, and our institutions. This under-utilized group possesses the wisdom and time to devote to mentorship activities that could easily be leveraged with the introduction of an "institutional framework for mentoring" (p. 103). Hirst and LeNavenec (2022) present and describe models and activities that could advance Professor Emeritus' mentorship involvement.

Evaluating Mentorship Models

Addressing a significant aspect of evaluating mentorship and mentoring programs is presented by Schechtel et al. (2022) perspectives in "Shifting values and voices: An exploration in holistic mentorship evaluation". They provide an overview of mentorship evaluation and concur that much is missing from current frameworks. Schechtel et al. (2022) propose a Co-Analysis model by defining "mentorship as a partnership" and "valuing flexibility" (p. 111) of time in mentoring relationships. This approach can uncover the "complexity of a real relationship" (p. 113) and ensure that all voices are included to truly evaluate mentorship models and experiences.

Conclusion

In this fifth volume, various mentorship models, including peer, group, and collaborative have been presented, discussed, and explored within and beyond the academy. Contributors provide frameworks, models, and evidence of how such mentorship models can be applied to benefit our students, faculty, institutions, and how students transition from education to the workplace.

Acknowledgements

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