

AAEA White Paper on Mentoring

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Introduction

In September 2010, AAEA President Tom Hertel appointed the mentoring task force to 1) assess AAEA's mentoring activities and reach (past and present), 2) propose a set of mentoring activities for the AAEA to undertake in the future, 3) implement a subset of activities for the 2011 meetings, and 4) report back to the AAEA Executive Board at the July 2011 meetings on the task force's findings and activities. This white paper reports findings for objectives 1, 2, and 4. Objective 3 will be accomplished at the 2011 meetings in Pittsburgh, PA, where two sessions on mentoring will be held to include presentations and a panel discussion.

The goal of this white paper is to inform AAEA board members about the status and potential for mentoring in our profession. This paper includes an overview of mentoring, a brief history of AAEA young professional development programs, an overview of possible mentoring models to consider, a LOGIC model outline for a potential AAEA mentoring program, as well as special considerations for such a program. Research indicates a sound mentoring program may benefit both AAEA members and the organization as a whole. The success of such a program will depend, however, on its thoughtful development and implementation.

Overview of Mentoring

Mentoring is the process by which a less-experienced person is guided and motivated by a more-experienced person to develop, typically in a professional environment (George & Neale, 2006; Wilson, 2001). As we will discuss, there are many mentoring models, including peer mentoring, a case where individuals with similar experience support one another. Mentoring is identified as a key component of healthy professional and organization growth, especially in the business community (Shenkman, 2010). In academia, successful mentoring programs have been developed to advance young professionals, especially in science and engineering fields. Within economics, the American Economic Association's (AEA's) Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) developed a mentoring program,

CeMENT. This program was developed to provide mentoring to junior women and minority economists in academia.

The benefits of mentoring are far reaching, especially for the mentee or protégé. In general, protégés of mentoring programs advance faster and with higher wages than their non-mentored peers. They are also more aware of their organizations political and organizational structure. Not to mention, protégés report higher career and life satisfaction (Wilson, 2001). Research results from the CeMENT program show significant improvements in publication and promotion rates for mentored versus non-mentored economists (Blau, Currie, Croson, & Ginther, 2010).

Mentoring is not analogous to advising, although the two may share commonalities. Mentoring typically occurs over a long time horizon, whereas advising is shorter, typically the length of a degree program. Mentoring is broad in scope, addressing greater life, psycho-social issues in addition to professional and career concerns (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Mentoring relationships may not result in a physical product, such as a research report or published journal article. Academic advising on the other hand, tends to be more research or project orientated. Thus, while a young or new professional may have had a successful relationship with their adviser during graduate school, it does not mean their career guidance needs are met post-graduation. In a report to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), George and Neale (2006) identify several academic job-related issues for which mentoring may be essential. These include selecting presentation venues, making professional presentations, reviewing scientific papers, understanding grant writing and the peer-review process, designing and implementing Extension programming, understanding data collection issues, such as the internal review board (IRB) process, professional ethics, and obtaining career materials and networking opportunities.

Current and Past AAEA Mentoring Programs/Activities

The task force found no evidence of active mentoring programs presently available to AAEA members. In the past, the AAEA did sponsor retreats for young professionals at the beginning of the last decade. These retreats were not held in conjunction with the annual meeting, but rather in resort settings. The program included guest speakers in the areas of teaching, research and extension. One of its participants, Jayson Lusk, reported that one of the most valuable aspects of the experience was the opportunity to network with other young professionals. The location provided a relaxed environment to socialize outside of set meeting time and enjoy the outdoor surroundings. This program was not mentoring focused, but did provide guidance for young professionals. It also provided a means to make valuable work relationships for future projects (Lusk, 2010). The program was short-lived. One reason may be the irregular pipeline of new junior faculty (i.e., some years there is a critical mass for such activities and there may not be the next year, depending on the job market).

Modes, Models and Dimensions of Mentoring

There are numerous models of mentoring including one-to-one, cascade mentoring, and network mentoring. One-to-one mentoring occurs when a mentor is paired with a protégé. The protégé is often a junior colleague, but may also be a peer. Cascade mentoring may occur in research groups where a lead professor mentors a post graduate fellow who, in turn, mentors a doctoral student who mentors a masters student and etc. Cascade mentoring in this environment may be more project or research focused, closer to traditional academic advising. Network mentoring involves multiple mentors, perhaps each offering input and guidance for different elements of personal and career development (George & Neale, 2006).

The CeMENT program offers one established model of mentoring within a professional organization. It uses a combination of peer network and one-to-one mentoring models. Protégé participants are selected at random from a group of applicants. The mentors are selected based on their professional rank and accomplishments, field of expertise, availability, and willingness to contribute to the program (Ginther, 2011).¹ Mentors are typically contacted after the pool of protégés is selected to insure matching interests. The mentors and protégés are brought together at a two-day CeMENT workshop, typically held in conjunction with a national or regional economics conference. Through the NSF funding arrangements, there were two different CeMENT workshop tracks, held at separate times and venues. The first workshop group consisted of mentors and protégés with research intensive appointments. The second workshop focused on mentors and protégés with more balanced or majority teaching appointments.

Prior to each workshop, the protégés are assigned to small groups (four to five protégés with two mentors) with similar interests (i.e., labor economics, resource economics, behavior and experimental economics, etc.). The group's protégés send a sample of their current work, such as a working paper or grand proposal, to all of the group members ahead of the workshop. Then, one of the primary activities is for the group to meet and discuss each member's work, providing critical feedback.

The CeMENT workshops then feature a series of session and panels (consisting mostly of the mentors) on topics including research and publishing, successful grant writing, professional exposure and networking, teaching, the tenure process, and work/life balance (Blau et al., 2010). Each protégé is provided with a resource notebook addressing these areas and references for further reading.

After the CeMENT workshop the small groups may continue to communicate and use the mentors. According to a recent CeMENT coordinator, Professor Donna Ginther

¹ Recruiting mentors is the most challenging aspect of the CeMENT workshop process. Mentors must be willing to commit to two days of workshop time and three days of time at the ASSA meetings. The CeMENT program offers mentors three years of membership in the American Economics Association (AEA), pays travel expenses to the ASSA meetings and CeMENT workshops, and covers the cost of mentors' hotel fees during the CeMENT workshops.

(2010), the post-workshop experience varies across groups. Some groups remain connected, working and/or socializing together. Others dissipate, having their main interaction at the workshop, followed by minimal or no contact. Even minimal CeMENT workshop interaction does have measurable, positive outcomes. According to Blau et al. (2010) workshop participants are 20 percent more likely to have a top-tier publication, have two more publications on average, and 27 percent more likely to obtain federal grant funds within three years of CeMENT participation than non-participants.

Defining AAEA Mentoring Program Goals

While programs such as the CeMENT program may provide basic background for AAEA mentoring, the organizational and professional needs for mentoring in the AAEA are more diverse. Members of AAEA may hold extension appointments in addition to teaching and research appointments or may be employed with a government institution, such as the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS). The AAEA also serves a breadth of members, including women, minorities, and other under-represented groups. Thus, as we consider mentoring goals for the AAEA, we must consider the broad professional and personal needs all AAEA members.

As research evidence suggests, mentoring offers many professional, social and emotional rewards for members, especially protégé members. Mentoring in the AAEA may be one avenue to encourage and enrich young professional involvement and future leadership in the organization. In a recent focus group of graduate student AAEA members, Just (2010) found graduate students near graduation sought networking opportunities with senior agricultural economists, research oriented professional development opportunities (e.g., how to navigate the publication process), and opportunities to be involved in section and organization leadership. While we may expect academic advisers to meet some of these needs, mentoring may be a means to meet such needs and encourage young professional involvement in the AAEA. Work by Wilson (2001), indicates mentoring is especially important for socially disadvantaged groups within the AAEA.

In general, the AAEA Mentoring task force finds mentoring may help AAEA achieve the following goals:

1. Retain young professional members after graduate school and through the first ten years of their career as members of the AAEA.
2. Engage young and senior professional members in leadership development and other activities in the organization.
3. Increase the overall scientific and educational impact of AAEA members in the future.

LOGIC Model Proposal to AAEA Mentoring Program

A number of actions need to be initiated by the AAEA to develop a mentoring program. We use the LOGIC model developed by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2004)

to outline the resources, activities, outputs, and potential outcomes/impacts of an association wide AAEA mentoring program.

Resources and Inputs

The proposed activities will require a variety of human capital, financial, and organization resources. It is not likely initial mentoring workshops will be possible without funding from the AAEA Foundation and/or other outside agencies. AAEA staff may be needed to help facilitate a proposed mentoring committee. They will also be likely to be instrumental in maintaining long-term data on mentoring and tracking its success. Additional staff resources may be required for mentor recognition at the annual meetings.

One of the upfront challenges to a mentoring program is recruiting and retaining mentor involvement. We believe considerable thought and resources must be dedicated to mentor recruitment and training. Ideally, mentors will be selected based on their professional and social/personality match for protégés. In addition, Wilson (2001) suggests good mentors are available and interested, ethical, intentional role models, and have an altruistic motivation for mentoring. Possible mentor training may emphasize the integrity and courage required to become a mentor. Mentors need to bring a high level of trust to the relationship. They also need to be able to take heart with their protégé and encourage them to have an optimistic view of the future. Proteges often need to “borrow from the courage of their mentors” (Wilson, 2001).

Activities

We envision a number of activities around mentoring, including the mentoring process itself, mentor recruitment and recognition, and tracking mentoring effectiveness. In order to develop a mentoring program, the AAEA may consider hiring an outside consultant with expertise in mentoring program development. This person may work in coordination with a standing committee on mentoring and young professional development in the organization.

It is likely that mentoring would be initiated with workshops similar in length and content to the CeMENT program (e.g., resources on research and publishing, successful grant writing, extension program development, professional exposure and networking, teaching, the tenure process, and work/life balance). Proteges and mentors may participate in a two-day workshop either prior to or following the AAEA meetings. It would also be advisable to hold workshops at a distance from the AAEA venue, to provide a more relaxed environment, free from distractions.

As the AAEA considers approaches to mentoring, it is important to establish ethical parameters and professional guidelines for mentoring. Wilson (2001) identifies four core ethical principles essential for successful and healthy mentoring relationships. They include the following:

1. **Autonomy:** How can mentoring promote knowledge, maturity and independence for the protégé?
2. **Non-maleficence:** Mentoring shall do no harm to the protégé.
3. **Justice:** How can protégés from different ethnic backgrounds, gender, etc. receive the same level of mentoring?
4. **Fidelity:** How can we remain loyal and honor commitments to protégés?

While such topics may be included in the mentor workshops and mentor training, the AAEA may want to consider additional activities to foster mentoring across the profession. In their report to the AAAS, George and Neale (2006) encourage organizations to do the following:

1. Declare a week, month, or year for mentoring
2. Provide mentoring and mentor training at annual meetings
3. Encourage professional journals to publish articles on mentoring (as is currently done for teaching)
4. Create mission statements which include the importance of mentoring
5. Establish professional and departmental mentoring awards
6. Conduct research on mentoring
7. Incorporate mentoring into the accreditation process

The majority of these suggestions are relatively low cost. The AAEA can also foster mentoring by recognizing individuals who serve as mentors and encourage departments to reward mentoring both within and across institutions.

One activity George and Neale (2006) recommend is to conduct research on mentoring. Tracking and researching the effectiveness of the mentoring program will be an important component of a total AAEA mentoring program. One task of a proposed standing committee on mentoring would be to develop a framework to tracking the impacts and effectiveness of various mentoring activities, especially for socially disadvantaged groups within the AAEA.

Outputs

The proposed activities will result in a number of short-term outputs. One of the first changes we suggest is that the AAEA establish a standing committee on mentoring and young professional development. This committee may then oversee the implementation of activities. It may also work in conjunction with the executive board to establish an AAEA mentoring policy and statement on mentoring for the greater profession.

Mentors should participate in a special mentor training session, perhaps one half day to one day in length. The training may culminate with a “certification” of trained mentors. The program organizers would need to recruit approximately ten to fifteen

mentors a year, depending on the size of the protégé group.² The mentor selection process will depend on protégé needs. Mentors will be needed from a variety of fields as well as demographic backgrounds, if possible.

We envision annual two-day workshops for mentors and protégés in conjunction with the annual AAEA meetings. Based on similar program comparisons, one may plan on protégé cohorts of approximately 25 protégés per year. The protégés may be divided into tracks based on their field (e.g., natural resource economics, agribusiness, international trade, etc.), type of position (e.g., research, teaching, and Extension combinations), and/or other special needs. For example, much of the literature on mentoring suggests tracks may be needed for women and minority participants (e.g., Blau et al., 2010; George & Neale, 2006). It is important to ensure mentoring activities are organized to benefit all groups and sub-populations. Research on the impacts of cross-gender mentoring outcomes (e.g., the mentor is male and the protégé is female) is mixed. Once protégés have completed the two-day workshop they may be assigned or select a mentor to serve for the duration of the tenure-track or relevant time period.

An initial task of the mentoring committee may be to devise methods to track and measure the success of the mentoring program. This is likely to result in a number of outputs. Mentors and protégés may be called upon to report on the evolution of their experience annually and across the mentoring time period. This will both encourage prolonged participation and provide information on the quality of the experience. As mentoring data is collected, we expect to see outcomes reported in AAEA related journals with journal articles on mentoring and professional development in our profession over the next three to five years.

Senior faculty and professionals should gain recognition at both the national and department or research unit levels for their mentoring work over the next three to five years. This should also coincide with improved job performance for junior faculty or young professional protégés. The AAEA may also initiate events like those suggested above (e.g., a mentoring month, a statement on mentoring) to promote and celebrate mentoring across the profession.

Outcomes/Impacts

In the first one to three years, mentoring will create improved networks among junior and senior members of the AAEA. Senior members may also recognize mentoring as a professional responsibility. This will be evidenced in both personal and professional activities, including contributing to journal articles on mentoring programs, impacts, and its relevance towards our profession. Finally, it is expected that mentors and protégés will be able to report positive experiences and impacts on their personal and

² The size of the protégé group will likely change from year to year depending on graduation rates and job market conditions.

professional lives resulting from workshop attendance, as well as follow-up mentoring relationships and activities.

In the following four to six years, mentoring may improve the equality of promotion for a broad spectrum of economists, both at academic and non-academic institutions. It may also result in the retention of young professionals as AAEA members through the first decade of their career.

Over the final seven to ten year time horizon, mentoring may increase openness and collaborative relationships in our profession. This, in turn, may improve the creativity and contribution of AAEA related work to the greater scientific community. This may be tracked through citation and publications across journals within and outside of our discipline. Ideally, mentoring will also improve the retention of young professionals in our profession. It will improve the potential leadership potential of new and seasoned members within the AAEA. Finally, in the long-run, we may create a mentoring culture in which today's protégés become future mentors.

Possible Challenges and Setbacks

The biggest challenge an AAEA mentoring program faces is recruiting mentors appropriate for its diverse membership, especially the intellectual and socio-demographic diversity of younger members. Mentors and protégés need to be prepared to deal with cross-cultural issues including building trust, cross-gender issues and technological aptitude differences. Mentoring programming directors need to be mindful of the potential for toxic mentoring. This includes mentoring relationships tending toward superficial interactions, sabotage, jealousy, betrayal, overdependence, and unmet expectations. If either mentors or protégés find themselves in such a relationship there needs to be a "safe out" procedure.

Indeed, the program will be challenged to connect the right people to each other. There are cases where people with top professional expertise are not well suited to guide others. In their Harvard Business Review article, Casciaro and Sousa Lobo (2005) identify such characters as "competent jerks." These are people with much expertise, but a low willingness or ability to share their expertise or information. Mentoring program coordinators may avoid toxic mentoring and "competent jerk" issues by enlisting people with a genuine interest in helping others to succeed to serve as mentors. It will also be important for the mentoring program to include opportunities for workshop participants (both mentors and protégés) to become familiar with each other and build relationships. This may be done through outward-bound type experiences and socialization time (Casciaro & Sousa Lobo, 2005).

Final Recommendations and Conclusions

The AAEA should consider mentoring in its portfolio of options to encourage young professional retention and involvement in the organization. The executive board may consider appointing a standing committee on mentoring and young professional

development to create mentoring related programs. Specific activities to consider are annual mentoring workshops with follow-up mentoring relationships, mentor training activities, organization wide mentoring recognition and celebration, calls for scholarly work on mentoring in our profession, and the development of organization statements and policies for mentoring.

The potential rewards from mentoring to individuals and the AAEA are great. Individual protégés will have enhanced opportunities to network with senior professionals, to become involved in AAEA leadership, to improve their research networks, understanding of professional publishing and grant writing processes, as well as impactful Extension programming. If a mentoring program is well designed, they may also be more likely to successfully navigate promotional processes and contribute more to our profession and discipline over their lifetime. Mentors have the opportunity to shape the future through their efforts. They may also benefit from personal growth through the mentor training and/or the mentoring itself. It is proposed they will also receive greater professional recognition for their mentoring efforts. The AAEA may see increased retention of young professionals in the organization. In the long-run, it is hoped their increased retention and involvement will lead to greater contributions from AAEA to the broader science community.

It will be challenging to develop a mentoring program in AAEA that is streamlined with members' various department and organizational units, as some have mentoring programs in place while others do not. As we conclude this white paper, we encourage the AAEA to work with leadership from various member institutions to understand how an AAEA mentoring framework will create the most benefit across the membership, to include fostering a mentoring culture at the local level, where one is not currently present.

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