

**NEW STAFF MENTORING PROGRAM**

**Overview**

A mentor is someone who serves as a counselor or guide. Being asked to serve as a mentor is an honor. It indicates that the organization has confidence in the person’s abilities and trusts him or her to have a positive impact on another person.

Mentoring for new employees not only helps employees settle into their jobs and the organization’s environment, but also increases employee retention. The use of a mentor may be an informal, short-term situation or a more formal, long-term assignment. Moraine Valley Community College utilizes an informal program.

In an informal mentoring program, the mentor helps the new employee for a limited period of time. Advice from the mentor may include the most basic of information about everyday routines including tips about “do’s and don’ts” not found in the employee contract or handbook to helping the employee learn job responsibilities. A mentor available to answer routine questions also saves time for the supervisor or manager. In addition, new employees often feel more comfortable asking questions of a mentor instead of a supervisor.

In a program of this type, mentors are volunteers. Forcing someone who does not want to serve as a mentor to do so can quickly create problems.

**Purpose**

Mentoring is all about learning. The value and purpose of a mentoring program for new employees is to transition new employees into an organization and increase employee retention. Networking, whether formal or informal, is essential to the transition and retention of employees. Employees who have mentors are more likely to have greater job satisfaction. Mentoring programs can help eliminate obstacles and difficulties new employees might encounter. Effective mentoring programs should allow new employees to freely ask questions and express themselves in order to gain the information necessary to effectively perform their jobs.

Mentoring is also a critical component to workplace diversity and the retention and success of all staff. A mentor can help a new employee discover how to survive in an environment that may not be entirely welcoming to him/her. Mentoring is a valuable tool which can be used to build an effective and diverse organization as it assists to ensure that all employees are equally given the opportunity to be successful.

**Parameters**

Both a mentor and the new staff member (mentee) need to understand the parameters of the mentoring relationship. These may be more important in a long-term, formal mentoring situation, but can also influence the success of short-term, informal mentoring.

* The mentor’s role is to teach, advise, and help transition the new employee into the college. The mentor does not interfere with the supervisor or manager’s decisions. The new employee, while expected to seek the mentor’s advice on various issues, is not bound to accept that advice
* Confidentiality is important. Both parties need to feel confident that discussions remain between them--not immediately relayed to a supervisor or manager
* Certain areas may be considered off-limits. The mentor needs to outline these areas at the beginning
* Decide in advance how you will communicate. Will you have regularly scheduled meetings? Will discussion be face-to-face, over the telephone or via email? Both parties need to make their preferences known at the beginning and reach an acceptable compromise if the preferences are different
* Discuss time limitations. If the mentoring period has a time limit the mentor should state that at the beginning
* Discuss time commitments. Again, this may be more critical for the long-term, formal mentoring. The mentor must expect to give the new employee adequate time, but the newcomer should not expect excessive amounts of time. Setting a schedule at the beginning (i.e., meet once a week the first month, then once a month after that) avoids irritating misunderstandings later
* Openness and respect. Both the mentor and the mentee need to be open and honest, yet respect the other. A mentor who withholds important information does not contribute to the other person’s success. However, such comments should be delivered with tact and courtesy--and (even if somewhat hurtful) received with an open mind
* Professional relationship. The relationship between the mentor and the mentee is a professional one, not a personal one. This is particularly important for the new employee to understand
* Compatibility. It would be helpful to use some kind of matching system for the mentee and mentor. This will help both understand each other’s communication styles, strengths, and limitations

**Goals**

The goals of new staff mentoring are to:

* Accelerate an employee’s perspective/understanding of the college and adaptation to a new position
* Increase employee loyalty
* Promote diversity
* Connect employees with one another (formal and informal/professional and social networking)
* Open the lines of communication
* Look after new employees’ welfare and provide employees with an outlet to listen to concerns as well as successes
* Safeguard the college’s new hire investment
* Enable employees to feel welcome and to promote their career or career path

**Informal Program**

Research related to community college mentorship programs supports the idea that informal mentoring programs are more successful than formal programs. Informal mentoring programs are not rigidly structured. Informal mentoring programs tend to be more successful for the following reasons:

* Informal mentoring relationships last longer than formal relationships
* Mentor/mentee relationship is not subject to evaluation
* Different types of networking occur, both professional and social
* No time limits are given as to when specific activities within a mentoring relationship must occur
* More commitment to the relationship exists, which can lead to more coaching
* One-on-one interactions across the college occur
* More friendships are built from a natural mentor/mentee match as opposed to a forced match

**Scope of Participation**

Participants will include all new employees in the following job classifications:

* Full-time and Part-time Administrative & Professional Staff
* Full-time and Part-time Administrative Classified Staff
* Full-time and Part-time Support Staff

**Mentorship Program**

It is vitally important that the relationship between a mentor and mentee be based on four key factors:

* Trust
* Respect
* Commitment
* Confidentiality

Individuals who are mentors should possess the following characteristics:

* Leadership qualities
* People-oriented
* Successful at the institution
* Knowledgeable of the college’s mission, values, vision, and strategic priorities
* Committed to developing staff
* Willingness share personal experiences
* Willingness to assist others in being successful

The Mentoring Program is coordinated through the collaborative relationship between the Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) and Human Resources (HR). Communication of the Mentoring Program will occur as follows:

* Current MVCC staff will be informed of the program via the college’s various communication avenues
* A web page devoted to the New Staff Mentoring Program is a central location for all things related to the mentoring program, including necessary forms and information
* New staff members will be made aware of the Mentoring Program by a representative from Human Resources during the initial benefits orientation session

The CTL is responsible for maintaining the mentor database.

All mentors must complete training prior to beginning a mentoring relationship with a new staff member. Training will be provided to mentors through the CTL.

**Qualifications for a Mentor**

In order to serve as a mentor, each staff member must meet the following qualifications:

* Must be a full-time staff member as defined by this document and have at least two (2) years of employment at MVCC
* Familiarity with the policies and programs available at MVCC
* Convey a positive image of the college (committed to the college’s mission and purpose and exemplifies its expectations and core values)
* Must not be new employee’s direct supervisor and preferably not employed in the same department
* Participation in a mentor training session provided by the CTL
* Commitment to a 3 month mentoring relationship, allowing 2 to 4 hours per month to meet with the new employee
* Available to the new employee by telephone, email, and in person

**Process**

* All new staff members will be made aware of the Mentoring Program by a representative from Human Resources during the initial benefit orientation session.
* Candidates for staff mentors must be nominated by their supervisor and reviewed and approved by the CTL and Human Resources. All nominations must be approved by appropriate Vice President.
* From the database, the CTL and HR will select a mentor for the new staff member from a pool of approved employees.
* Mentoring relationships will be established as listed below. Any deviations from these pairings require approval from the appropriate Vice President.
* New Support Staff will be paired with Support Staff mentors
* New Administrative Classified staff will be paired with Administrative Classified mentors
* New Administrative & Professional staff will be paired with Administrative & Professional mentors
* The mentor will make contact with the new employee to begin the mentoring relationship.
* The CTL will sponsor at least one mentoring meeting during the first three months of the new staff members’ employment.
* The mentor and mentee will evaluate the mentoring relationship and program after a period of 3 months.

**Guidelines for a Mentoring Relationship**

Mentors should provide a support network for a new employee. They should encourage participation in college meetings and activities, pass on information about the college and experiences the mentor has encountered, help the mentee navigate office politics, and encourage professional development. A Mentor Checklist will be provided to mentors to assist them with the mentoring process.

* The mentor will welcome the new employee, respond to questions that have arisen, and set a time for their first meeting (this should occur during the first month of employment)
* Based upon the needs of a new employee, the mentor may provide a campus tour, introductions to other college employees, and assistance with becoming familiar with college policies, programs, mission, priorities, activities, events, etc.
* The mentor and mentee should meet a minimum of once per month to discuss the new employee’s experience at MVCC and to address any concerns or issues that the new employee has. The mentor should actively encourage these meetings reinforce mentee understanding and comprehension
* The mentor and mentee may wish to attend college meetings and events such as President’s Advisory Council, athletic events, Fine & Performing Arts events, lectures, or other activities offered on campus
* The mentor should provide encouragement and inspire dedication to MVCC and its mission
* If either the mentor or the mentee is not experiencing a positive relationship, both have the option of selecting another partner and are to contact Human Resources
* If the mentor is aware of any negative experiences or issues that the new employee may have encountered, he or she should contact Human Resources, provided the sharing of this information does not compromise the confidentiality agreements established between the mentor and mentee
* Confidentiality is a very important aspect of a mentoring relationship. Both the mentor and the mentee may learn personal information about each other that if revealed might have serious consequences. Both the mentor and mentee should use the college’s checklist to define how confidentiality will be defined in the mentoring relationship. Refer to the Confidentiality Checklist document included in the Mentor folder.

**Suggested Mentoring Activities**

To help provide a support network for a new employee, below is a list of suggested activities that the mentor may choose to incorporate into the mentor experience:

* Meet for breakfast or lunch
* Tour the campus
* Visit various departments on campus
* Attend a college meeting, such as PAC or other department sponsored meetings/activities
* Introduce employee to other faculty and staff
* Explain some college procedures
* Discuss emergency preparedness procedures
* Discuss various employee events and accompany the new staff member to them
* Review the college’s mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities
* Review benefits and staff orientation information as needed
* Discuss the mentoring program and what the responsibilities and expectations are
* Discuss each other’s background and professional development/career goals

**Coordinating Program & Training**

The CTL will be responsible for coordinating the Mentoring Program and providing training to mentors. Responsibilities include:

* Communicate the program to current staff
* Maintain a database of qualified and approved mentors
* Coordinate and provide training to mentors
* Contact the chosen mentor to gain his/her agreement to be a mentor and follow-up with a confirmation notice
* Communicate the program to new staff members during initial benefit orientation
* Conduct an informal yet organized introductory meeting to the program with the mentor (and mentee, if possible) to provide necessary information and forms. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, provide written direction as well as the appropriate forms to the mentor
* Sponsor at least one mentoring meeting during the first three months of the new employees’ employment
* Evaluate and assess the Mentoring Program (distribute, collect, log, and analyze participant feedback) and make recommendations for refinement and improvement

**Measuring Success**

To assess the value of the Mentoring Program, mentees and mentors will be asked to complete evaluation forms. Refer to the New Staff Mentoring Program Feedback forms. Activities that have promoted successful mentor relationships will be referenced in future training sessions and orientations.

* Retention (annual turnover report and exit interview analysis)
* Employee engagement (surveys)
* Productivity of mentee (performance evaluations)
* Career success of mentee (performance evaluations, promotions, transfers, etc.)
* Feedback from mentor and mentee (participant feedback forms – mentor and mentee)

**Expected Outcomes**

At the end of training, a mentor should be able to:

* Practice active listening skills to help assist in the new employee’s transition
* Practice asking a variety of questions to help new employee resolve issues
* Provide non-judgmental feedback
* Make directive comments and provide suggestions appropriately
* Identify effective ways to help a new employee deal with change and adjust to a new environment
* Convey a welcoming and positive representation of the college

*(from G.P. Smith. “Coaching and Mentoring: The Importance of Having a Good Mentor.” 2007)*