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Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The views expressed in the project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.
1 The importance of mentoring to academic leadership development

The importance of mentoring for future leaders cannot be overemphasised. Studies of university leaders have shown that learning from others is among the top three most significant influences on their learning how to lead and their leadership effectiveness (Drew, Ehrich & Hansford, 2008; Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008). Being in a mentoring partnership with a successful academic leader offers pre-leadership academics an invaluable opportunity to learn from the leader’s knowledge, experience and insight.

Mentoring is both an opportunity for self-development and a leadership skill which itself must be learned and practised. At universities, as in other organisations, leaders are mentors of other staff (Drew et al., 2008). Pre-leadership academics who experience a successful mentoring partnership will develop a mentoring ‘mindset’ which they carry forward into future leadership roles.

Mentoring has been used successfully at UOW in a variety of staff development contexts. In 2007-2008 a pilot Mentoring Program for Early Career Researchers was conducted. As a result of this pilot a Research Mentoring Program now forms part of the suite of development opportunities offered to early career research staff. Many of the recommendations of the pilot program have been incorporated in the PROPEL Program Mentoring Component.

2 Aims of the PROPEL Mentoring Component

Through establishing appropriate mentoring partnerships between pre-leadership academics and successful academic leaders, the PROPEL Mentoring Component will contribute to achieving the following outcomes:

- Fostering of a culture of collaboration.
- Breaking down borders between Faculties and disciplines.
- Providing a pool of candidates for future leadership positions who are equipped with leadership skills (including mentoring skills).
- Developing and retaining pre-leadership academics with recognised leadership potential.
- Acknowledging personal/professional qualities of successful leaders and providing the opportunity to share knowledge, skills and experiences.
- Raising awareness among current leaders of the importance of addressing the leadership crisis in the Australian tertiary education sector.

3 Defining mentoring in the PROPEL context

"Mentoring is an alliance of two people that creates a space for dialogue which results in reflection, action and learning" (Rolfe, 2006). Mentoring is best defined as a relationship rather than an activity. In essence it is simply about one person guiding another in their personal and/or professional development.

The PROPEL Mentoring Component provides a structure for such partnerships. Each PROPEL participant will be assigned a mentor for the duration of the program (12 months). Mentoring will be carried out through regular intentional dialogue between the two partners and will involve agreed objectives and clearly defined responsibilities and expectations.

The mentoring process will be facilitated and supported by the PROPEL Coordinators (consisting of the three PROPEL Project Leaders and the PROPEL Project Manager).

While informal mentoring partnerships often exist among academic staff, a structured mentoring program offers a number of advantages:

- Partnerships are not based on working relationships or friendships.
- Opportunities to be mentored are available to those staff without strong networks within the University.
- The PROPEL Coordinators ensure mentoring partners are well matched and continue to support the partnerships to maintain momentum and resolve any issues.

4 Benefits to PROPEL participants from the Mentoring Component

The PROPEL Mentoring Component will support participants as they work through the various program components. Participants will gain both direct and indirect support.
Direct support to:
- develop specific leadership skills identified through the Leadership Skill Component;
- plan and carry out the leadership project during the Active Component;
- reflect on learnings from meetings and fora attended during the Big Picture Component and Interdisciplinary Component;
- be self-reflective throughout the program, and especially in preparation for the Reflective Component;
- experience and learn effective mentoring techniques.

Indirect support to:
- extend collaborative networks;
- take a focused approach to planning;
- increase confidence in their leadership abilities;
- increase motivation to pursue academic leadership pathways;
- build a personal leadership development plan with both long and short term goals;
- establish contacts and networks to support their development;
- better balance demands of academic life;
- reduce any sense of isolation;
- benefit from knowledge and skills of an experienced academic leader.

5 Identifying and selecting mentors

Potential mentors will be identified from academic staff at the University of Wollongong (and may include staff recently retired from an academic leadership career) and will be invited to take part in the program. Criteria for selection as a PROPEL mentor will include:
- leadership experience;
- active involvement in multi or interdisciplinary teaching and/or research;
- membership of a university-level committee;
- attendance at UOW mentoring training;
- demonstrated competencies of a good mentor:
  - a willingness and capacity to commit time to a mentoring partnership
  - recognised leadership capabilities and strengths
  - a demonstrated interest in sharing knowledge and experience with colleagues
  - strong communication and interpersonal skills.

6 Support and training for mentors and PROPEL participants

The University acknowledges that mentoring is a time-consuming task. Deans of all Faculties have committed to providing one hour per week face-to-face teaching relief for both mentors and PROPEL participants to support their involvement in the PROPEL program.

Mentors and participants will receive mentoring training prior to the commencement of the partnerships. The training will focus on preparing to be mentored, being an effective mentor, and maintaining a worthwhile mentoring partnership.

Supporting materials will be provided to participants, including structured tools for planning, goal setting and monitoring outcomes achieved.

The PROPEL Coordinators will provide follow-up support at regular intervals to assist partners maintain momentum and revisit goals, including forums, ‘mentoring the mentor’ sessions and coaching from experienced mentors.

7 Matching participants with mentors

Program participants will be matched with experienced academic leaders OUTSIDE THEIR OWN FACULTY.

Partnerships are established cross-faculty to:
- broaden the participant's experience beyond the borders of their own discipline;
- ensure the mentoring partnership is not conflicted by any professional or personal issues with the faculty.
Mentoring partnerships will be determined by the PROPEL Coordinators based on:

- participant’s stated professional development needs in relation to leadership (this information is collected as part of the PROPEL application process);
- alignment of participant’s needs with the professional/personal abilities and circumstances of the mentor;
- gender (where a preference has been identified by the participant or mentor).

Both participants and mentors will be given the option of declining their selected partner and being rematched.

8 Schedule and focus of PROPEL mentoring partnership discussions

Mentors and participants will be introduced to each other prior to the PROPEL Leadership Workshop at the commencement of the program.

Initial mentoring meetings will be scheduled for no more than two weeks after the Leadership Workshop.

Partnerships will complete a Mentoring Agreement at their initial meeting, which will clarify the following details of the partnership:

- objectives and desired outcomes;
- duration of partnership;
- frequency of meetings;
- acceptable level and methods of communication outside the scheduled meetings;
- confidentiality;
- no-fault exit clause.

Mentoring partners will be expected to schedule and hold regular face-to-face meetings. The length and frequency of meetings can be determined by the participant and mentor, but should be at least one hour a month. Meetings should be scheduled to align with other elements of the PROPEL program, such as attendance at committee meetings and interdisciplinary fora.

During their mentoring discussions, the partners will focus on:

- working through the results of self-assessment and 360 deg. feedback instruments completed by the participant prior to the commencement of the Program;
- preparing an individual development plan for the coming 12-months;
- developing the participant’s selected leadership skills;
- supporting the participant as they plan and carry out the leadership action project;
- preparing for and debriefing following participant attendance at committee meetings and interdisciplinary fora;
- self-reflection and reflection on the program;
- setting longer-term leadership goals (beyond the PROPEL program) and developing action plans to achieve them.

Timeline and Key Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March/April 2010</td>
<td>Mentors confirmed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 2010</td>
<td>PROPEL participants selected. Mentoring partnerships determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug/Sept 2010</td>
<td>Mentors and participants introduced and mentoring training session attended.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-29 September 2010</td>
<td>Three-day Leadership Workshop attended by participants. Mentors invited to attend certain sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Initial meetings of mentoring partnerships; mentoring agreements completed; schedule of meetings set for November 2010 to August 2011.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approx. Nov 2010</td>
<td>Participants attend their first committee meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approx. March 2011</td>
<td>Participants attend their second committee meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approx. May 2011</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Forum #2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 2011</td>
<td>Final mentoring meetings held to conclude partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2011</td>
<td>Final reflection day.</td>
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9 Roles and responsibilities of the mentoring partners and the PROPEL Coordinators

The mentor and participant are entering into a voluntary partnership. To facilitate this, both the mentor and participant need to work to maintain the effectiveness of the mentoring partnership. This will involve both partners:

- being willingly involved in the PROPEL program;
- being comfortable with the mentoring match;
- being committed to the partnership;
- discussing and agreeing on specific time-framed goals/objectives for the partnership to work towards;
- agreeing on and respecting the ground rules of the partnership;
- treating information or advice shared by either partner confidentially;
- giving and receiving advice or recommendations in good faith;
- regularly discussing how the mentoring partnership is progressing and making any adjustments;
- referring issues that arise, which are beyond the scope of the partnership, to a third person (e.g. PROPEL Coordinators) but only with the permission of both parties;
- agreeing to a 'no fault' conclusion of the partnership by either partner if, for any reason, it is no longer appropriate or helpful to continue.

Role of the participant
For the mentoring partnership to be successful, the participant must be committed to making the partnership work and focused on their goals.

The participant should:

- approach the mentoring partnership with clear and realistic ideas of what they want to achieve;
- lead the mentoring partnership by clarifying to the mentor the kind of advice and feedback they need;
- be proactive in their communication with the mentor, including a commitment to meet regularly;
- prepare for each mentoring meeting, keep a record of the discussion and act on suggestions;
- be willing to prepare work that is sufficiently developed to enable critical review by the mentor;
- be open to advice and welcome constructive feedback;
- be considerate and appreciate the value of the mentor’s time;
- listen to the mentor’s advice and act on it where they consider it appropriate.

It is the sole responsibility of the participant to decide whether or not to act on advice given by their mentor, including whether to seek further advice.

Role of the mentor
The mentor may serve as a sounding-board, adviser and coach, depending on the personalities and needs of the mentor and participant. The mentor’s role is to ask good questions and to lead the participant through explorations of his/her own abilities, goals and professional development plans.

One of the main roles of a mentor is to help participants take stock of where they are now and where they want to be. This is done successfully through building a climate of trust; encouraging the participant to explore ideas and take risks; confronting difficult issues; serving as a role model; and developing the participant’s vision.

The mentor’s role does not include taking action on behalf of the participant, such as intervening with supervisors or acting as an advocate. If action is required on any issue, it is the participant who must initiate it through the appropriate channels.

Role of the PROPEL Coordinators
The PROPEL Coordinators (consisting of the three PROPEL Project Leaders and the PROPEL Project Manager) will:

- set up and manage the process for selecting mentors and matching partnerships;
- provide information and training to both partners plus ongoing assistance where needed;
• provide a strategy to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the partnerships;
• be available to assist if any problems arise which the partners have difficulty resolving.

10 Addressing partnership concerns

While many positive outcomes will be achieved from the mentoring partnerships, difficulties may arise from time to time. Mentoring partners are encouraged to be open and honest about issues and look for a solution. Where participants wish to explore issues which are outside the agreed scope of the mentoring partnership the mentor should refer the participant to other more appropriate sources of support. The PROPEL Coordinators may be called on for assistance at any time during the mentoring partnership.

Partners are encouraged to agree, at their initial meeting, to a fault-free closure of the partnership at any time without blame, fault finding or recrimination.

11 Privacy and confidentiality

Mentoring partners must agree to confidentiality. Conversations should be regarded as private and information disclosed should not be passed on, used or in any other way revealed. Privileged or sensitive information should not be shared between mentoring partners.

At certain points during the PROPEL program, the PROPEL Coordinators will collect personal information and request feedback on the mentoring partnership from both participants and mentors. The PROPEL Coordinators will ensure the confidentiality of all information received and will not identify individual respondents as part of any program evaluation reports.

12 References