# PROPEL

**PROGRAM FOR PREPARING EARLY LEADERS**

## MENTORING COMPONENT FRAMEWORK

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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.

2. ORGANISATIONAL 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:

- Developing and retaining pre-leadership academics with recognised leadership potential.
- Providing a pool of candidates for future leadership positions who are equipped with leadership skills (including mentoring skills).
- Acknowledging the personal/professional qualities of successful academic leaders and providing them an opportunity to share their knowledge, skills and experiences.
- Raising awareness among current leaders of the importance of nurturing future leaders.
- Fostering of a culture of working collaboratively across faculties and disciplines.
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 is assigned a mentor for the duration of the Program (12 months). Mentoring is carried out through regular intentional dialogue between the two partners and should involve agreed objectives and clearly defined responsibilities and expectations.

The mentoring process must be facilitated and supported by the coordinators of the PROPEL Program.

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 Program 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 supports 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 Skills Component.
- Plan and carry out the leadership project during the Active Component.
- Reflect on learnings from meetings attended during the Big Picture Component.
- Be self-reflective throughout the Program, and especially in preparation for elements of the Reflective Component.
- Benefit from knowledge and skills of an experienced academic leader.
- Experience firsthand 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 short and long term goals.
- Establish contacts and networks to support their development.
- Better balance demands of academic life.
- Reduce any sense of isolation.

5. IDENTIFYING AND SELECTING MENTORS

Potential mentors should be identified from academic leaders within the university (and may include staff recently retired from an academic leadership career). Potential mentors should be invited, not directed, to take part in the Program.

Criteria for selection as a PROPEL mentor should include:

- Leadership experience in teaching and/or research.
- Membership (current or past) of a university-level committee.
- Attendance at in-house or external mentoring training, if this is provided.
- 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 FOR MENTORS AND PROPEL PARTICIPANTS

Most universities would acknowledge that mentoring is a time-consuming task. Senior leaders are often called on to take part in organisational development programs such as PROPEL, and each request they accept takes time away from their primary responsibilities. Universities which are committed to developing their academic staff and recognising the contributions of their experienced leaders should explore ways to compensate both mentors and participants for time dedicated to professional development.

One model of providing this compensation is through negotiating buy-out of a small amount of face-to-face teaching for both the Program participants and mentors, possibly one hour per teaching week. The PROPEL Program Coordinators should attempt to negotiate such an arrangement with faculties participating in the Program.

7. MENTORING TRAINING AND FOLLOW-UP

As part of the PROPEL Program Launch, mentors and participants will receive some mentoring training prior to the commencement of the partnerships. The training focuses on preparing to be mentored, being an effective mentor, and maintaining a worthwhile mentoring partnership.

Supporting materials are provided to participants at the Launch, including structured tools for planning, goal setting and monitoring outcomes achieved.

The PROPEL Coordinators should provide follow-up support at regular intervals to assist partners maintain momentum and revisit goals. Support can be in the form of catch-up meetings with each partnership, group meetings focusing on mentoring, and mentor coaching from experienced mentors.

8. MATCHING PARTICIPANTS WITH MENTORS

Program participants should be matched with experienced academic leaders OUTSIDE THEIR OWN FACULTY. However, where the participant has specific reasons to find a mentor within their discipline these should be considered.

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 within 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).
- Any specific requests.

Both participants and mentors must be given the option of declining their selected partner and being rematched prior to the commencement of the Program.

9. SCHEDULE OF MENTORING COMPONENT ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program preparation stage:</th>
<th>Pool of mentors invited and confirmed.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program nomination stage:</td>
<td>PROPEL participants nominated and selected.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring partnerships determined.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Option to be rematched offered to both mentors and participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Launch Event:</td>
<td>Mentors and participants introduced.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring training session provided.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program start date:</td>
<td>Three-day Leadership Workshop attended by participants.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentors welcome to attend certain sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within 1 month:</td>
<td>Initial meetings of mentoring partnerships held.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentoring agreements completed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Schedule of meetings set for next 11 months.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During next 2 months:</td>
<td>Fortnightly mentoring meetings held (approx. 1 hour duration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>During next 9 months:</td>
<td>Six-weekly mentoring meetings held (approx. 1 hour duration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months from start date:</td>
<td>Final reflection day attended by participants.</td>
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<td>Graduation — mentors invited to attend.</td>
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</table>
10. FOCUS OF PROPEL MENTORING PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships should be encouraged to 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 are expected to schedule and hold regular face-to-face meetings. The length of meetings can be determined by the participant and mentor, but should be around one hour duration.

The first meeting should be organised for no later than one month after the start of the Program. Meetings should then be scheduled fortnightly for the first two months, to allow the partnership to settle in quickly, and then reduced to a six-weekly schedule to take some time pressure off both mentors and participants. Meetings should be planned to align with other elements of the PROPEL Program, such as attendance at committee meetings and milestones in the Active Project.

During their mentoring discussions, the partners should focus on:

- Working through the results of self-assessment and 360 degree feedback instruments completed by the participant at the commencement of the Program.
- Preparing an individual development plan for the coming 12-months.
- Developing the leadership skills the participant has chosen to focus on.
- Supporting the participant as they plan and carry out their leadership action project.
- Preparing for and debriefing following participant attendance at committee meetings.
- Self-reflection and reflection on the PROPEL Program.
- Setting longer-term leadership goals (beyond the PROPEL Program) and developing action plans to achieve them.
11. 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 partners.
- 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.

11.1 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 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.

11.2 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 the 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.

11.3 ROLE OF THE PROPEL COORDINATORS

The PROPEL Coordinators should:
• Set up and manage the process for selecting mentors and matching partnerships.
• Provide information and training to both partners plus ongoing support and 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.
12. 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.

13. 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 may collect personal information and request feedback on the mentoring partnership from both participants and mentors. The PROPEL Coordinators must ensure the confidentiality of all information received and ensure they do not identify individual respondents as part of any Program evaluation reports.

14. REFERENCES

