

Current Strategic Initiative / Project Review
Staff Advisory Council Staff Mentorship Program
Karen Ferris and Cate Putirskis
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SAC believes that a Mentorship Program, administered separately from the existing human resources onboarding process, is valuable for A&P and CCS staff members, particularly those who have recently joined the OSUL.

1. How we got to where we are (brief history)

Beginning in February, 2015, SAC introduced open forum discussions with staff members throughout the OSUL during their monthly meetings. These discussions revealed a need for emphasis on issues related to Human Resources and Information Technology, broadly. Though SAC could not presume that staff mentorship would address all of the issues staff encountered, it was important to note that many staff issues arose from organizational complexity and inconsistencies in staff culture across the OSUL as a whole. SAC committee members believed that mentorship could directly influence both of these categories in positive ways. The program was proposed in fall of 2015 and approved in the summer of 2016. A call for mentor and mentee participants went out in late summer of 2016, and mentee roles for the first year were open to staff who had started in the prior twelve months (as well as new hires); since that time, staff have only been contacted to join the program as new hires. Invitations to new hires are sent out within the first 2-4 weeks of their employment at OSUL. The initial round of mentor/mentee pairings was made in early fall 2016; since that time, 32 pairings have completed a mentorship, with an additional 13 pairings active as of 5/1/2019.

Lisa Patton-Glinski supports SAC as our sponsor, and an HR representative (currently Randall Mackenzie) is an ex-officio member of SAC. The remainder of SAC is comprised of an elected body of seven staff advocates, each serving two year terms. One or two SAC members oversee the mentorship program on behalf of SAC; oversight involves recruiting mentors, contacting new staff to invite them to become mentees, determining pairings (based on complimentary work schedules and the ability of the pairing to meet, but trying to match pairs across units, divisions, or buildings when possible), coordinating and scheduling events for pairings to attend, creating and distributing welcome bags for new staff members, and facilitating feedback gathering from pairings after the mentorship period concludes.

2. Where Are We Now?

The program guidelines and mentorship responsibilities have changed only slightly since the program's inception 3 years ago. Program enhancements were made last year with the addition of organized group tours for mentor/mentee pairs (with optional lunch afterward) and welcome bags delivered to new staff members on behalf of SAC, regardless of their participation in the mentorship program. The organized tours have been very popular, increasing interest in the program.

Below are some of our group tours:

- Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center
- Historic Tour of the Oval (Archives)
- Billy Ireland Museum and Archives
- Museum of Biological Diversity
- AD&S "Cyber" Tour (OSUL IT department, upcoming).

Current Program participation:

25 – Mentor volunteers

13 – Current mentor/mentee pairings

In addition to group tours and lunches for mentor/mentee pairs, all pairs are encouraged to meet on their own at a frequency of their choosing, though monthly is suggested. During these one-on-one paired meetings, pairs have toured many additional libraries, library departments, and other campus locations. Pairs also meet for informal conversations throughout the library locations and all over campus, attend library-wide events together (such as general meetings, staff forums, lunches or other celebrations, trainings, curatorial tours of the Thompson exhibit gallery, and undoubtedly many other scheduled events), and communicate regularly through email/IM/phone/etc.

A structural change in duration of mentorship pairing was made after the first year of pairings. During the first year, all pairings were a 12-month pairing; some participants provided feedback that a shorter duration would have worked better for their pairing, so going into the second year, the new minimum duration of pairing was set to 6 months, with pairings encouraged to continue the pairing for up to 12 months if determined beneficial. Many pairings continue to opt for a 12-month mentorship.

The introduction of planned group outings for pairings during this third year of the program has decreased the responsibility of mentors to identify a new activity or meeting location each month for their pairing, while also decreasing the scheduling burden on popular tour locations so that they are not being asked to commit time to a continuous stream of individual mentor/mentee pairs.

3. Is the project/initiative succeeding in meeting its intended objectives? How is success being measured against strategic priorities (measures of success)?

Mentorship Program Objectives:

- Identify, communicate, and provide recommendations to OSUL administration on staff related opportunities and concerns.
- Develop, recommend, and participate in initiatives that advance innovation, stimulate positive culture change and generate employee engagement.
- Engage in projects that directly support strategic planning initiatives.

How the Mentorship Program Meets its Objectives:

- Cultivates friendships and trust creating a comfortable environment for staff to voice their ideas and concerns. This helps SAC identify, communicate and provide recommendations to OSUL administration.
- Organizes activities that engage staff in library and university culture.
- Provides a gateway through which staff members can access, and learn about areas of the library aside from their own; introducing new employees to

other departments, staff, and faculty they might not otherwise have a chance to meet in their first weeks at OSUL, or possibly at all.

Measures of Success against Strategic Priorities (measures of success)

At the conclusion of the mentorship pairing, both mentor and mentee are asked to complete a survey on their experiences in the program, asking both for what worked well and what could be improved. It should be noted that survey completion has not been consistent, with the highest amount of surveys returned in the first year, and a decreasing return rate since that time.

However, nearly all responses to the surveys indicate a positive experience with the program, with participants reporting increased learning about and familiarity with areas of OSUL that they otherwise have limited interaction with, and an appreciation for being introduced to a friendly non-supervisor to guide them through their first year at our complex organization. Several mentees have commented informally on their appreciation of knowing they have someone they can go to ask questions that they may otherwise feel silly or uncomfortable asking a supervisor, noting that it may otherwise have taken them years at OSUL to organically find a peer of this nature.

Mentors have reported on the benefits of regular interaction with someone working in a department that they themselves otherwise do not interact with, and that the accumulated knowledge of operations in other areas of the organization, as well as introductions to colleagues they interact with infrequently, has grown their own ability to successfully navigate our complex organization.

A notable measure of success for the mentorship program is the return rate of participants. Many mentors have returned yearly to be available for new mentorship pairings, and several individuals who joined the program originally as a mentee have since volunteered to become a mentor and are now mentoring new mentees in the program.

Overall, the Mentorship Program strongly supports OSUL's strategic initiative of 'Invest in People'.

4. Were the resources allocated for the project/initiative adequate? If not, why?

The Mentorship Program does not generally require any financial resources. Welcome bags being given to new staff are filled with items that have been donated or otherwise acquired for free. Tours and events are all free of charge, and all lunch/coffee/dessert outings are optional and paid for by program participants, noting that some mentors pay for their mentees' expenses at these outings, though it is not an expectation that all mentors do so.

5. Are there successes/highlights to share?

We have received a lot of positive feedback about our organized group tours and lunches. It seems word has gotten around about how much fun we are having, creating more interest in staff volunteering to be mentors. Many of the places we tour are new to both new and seasoned staff. The group lunches afterward have been a great way for people to meet in a small group atmosphere and really get to know each other. The success we've seen has spurred talk about adding regular coffees and/or lunches to the program. Though the Mentorship Program alone cannot address issues of organizational complexity and differences of staff experience in the different divisions,

the cohesion of staff from all areas of the Libraries participating together in the Mentorship program has begun to reduce the strain of these issues for staff.

6. Is the project/initiative encountering any barriers to success? If so, what?

There have been a few pairings that did not succeed, due to low engagement from the mentor. This occurred primarily in the first and second year of the program, with mentees assigned to these mentors reporting disappointment that their mentor had only contacted them once or twice during the mentorship year. SAC wants to ensure that everyone in the mentorship program is committed to the responsibilities asked of participants, and has since invested more effort in confirming the mentors' willingness to commit their time to the program before pairing mentors. The scheduling of events that pairings can opt in to has helped with this latency issue, as one concern raised by non-meeting pairings was an uncertainty about what to do when they met; though SAC provides and maintains a list of suggestions and resources that all mentors have access to, the further efforts of SAC to schedule events appears to be a solution that is working. SAC is also checking in with pairings within the first six-months for a brief status update on how the pairing has gone thus far, hoping that if the mentor has not engaged with their mentee that SAC will be able to intervene earlier on.

It should also be noted that many new staff joining OSUL choose not to have a mentor; the current opt-in rate to the program is about 50% of new staff. SAC has not investigated what roadblocks may exist for staff choosing not join the program, or if there is anything SAC should do differently to interest more new staff in the program.

SAC has also received several requests from veteran staff to be paired with mentors (i.e. those staff who have been here 'too long' to qualify for a mentor in the program). Currently, the program is not able to support these requests, but has not been able to offer an alternative to veteran staff requests for mentors.

7. Is the project/initiative on time? Have you had to alter timelines? If so, why?

As an ongoing initiative, this question is not relevant to the Mentorship Program.

8. Should the Libraries continue investments in this project/initiative? Why or why not?

Yes! There is no financial outlay and the investment in people is priceless. Positive culture changes are happening within the staff that choose to participate in the program, and as this number of staff grows throughout the organization over time, we hope to see continued improvements in these areas of expressed staff concern.