

Recommendations from the Select Committee on Institutional Mentoring

Why Mentor?

A mentorship program at Santa Fe College fulfills the institution's mission by helping new employees adapt to their roles more effectively, integrating employees into the Santa Fe culture, supporting established employees' development and advancement, and fostering interdisciplinary connections among all employees.

The Mentorship program promises to provide benefits on multiple levels, including:

- **Benefits to new employees:** Mentorship connections provide invaluable resources to new employees, augmenting existing orientation efforts to offer more consistent support throughout employees' early years. Further, these relationships cultivate a sense of belonging and connections with Santa Fe College's broader culture. Mentorship relationships promise to provide effective avenues for the communication of best practices between experienced employees and those new to the college. Mentor connections are highly effective at combating job-related stressors, including impostor bias, a particularly prevalent phenomenon impacting the performance, health, and well-being of employees at higher-education institutions.
- **Benefits to established employees:** Frequently, employees who are already established in their roles at the college seek to enter leadership positions—either among their peers or by moving higher in the college's administrative structure. Numerous studies on the benefits of mentorship demonstrate that mentorship from institutional leaders provides valuable benefits to those looking to take on additional responsibility. This is particularly true for female employees and employees of color at institutions of higher education.
- **Benefits to mentors:** More recent findings on the subject of mentorship indicate that effective relationships are not transactional, and that benefits are not realized by the new employees alone. Instead, studies examining experiences of mentors in education find that mentors derive as much benefit from involvement in these programs as new employees do. Not only can engaging as a mentor satisfy an employee's commitment to provide service to the college, it also can foster the same sense of community as well as improved job-related confidence and competence observed among new employees.
- **Benefits to students:** Reinforcing connections across the college, furthering employee development, and attenuating impostor bias all serve to benefit the community of learners we serve. Connecting employees with counterparts across traditional administrative divisions establishes a more consistent college culture and helps employees appreciate student experiences at our institution. In addition, mentorship provides employees with skills and information to better serve our students—much of which they may not encounter outside of a program like that proposed here. Mentorship programs have immediate, quantifiable effects on student persistence and performance, especially among First Time in College (FTIC) students and students of color.
- **Benefits to the college:** A mentorship program promises to produce more confident and highly skilled employees. Mentorship programs improve employee sense of belonging and create a more positive campus and community culture. Research demonstrates that mentorship programs increase employee engagement. As a result, the college may experience less turnover as we provide employees with better support and guidance. The program also encourages employees to participate in professional development activities and builds a culture of collaboration that promotes and preserves institutional knowledge.

Program Organization

Program Administration

If this is to be a college-wide effort, it is crucial that the mentorship program reflect this. As such, it is our recommendation that:

- The mentorship program be administered by more than one individual, ideally co-coordinators or co-directors from both faculty and A&P positions.
- Program administrators have experience as mentors, ideally within the SF Mentorship program once it is established.

- Program administrators receive compensation, ideally as reassigned time (or supplemental staff stipend), to allow for the effective execution of their responsibilities.

The First-Year Experience:

For faculty and staff alike, the first year at Santa Fe College presents unique opportunities and challenges. As such, we suggest programming and mentorship tailored to this first-year experience. The first year initially focuses on building relationships between the new employee and colleagues that can provide the most relevant support. Linking new employees with one another in this first year provides the added benefit of creating a supportive cohort for new hires that can last well beyond this first year. It is our recommendation that the new hires' first year mentorship involvement and activities focus on the following.

New Hires are:

- Welcomed by the mentorship program and their assigned mentor
- Provided with resources and consistent support for the best use of college services and their workspace (e.g., SFID, parking, office technology, mailboxes)
- Introduced to and encouraged to take part in parallel development opportunities (e.g., REI Groundwater, CODI, ACUE)
- Introduced to wraparound student support services (e.g., DRC, Counseling Center, Library)
- Given the opportunity to take part in campus tours that provide introductions to relevant offices, services, and resources (e.g., CATT, Media Studio, Library, Human Resources)
- Encouraged to participate in a new-hire reception
- Oriented to their office, classrooms, and/or online workspaces
- Involved in regular small- and large-group mentorship sessions focused on building community and a culture of support
- Paired with a mentor, with whom they meet regularly to discuss challenges and opportunities for growth
- Connected with mentors and peers who can help them develop and refine skills related to their new position
- Familiarized with appropriate annual evaluation procedures and assisted in developing appropriate goals for their first year at Santa Fe College
- Introduced to the college's mission, values, and culture as it relates to their role
- Introduced to the Association of Florida Colleges (AFC), shared governance organizations, and their representatives

Mentorship After the First Year

After the first year, mentoring will be customized according to employee strengths, interests, and goals.

The mentoring relationship after the first year may focus on:

- The employee's role in the college mission, values, and strategic priorities.
- Familiarization and engagement with the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).
- Visiting the Educational Centers and understanding their roles in serving our community.
- Assessing and reflecting on previous years' goals.
- Development of current goals and plans to achieve those goals.
- Fostering an awareness of and engaging with professional development and leadership opportunities.
- Ensuring an understanding of college service expectations and assistance in connecting with opportunities that complement the employee's goals and interests.
- Connecting to people within the Santa Fe community and local communities.

Events & Activities

Interpersonal mentoring relationships are invaluable supports, but they can be further bolstered by regular engagement with rewarding, relevant cohort activities focused on building a sense of community and belonging as well as a culture of growth and development.

Cohort activities can include any combination of the following depending on cohort need and interest:

- An initial welcome reception for new mentees.

- Introduction to Mentorship program and virtual space during New Employee Orientation
- Social gathering on Convocation Day
- Information sessions/symposia conducted by offices on campus to connect mentees with student- and employee-supports
- Leadership-focused seminars that connect mentees with college administration
- Workshops focused on annual evaluation procedures
- Informative sessions about resources, departments, and both volunteer and committee opportunities on campus (Food Pantry, College Senate, Saints Sharewear, etc.)
- Roundtable discussions, panels, town-halls, and group discussions to address issues of specific interest to employees (e.g., H.R. policies and procedures, eStaff, QEP, pedagogy)

Departmental Support

Department chairs, program coordinators, and directors will be integral to the mentorship program's effectiveness since this is a large program that serves employees in diverse roles. The committee recommends that a portion of the mentorship program's support and facilitation lie with departments so that mentorship activities can be better tailored to employees' individual goals and needs.

Departments might facilitate the program by:

- Making knowledge of the mentorship program available to all employees.
- Affording the opportunity of mentorship to full-time and part-time faculty and staff.
- Connecting part-time employees (including adjunct instructors) with full-time mentors.
- Assisting in the mentor-matching process.
- Making resources available to assist mentors and mentees in resolving discipline or department-specific questions (e.g., transfer application changes, FAFSA requirements, writing-assignment expectations).

Mentors

Santa Fe College employees who wish to serve as mentors should exhibit qualifications based on experience and disposition.

Qualifications

To more effectively provide guidance and support, mentors should meet the following qualifications:

- At least 1 year experience working at Santa Fe College
- No direct supervisory role over new employee to be mentored
- Enthusiasm for helping others grow and challenge themselves
- Familiarity with policies and programs at Santa Fe
- A willingness to seek solutions to novel challenges
- Commitment to mentoring, allowing 2-4 hours per month to meet with mentees, virtually and/or in-person

Goals

Engagement in the mentorship role can help employees accomplish their own goals, including:

- Sharing knowledge and experience within and throughout the college.
- Learning from other employees' experiences.
- Exploring resources alongside other employees to aid in resolving issues.
- Connecting employees with service or professional development opportunities.
- Creating opportunities for future collaboration.
- Improving mentoring and leadership skills through participation in mentor training sessions.

Responsibilities

Within the mentoring partnership, mentors are responsible for the following:

- Initiating contact with mentee by the end of the first week of the semester
- Providing campus tour and help locating relevant offices, resources, or people

- Introducing mentees to other faculty and staff
- Informing new employees of college mission, values, and culture
- Explaining expectations of new hires within the first year, including important logistics and deadlines (e.g., how/when to enter grades or payroll information)
- Guiding new hire through setting developmental goals
- Providing guidance and support for evaluation processes
- Informing new employees on professional development expectations and opportunities
- Coordinating monthly meetings with new employee
- Connecting mentees as needed with additional resources
- Respecting the confidentiality of information shared between mentor and mentee

Recruitment

The mentorship program will recruit mentors through campus-wide promotions and individual outreach, including but not limited to the following:

- Campus-wide recruitment: regular exposure to mentoring opportunities throughout the year with ads in the newSFeed, promotions during Convocation, mailbox fliers, etc.
- Recommendations: solicited from chairs, directors, coordinators, and other supervisors at the college.
- Individual recruitment: based on recommendations from current participants in the mentorship program, departments, etc.

It is our recommendation that supervisors collaborate with the mentorship program to assist in mentor matching based on mentors and mentees' stated career interests and goals based on the annual evaluation process

Training & Support

Established programs demonstrate that a key to long-term success is consistent support and development of program mentors. As such, it is our recommendation that mentors take part in ongoing training and receive support from the mentorship program, including but not limited to the following:

- Financial support for events with mentees
- Membership in regional/national/international mentorship organizations
- Initial onboarding and training session
- Mentor cohort activities and training opportunities throughout the year

New Employees

To maximize the impact of the program, it is our recommendation that all Santa Fe College employees be enrolled in the mentorship program with the option to opt out. New Santa Fe College employees will be invited to mentorship program online resources immediately after hire to encourage participation in the program. Further outreach before beginning work at Santa Fe College will occur between mentors and the new employee.

Goals

Engagement in the mentorship program can help employees accomplish their professional goals, including:

- Establishing and broaden institutional connections.
- More effectively connecting with the Santa Fe community.
- Improving knowledge of institutional policies and higher education.
- Actively engaging in personal and professional development through the annual evaluation cycle.
- Learning about other careers and professions in higher education.
- Strengthening their practice.
- Creating opportunities for future collaboration.
- Building a professional identity.
- Improving mentoring skills.

Responsibilities

Within the mentoring partnership, mentees are responsible for the following:

- Be responsive to the mentors' attempts to reach out.
- Be respectful of mentor's time and effort.
- Utilize mentor as a resource for guidance, questions, or concerns.
- Be respectful of confidentiality of information shared between mentor and mentee.

Measuring the Program's Success

To evaluate the mentorship program's success and improve the experience for future cohorts, both mentors and mentees will complete feedback and experience surveys. This feedback will help the program evolve and provide guidance that can be included in subsequent trainings and orientations.

Additionally, the program's success should be measured using the following metrics:

- Employee retention
- Employee engagement surveys
- Employee climate survey
- Employee advancement

These metrics should be assessed prior to mentorship program inauguration to establish the baseline for determination of success.

Additional Recommendations

Peer institutions that have successfully established and maintained a mentorship program find it to be a valuable way to support and retain employees. Conversations with program administrators suggest that the college can help ensure the success of the program by:

- Establishing the mentorship program under the authority of a senior leader of the college.
- Establishing a dedicated physical space for in-person mentorship meetings and events.
- Assisting in the development and maintenance of virtual resources and meeting spaces.
- Committing financial resources to support the program's administration, especially in the form of reassigned time (or supplemental staff stipend) for mentorship program administrators.
- Involving college leadership in mentorship roles, especially for employees with an articulated interest in joining administration.
- Articulating enthusiastic support for a college-wide mentorship program.