

Evaluation of promising peer mentoring program for early career gero-nursing faculty

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New models for providing mentorship to early career academics will become key to developing and maintaining an experienced faculty.

"Healthcare professionals in academia who are privy to formal mentorship by senior [faculty](#) early on in their careers enjoy a host of advantages, such as faster career advancement and higher job satisfaction," says Abraham Brody, PhD, RN, GNP-BC, an assistant professor at the New York University Rory Meyers College of Nursing (NYU Meyers).

The problem, explains Brody, who is also the associate director of the Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing (HIGN), is that there are not enough senior faculty to go around. Academic institutions across the board and particularly in nursing and other [health sciences](#) are facing a shortage of senior and mid-career faculty due to an aging and retiring faculty. "The issue is effectively compounded," says Brody. "Early career individuals are now placed in a position where we need them to mature more quickly and become mentors themselves."

In 2000, the John A. Hartford Foundation, in order to prepare the next generation of expert gerontological academic leaders and researchers, established the "Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity" (BAGNC) [program](#).

In 2011, alumni of the BAGNC pre-doctoral and post-doctoral programs, now part of the National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nursing Excellence (NHCGNE) which is hosted by the HIGN through a grant from the John a Hartford Foundation formed a "Peer Mentoring Committee" and developed a "Peer Mentoring Program," using the "mentoring forward" peer mentoring model to enhance new scholars' and fellows' experience in the program, utilizing mentors who were program alumni just a few years ahead of them in their career.

Given the now more than ever dire need for mentors in the field of geriatric nursing, Dr. Brody led a team of researchers from various institutions in assessing the mentoring model employed by the BAGNC. Surveying the experiences of mentors and mentees, the evaluation, ["Evaluation of a peer mentoring program for early career gerontological nursing faculty and its potential for application to other fields in nursing and health sciences,"](#) published in *Nursing Outlook*, examines areas of need for sustaining the program into the future.

"Overall, 64.7% of mentors and 72.7% of mentees found value in the program," said Dr. Brody. Mentees suggested the program places a stronger emphasis on encouraging future mentees to proactively engage their mentors. Both mentees and mentors saw goal setting at the start of the program as an area for improvement.

Among the various benefits observed, mentees stated that the program had increased the scope of their network, improved their ability to work at a distance in teams, and provided them an opportunity to learn more about research activities and experiences at other institutions.

The NHCGNE at HIGN is currently further developing out its peer mentorship program, which will be open to all early career faculty, post-doctoral fellows and pre-doctoral students at NHCGNE Member Schools in the coming year.

Beyond early career gerontological nursing faculty, the researchers outlined the program's potential for application to other fields in nursing and health sciences and noted the model is low-cost as [mentors](#) and mentees are both volunteers. The program could also serve as a model for other professional organizations, academic institutions, and consortiums to enhance and extend the formal vertical mentorship provided to early academic career individuals.

"The structure of the program and lessons learned are equally applicable to other areas of nursing as well as other health care fields," says Dr. Brody. "By providing lateral mentoring that crosses institutional boundaries, we can expose early career academics to a diversity of thought and methodology, allowing for a multitude of career opportunities and collaborations."

Provided by New York University

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