

# Promoting Faculty Involvement in First-Year Experience Programs & Student Success Initiatives

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## *Introduction*

The issue of faculty involvement in orientation and the first-year experience in general has been a topic that has received regular attention on this FYE-List, which serves as testimony to its ongoing importance. In some ways, this issue is really embedded in a larger issue of how to induce effective collaboration and partnerships between student affairs and academic affairs. With respect to this larger issue, I've attached a document that begins with a quick review of the literature that makes the case for *unifying academic and student affairs*; it ends with some suggestions for collaborative strategies that may reduce the schism between these two organizational divisions.

Regarding the more specific issue about promoting faculty involvement in new-student orientation, I've pasted a series of strategies below (followed by some research and theory supporting the role of faculty-student contact and faculty-student mentoring outside the classroom). The below-listed strategies range from informal, altruistic human relations approaches, to formal professional development programs, to top-down administrative changes in faculty promotion and tenure practices.

Some faculty would be intrinsically interested and willing to become involved in orientation if they knew exactly what role they were to play and why they were being asked to perform it. Other faculty, however, may need much stronger, extrinsic incentives—such as some of those that are suggested below. Admittedly, these stronger incentive systems would require radical restructuring of traditional faculty reward (and recruitment) practices, as well as some bold (and visionary) initiatives on the part of top-level administration. However, as I see it, these aggressive strategies represent the type of substantive institutional change and organizational restructuring that is needed to forge a systemic solution to this perennial problem.

While I concur and empathize with student development professionals about the lack of involvement of faculty in student life issues, I also understand why faculty do not get involved—given that their graduate school experience provides absolutely no preparation for this role, and the faculty recruitment and promotion systems they encounter after they enter the professoriate neither reward nor encourage (or even mention) faculty involvement in student life outside the classroom. Until this issue is more forcefully addressed by top-level administrators—who play a pivotal role in its resolution, I'm afraid that laments about lack of faculty involvement in the co-curriculum will continue ad infinitum (and ad nauseam).

## **The Case for Faculty Involvement with First-Year Experience Programs**

The late Ernest Boyer (1987), writing as then president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, contended that the following "key question" must be asked when

assessing the effectiveness of an institution's freshman-orientation program, "Is the orientation program actively supported by the faculty?" (p. 288). After comprehensively reviewing twenty-five years of retention research, Pantages and Creedon (1978) concluded that one potentially potent approach to reducing student attrition was for colleges to find new ways to maximize faculty-student interaction during the freshman year, including greater faculty involvement in the orientation program.

The importance of *student-faculty contact* and *front-loading* of outstanding teachers and advisors are two oft-cited recommendations in the retention literature (National Institute of Education, 1984; Noel, Levitz, et al., 1985). Empirical evidence supporting this contention is provided by Moore, Peterson, and Wirag (1984), who found that faculty involvement in orientation programs had positive effects on students' academic development. Tammi (1987) also found that participants in a freshman seminar reported significantly more informal contacts with faculty than non-participants.

Faculty involvement in the freshman seminar would seem to be an effective and efficient way to simultaneously implement the dual advantages of student-faculty contact and front-loading. Involvement of faculty in freshman orientation should also serve to increase their sensitivity to the significant personal adjustments which adolescents (and returning adult students) must make upon entering college, and enhance faculty's advising skills. Furthermore, faculty involvement in orientation would improve the program's credibility and elevate the significance of student support and student retention to the level of a college-wide concern—rather than limiting it to an "extracurricular" job performed exclusively by student-affairs professionals (Cuseo, 1991).

## FORMS OF MEANINGFUL STUDENT-FACULTY CONTACT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Listed below is a sample of institutional practices that may be intentionally or purposely designed and implemented to increase faculty-student contact outside the classroom.

- Faculty participate in *new-student orientation* by leading small-group discussions relating to summer reading or short reading given during orientation.
- Faculty interact with students at a reception following *new-student convocation*.
- Faculty serve as *mentors* to undergraduates, and periodically meet with them in out-of-class contexts for the purpose of promoting their collegiate success.
- The college explicitly designates a specific number of *student clubs and organizations* for faculty sponsorship or moderation.
- The college expects academic departments to sponsor *departmental clubs* for students majoring in their field, which include faculty sponsors.
- Faculty members visit *student residences* to conduct small-group discussions, conduct tutoring sessions, or advise students.

- ***Faculty-in-residence*** program is developed, whereby a teaching faculty member lives in a student residence and provides out-of-class instruction, advising, or mentoring assistance to residential students who co-occupy the same unit.
- The college provides specific ***faculty incentives*** for becoming involved with students outside the classroom (e.g., stipends for taking students to lunch/dinner or cultural/athletic events; release time; merit pay; credit toward promotion and tenure; student-service awards to publicly recognize outstanding faculty contributions to students outside the classroom; incentive grants for faculty who involve students as partners in teaching or research).
- The importance of faculty-student contact outside the classroom is explicitly highlighted in ***new-faculty orientation*** and promoted via ***faculty development*** activities.
- The college adopts a formal ***policy*** about the minimum number of weekly ***office hours*** that faculty are expected to be available to undergraduates.
- College faculty are ***trained, evaluated, and rewarded*** for providing ***academic advising*** to first-year students on a one-to-one basis outside the classroom.
- Faculty are encouraged to ***schedule office visits/conferences*** with individual students or small groups of students enrolled in their classes.
- ***Students interview faculty*** as a required or optional course assignment. (For example: As a first-year seminar assignment, students interview a faculty member in their major or a potential field of interest.)
- Faculty are encouraged to sponsor out-of-class educational activities that promote personal contact with students, such as: ***independent studies, field work, internships, or service-learning*** experiences.
- College ***committees*** are intentionally structured to include both student and faculty representation.
- Faculty-student ***research teams*** are sponsored, whereby a faculty member involves undergraduate students in his or her field of research, for which students gain experience as research assistants and a potential product for use as a senior honors thesis, joint conference presentation with a faculty member, or professional publication co-authored with a faculty member.
- ***Undergraduate student fellows*** receive stipends for working 10-20 hours per week with faculty mentors on collaborative research projects or creative productions.
- Faculty-student ***teaching teams*** are encouraged, whereby a faculty member co-teaches a course with an undergraduate. (For example, a faculty member and a sophomore or upper-division student team-teach a freshman seminar.)

- Undergraduate ***teaching assistant*** opportunities are offered, in which upper-division students work closely with faculty mentors to gain insight into the teaching role and gain direct teaching experience. Students receive academic credit for their work as undergraduate teaching assistants and for their participation in a preparatory seminar covering course planning, classroom instruction, and student evaluation.
- ***Student management teams*** are developed by course instructors, in which a team of 4-6 students is selected by their instructor to serve as "student managers" for the course, and assume responsibility for promoting the quality teaching and learning. The role of this student management team is to solicit comments from other students and meet with the instructor outside of class to dialogue about possible course improvements. Student managers may participate in a training program to prepare them for this role.
- Opportunities for faculty-student ***collaborative course development*** are available, whereby faculty members design new courses relating to contemporary issues or emerging areas of interest by collaborating with a selected group of undergraduates, who assist in course planning and syllabus development.
- Faculty-student technological ***support service teams*** are developed whereby student assistants who are technologically advanced work with faculty, staff, and other students in the area of information technology. The institution benefits by capitalizing on student expertise to help combat support-service shortages on campus. In the process, students benefit from out-of-class interaction with faculty, and acquire technical and human service skills that prepare them for higher-paying, part-time work in information industries while they are still in college, and for entry-level technology positions after college.
- The college offers a ***federated learning community***, a learning community model in which a faculty member takes the same courses as a cohort of students and serves as a "master learner." The faculty member meets regularly with these students outside the classroom to help them master and integrate concepts taught in the different courses.
- The college offers ***ESL-linked transitional courses***, in which an English as a Second Language (ESL) faculty member participates as a learner in an academic discipline-based course (e.g., History) that contains a group of ESL students. The ESL instructor meets regularly with these students outside the classroom to help them master the course material.

### *Summary & Conclusion*

The range of potential strategies in the foregoing list suggests that intentional promotion of faculty-student contact outside the classroom is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which is best addressed with a comprehensive, coordinated approach that involves diverse divisions or units of the college. A truly comprehensive, institution-wide response would embrace the following elements: (a) student development services, (b) office of academic affairs, (c), academic departments, (d) college committee structures, (e) the curriculum, (f) the co-curriculum, (g) faculty orientation/development, and (h) faculty evaluation/rewards.

Given the multiple positive outcomes that are empirically associated with faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, an integrated college-wide approach to stimulate such interaction may be expected to promote systemic and synergistic effects on student development.

## STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVING FACULTY IN STUDENT LIFE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

### HUMAN RELATIONS & HUMAN MOTIVATION STRATEGIES

1. Send *personal invitations* to individual faculty that *formally invite* them to participate in specific out-of-class activities with students.
2. Offer *food and libation* (or any other forms of gastronomic stimulation you can think of) as incentives for faculty participation.
3. Acknowledge and validate faculty who do participate with a *formal thank-you note* that is also forwarded to the *college president or academic dean*.
4. Give a *small gift* to faculty participants as a tangible token of appreciation (perhaps funds could be earmarked for this purpose or donors could be solicited).

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

1. Host professional development *workshops, seminars, or brown-bag lunch discussions* on the ways in which faculty may become involved with students outside the classroom, and why this involvement is so important to student retention at the college.

Many college faculty do not realize how much impact they have on student retention, nor are they aware of what specific things they can do inside and outside the classroom to reduce student attrition. For instance, many faculty may still believe that most students drop out of college because they're just "not ready" for college," or because they "flunk out" and that providing individual student assistance in non-academic areas undermines the academic integrity of the college by "lowering academic standards."

Periodic faculty workshops/seminars might be effective delivery mechanism for providing faculty with research on the underlying causes of student attrition, what practices have been repeatedly found to promote student success, and what specific practices they can engage in to promote student persistence.

These faculty development get-togethers could be offered in conjunction with, or as part of, the college's faculty development program. If your campus does have such a faculty development program, you might very well find that the faculty member running that program will be an ally, because faculty development often involves promoting faculty change and encouraging faculty behavior that contributes most directly to student learning and development.

2. Ask for the opportunity to make a short presentation to newly hired faculty, perhaps during *new-faculty orientation*, at which time you might make a passionate plea for their involvement with student development and retention programming. This might also be a good time to “educate” faculty about what student affairs professionals do, why they can do it better by collaborating with faculty, and how working together works in the best interest of students at the college.

## STRATEGIES FOR SOLICITING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

1. Encourage *high-level* administrators to **demonstrate visible support** for faculty involvement with students by their *presence* at student development events, by *comments* they make during formal addresses, and in their *written* statements or documents (e.g., college memos, position statements, strategic plans).

2. Seek administrative encouragement of, and support for, **college rituals** that perennially bring faculty and students together outside the classroom (e.g., a post-convocation reception where new students meet and mingle with the college faculty).

3. Try to enlist support for the establishment of a **working committee** (comprised of committed faculty and student development professionals) whose charge is to oversee and promote faculty-student involvement at the college and student retention. Ideally, this committee should be “built into” the college’s *table of organization*, thus ensuring that attention to the issue of faculty involvement becomes “institutionalized” and receives ongoing attention.

4. Encourage administrators to **create incentives** and **provide rewards** for faculty involvement with students outside the classroom; for example:  
 a) stipends for taking students to lunch/dinner or cultural/athletic events; b) faculty release time or workload reduction; c) professional-development travel funds; d) merit pay or meritorious performance awards; e) letters of commendation to be included in faculty’s personnel file or professional dossier; f) credit toward promotion and tenure; g) student-service awards or certificates of recognition to outstanding faculty that publicly recognize their out-of-class contributions to students at well-attended college functions, such as graduation or convocation; h) incentive grants for faculty who involve undergraduates as partners in teaching, research, or the establishment of discipline-based clubs ).

Vince Tinto has reported a couple of interesting institutional incentives for encouraging faculty to interact with students outside the classroom. One college provided their faculty with a coffee cup which could be filled for free at the student center, while a second school gave college jackets to their faculty which, when worn to campus sporting events, allowed them free admission. Both of these institutions reported that these incentives led to increased student-faculty contact in these setting, which in turn, led to increased contact in a variety of other settings. A number of colleges and universities have also developed formal student-faculty involvement programs, typically housed in Student Affairs, which provide incentives for faculty and students to engage in joint out-of-class activities by earmarking funds for these activities.

5. Attempt enlist the support of *department chairs* by asking them to encourage their departmental faculty to become involved with students, and by recognize their involvement in departmental decisions regarding promotion, and tenure.

6. Lobby for a *restructuring or redefining of faculty roles and responsibilities* so that service to students is considered to be a “normal” or “regular” faculty function that is expected, evaluated, and rewarded in promotion and tenure decisions. For example, lobby to have your college broaden their definition of “service to the college,” so that this faculty responsibility can be fulfilled not only through academic “committee work,” but also by faculty service (involvement) with students outside the classroom.

7. Request administration to consider faculty candidates’ history of involvement with students in their *faculty recruitment and hiring* practices. Try to promote inclusion of faculty-hiring criteria that relate to student development and student retention (e.g., faculty interest, experience, and effectiveness in the areas of faculty-student mentoring, faculty-student research outside the classroom, or scholarly work relating to student development and student success).

More specifically, encourage your college to consider adopting some or all of the following faculty recruitment-and-hiring practices:

(a) Perusal of the candidate’s application materials for documentation of commitment to and effectiveness in the areas of student development (e.g., experiences listed on the applicant’s vita; and references to student-centered experiences mentioned in applicant’s cover letter, statement of educational philosophy, or letters of recommendation).

(b) Involving students and student affairs professionals in the faculty-selection process by having them meet with faculty candidates brought to campus, and by seriously weighing their perceptions/input when making final decisions.

(c) Including questions in the interview process that may provide reveal the faculty candidate’s attitudes toward issues pertinent to student development and retention (e.g., attitudes regarding teaching and tutoring underprepared students; attitudes regarding out-of-class interaction with students).

## ***FACULTY-STUDENT CONTACT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM: SUPPORTING EVIDENCE & PROMOTING PRACTICES***

*Joe Cuseo*

### *Introduction*

This document first provides a review of the research literature is provided on the relationship between student-faculty contact outside the classroom and various educational outcomes. The document concludes with a series of two-dozen practices that serve to promote meaningful faculty-student contact outside the classroom.

### *Review of the Research*

In short, research indicates that faculty-student contact outside the classroom is empirically associated with multiple, positive outcomes, such as:

- (1) ***retention/persistence to graduation***
- (2) ***academic achievement/performance***
- (3) ***critical thinking***
- (4) ***personal and intellectual development***
- (5) ***educational aspirations***
- (6) ***satisfaction with faculty***
- (7) ***college satisfaction***
- (8) ***perceptions of college quality.***

Positive outcomes associated with faculty-student contact outside the classroom have been reported for students of all types, including *transfer students*, *female* students, *African-American* students, and “*at-risk*” students (e.g., economically disadvantaged, first-generation college students). Furthermore, the positive effects of student contact with faculty outside of class has been found to have a *direct* effect on educational outcomes that is *independent* of other college experiences and student characteristics. Thus, its association with positive outcomes cannot be simply dismissed as being caused by the tendency of already high-achieving students to engage in more frequent out-of-class contact with faculty.

The research evidence supporting faculty-student contact outside the classroom is formidable and the positive outcomes empirically associated with it are multiple. One would be hard-pressed to find any other college-experience variable with as much empirical support for as many positive educational outcomes.

Perhaps the first and most impressive set of research findings pointing to the positive impact of student-faculty contact outside the classroom were reported by Wilson et al. (1975), who conducted an 8-institutional study over a 4-year span that included survey and interview data gathered from 4,815 students and 1,472 faculty. This study revealed that faculty who were consistently nominated by students and professional colleagues as “most outstanding,” as having the “most impact” on students, and as playing a role in students’ “choice of major” were those who interacted most frequently with students outside the classroom. In addition, those students who showed the most gains in intellectual achievement and reported the most satisfaction with the academic and nonacademic aspects of their college experience were students who reported more

contact with faculty, particularly contacts that occurred outside the classroom. The authors of this comprehensive research report reached the following conclusion: “The relationships that faculty and students develop outside the classroom may well be the part of teaching which has the greatest impact on students” (p. 107).

Several years later, George Kuh reviewed the scholarly literature on college quality and concluded: “The empirical evidence seems unequivocal: Faculty-student interaction is an important part of a quality undergraduate experience” (1981, p. 21). In a more recent, national report on indices of college quality, the Education Commission of the States included out-of-class contact with faculty as one of its 12 essential attributes of good practice, stating that: “Through such contact, students are able to see faculty members less as experts than as role models for ongoing learning” (1995, p. 8).

A host of specific research findings underscore the importance of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom. For instance, Astin (1993) completed a longitudinal study over a 25-year period, which included a national sample of approximately 500,000 students and 1300 institutions of all types. He found that student-faculty interaction was significantly correlated with *every* academic achievement outcome examined, namely: college GPA, degree attainment, graduating with honors, and enrollment in graduate or professional school. Levine & Cureton (1998) infer from Astin’s findings that, “Despite the wide variation in the cultures of our nation’s academic institutions, the value of human connection remains important” (p. 131).

In addition, Astin has found that student-faculty contact outside the classroom correlates more strongly with *college satisfaction* than any other single variable. Drawing on longitudinal data gathered from 200,000 students in 300 institutions of all types, Astin reports that:

Student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other variable [and] any student characteristic or institutional characteristic. Students who interact frequently with faculty are more satisfied with all aspects of their institutional experience, including student friendships, variety of courses, intellectual environment, and even administration of the institution (1977, pp. 223 & 233).

Other studies have demonstrated that student-faculty contact outside the classroom correlates positively with undergraduate students’ (a) *academic achievement* (Astin & Panos, 1969; Centra & Rock, 1970; Pascarella, 1980) (b) *personal and intellectual development* (Endo & Harpel, 1982; Lacy, 1978; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978), (c) *critical thinking* (Wilson, 1975), (d) *satisfaction with faculty* (Astin, 1993), (e) *perceptions of college quality* (Theophilides & Terenzini, 1981), and (f) *educational aspirations* (Astin & Panos, 1969), such as their decision to pursue advanced (graduate) degrees (Kocher & Pascarella, 1987; Pascarella, 1980; Stoecker, Pascarella & Wolfle, 1988). In particular, student-faculty contact outside the classroom that involves the following topics has been found to be most strongly associated with positive academic outcomes: (a) intellectual issues, (b) literary or artistic interests, (c) values, and (d) future career plans (Pascarella, 1980).

Furthermore, there is abundant evidence that informal student-faculty contact outside the classroom correlates positively with *student retention* (Bean, 1981; Pascarella 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini 1979, Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977, 1978). On the basis of his

extensive consulting experiences with colleges interested in promoting student retention, Lee Noel (1978) offers the following observation:

It is increasingly apparent that the most important features of a “staying” environment relate to the instructional faculty. Students make judgments about their academic experience on the basis of such factors as quality of instruction, freedom to contact faculty for consultation, availability of faculty for consultation, and faculty involvement outside the classroom (pp. 96-97).

In a comprehensive review of the research literature, Vince Tinto (1987) reached a similar conclusion: “Institutions with low rates of student retention are those in which students generally report low rates of student-faculty contact. Conversely, institutions with high rates of retention are most frequently those which are marked by relatively high rates of such interactions” (p. 66).

Moreover, informal out-of-class contact between faculty and students has been found to be particularly beneficial in promoting the persistence of students who are “*withdrawal prone*,” such as low-income, first-generation college students (Tinto, 1975). Pascarella and Terenzini (1979) found that frequency of non-classroom contact between students and faculty, which involved discussion of academic issues, had its most positive influence on the persistence of students with low initial commitment to college and students whose parents had relatively low levels of formal education. Consistent with these quantitative findings is the qualitative research reported by Vince Tinto, stemming from interviews he conducted with especially high-risk students who beat the odds and succeeded in college. He discovered that, “*In every case*, the students cited one or two events, when someone on the faculty or—less commonly—the staff had made personal contact with them outside the classroom. That’s what made the difference” (Levitz, 1990).

This observation is supported by an analysis of student narratives written 30 years after graduating from Rollins College, in response to a letter asking for stories about their most effective professors. Many of the memories reported in the student narratives about their most effective instructors related to their informal, out—of-class contact with them (Carson, 2000). One student wrote that a conversation at a professor’s home made it easier to “see [my professor] as a person rather than a lecturer and also [made me] feel like she appreciated my opinions and insights.” Another alum wrote about her professor’s accessibility and her own classroom performance, remembering that, “It motivated me to perform well in his classes.”

The importance of *early* contacts with faculty, in particular, for promoting student retention is supported by the first comprehensive review of student retention research, conducted by Pantages and Creedon (1978). On the basis of their review of 25 years of research, they concluded that one potentially potent approach to *reducing student attrition* was for colleges to find ways to maximize faculty-student interaction during the first year, including greater faculty involvement in new-student orientation.

The value of student-faculty contact during *orientation* for promoting *academic achievement* is supported by research conducted by Pascarella, Terenzini, and Hibel (1978), who examined different types of faculty contact on the academic achievement of approximately 500 students. The results of this study led the authors to conclude that, “the first few informal interactions with faculty appear to be the most important” (p. 457).

This finding is consistent with reported evidence indicating that orientation programs in which faculty participate have a favorable impact on the intellectual development of students (Moore, Peterson & Wirag, 1984).

Faculty-student contact outside the classroom has also been associated with positive outcomes for different student *subpopulations*. For instance, positive correlations between frequency of student-faculty contact and cognitive growth have been reported for *transfer students* (Volkwein, King and Terenzini, 1986). Also, student-faculty interaction outside the classroom has been found to relate positively to the intellectual self-image and career aspirations of *female* students (Komarovsky, 1985). Such interaction also correlates positively with the intellectual self-image and persistence of *African-American* students' (Gurin & Epps, 1975; Lewis, 1987). As Davis (1991) notes, "Black students on white campuses who have good relations with faculty have never seriously considered dropping out of school and have greater satisfaction with their campus lives" (p. 154).

Moreover, Tinto (1993) points out that student contact with faculty, especially outside of class, is an *independent* predictor of learning gain or growth, i.e., its association with intellectual development remains significant even after one takes account of differences in students' ability, prior levels of development, and prior educational experience. Tinto's observation is reinforced by an extensive literature review of more than 2500 studies conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), who report findings indicating that out-of-class contact with faculty has a "statistically significant *direct effect* on various dimensions of career interest and career choice above and beyond the influence of selection factors" (p. 479, italics added). These results are consistent with the conclusion reached by Pascarella (1980), following his critical review and synthesis of a large number of studies that were specifically designed to investigate the relationship between student-faculty contact and educational outcomes:

The significant associations between student-faculty informal contact and educational outcomes are not merely the result of covariation with individual differences in student entering characteristics or with college experiences in other areas. Rather, various facets and quality of student informal contact with faculty may make a unique contribution to college impact. In turn, this suggests the possibility that colleges and universities may be able to positively influence the extent and quality of student-faculty contact, and thereby faculty impact on students, in ways other than the kinds of students they enroll. If such interaction has a significant, positive influence on student development, then it becomes important to determine the extent to which it might be influenced by purposeful institutional policies (pp. 564-566).

While there is a substantial amount of empirical research indicating that faculty-student contact outside the classroom is powerful, there has been comparatively little discussion of *why* this experience has proven to be so powerful. Listed below are some hypotheses about why faculty-student contact outside the classroom has such high impact:

- (1) It occurs in a less formal context than the classroom, so a student may feel less threatened or intimidated about discussing his or her ideas.
- (2) The faculty member is more likely to be seen as a real "person" who can be emulated, instead of a professorial pedagogue (or demigod) who should be revered.
- (3) Faculty verbal interaction with students outside the classroom is likely to be more

conversational or dialogic and less didactic or prescriptive than it is inside the classroom.

- (4) It is an individualized person-to-person interaction, where the faculty/student ratio is 1:1—an idea social context for learning.
- (5) The student is able gain some control of the agenda and the topics discussed, in contrast to the classroom where the instructor dominates the agenda and the flow of conversation.
- (6) Ideas are exchanged for reasons that are non-evaluative and more intrinsically motivated, in contrast to ideas exchanged in the classroom where the student is responsible for remembering those ideas, because s/he will be evaluated (graded) for comprehension of them.

The contemporary significance of all the positive outcomes associated with informal out-of-class contact between students and faculty is magnified further by reports indicating that the frequency of such contact is *decreasing*. Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt (1991) report that faculty are now spending more of their non-teaching time in the pursuit of research and publication, leaving out-of-class contact with undergraduates to student affairs' staff. In a more recent, large-scale study conducted by Milem, Berger, and Day (cited in Braxton, 2000), it was found that faculty members in virtually all types of postsecondary institutions (e.g., research universities, comprehensive institutions, and liberal arts colleges) are spending more time engaged in classroom teaching and research, and less time interacting with students outside the classroom.

This shift in faculty priorities and reward systems suggests that contemporary undergraduates are losing a valuable source of influence that has the capacity to exert multiple, positive effects on their collegiate and post-collegiate success. Unless postsecondary institutions engage in institutional practices that are intentionally or purposely designed to promote faculty-student contact outside the classroom, prevailing faculty interests and reward systems make it unlikely that such contact will occur either systematically or serendipitously.

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## **The Case for Faculty and Staff *Mentoring Programs* for College Students**

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The number of colleges offering mentoring programs is on the rise (Haring, 1997), and mentoring is increasingly being viewed as a tool for promoting student retention (Walker & Taub, 2001), particularly the retention of first-year students (Johnson, 1989). Mentoring has the potential to reduce students' feelings of marginality, increasing their sense of personal *significance*—that they “*matter*” (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989). Mentoring can also provide an important “validation” experience for first-generation students, for whom the transition to college is not a normal or routine rite of passage (Rendon, 1994).

The importance of mentoring for contemporary college students is well expressed by the indefatigable leader of the first-year experience movement, John Gardner:

Students need mentors and facilitators. They need, in the words of Carl Rogers, authentic professional human beings who are worthy of emulation. They need models who exhibit professional behavior, a sense of commitment and purposefulness, and a sense of autonomy and integrity in a world that generates enormous stress. Students cannot be told how to do this; authenticity cannot be transmitted through lectures” (1981, p. 70).

The availability of exemplary, caring role models is valuable for all students, but may be especially critical to the retention and success of underrepresented, first-generation college students who do not have college role models at home. Vince Tinto (1987) notes that, “While role modeling seems to be effective in retention programs generally, it appears to be especially important among those programs concerned with disadvantaged minority students” (p. 161).

Research in the field of human development indicates that mentoring has a positive impact on the personal and professional development of young adults (Levinson, 1978). There is also a growing body of research in higher education that suggests an empirical link between student mentoring and student retention (Campbell & Cambell, 1997; Wallace & Abel, 1997). For instance, Miller, Neuner, and Glynn (1988) used an experimental research design in which students were randomly assigned to either an experimental group—who received mentoring, or a control group—who did not. It was found that students who received mentoring evinced higher retention rates than non-mentored students with similar pre-enrollment characteristics.

Despite the retention-promoting promise of mentoring, one of the major logistical stumbling blocks for implementing an effective mentoring program on a large-scale basis is the fact that mentoring is traditionally delivered via dyadic (1 to 1) relationships, which makes it difficult to find a sufficient number of mentors to sustain a program that reaches a significant number of students (Redmond, 1990). However, the results of one recent study reveals that “network” mentoring programs, in which multiple students are mentored by one college faculty or staff member, are comparable in effectiveness to traditional “dyadic” (1 to 1) mentoring arrangements—as measured in terms of student satisfaction with the quality of the mentoring relationship and the frequency of student contact with their mentor (Walker &

Taub, 2001). One implication of this finding is that traditional academic advisement programs could potentially co-function as mentoring programs, because a ratio of multiple mentees (students) to one mentor (advisor) may still allow for the advantages of mentoring to be realized. While advising and mentoring have been traditionally conceptualized as distinctly different programs, even a cursory look at some of the characteristics cited in the scholarly literature for effective mentors indicates that they are very compatible with the characteristics of effective advisors. For example, Johnson (1989) suggests that the following characteristics may serve as criteria for identifying individuals who have the potential to serve as effective mentors for college students: (a) more mature than the mentee, (b) interpersonal skill, (c) willingness to commit time, and (d) knowledge of the campus. Certainly, these qualities are also characteristic of effective advisors.

Furthermore, research on the perceptions of students, as advisees, repeatedly points to the conclusion that they value most highly academic advisors who serve as mentors—who are accessible, approachable, and helpful in providing guidance that connects their present academic experience with their future life plans (Winston, Ender, & Miller, 1982; Winston, Miller, Ender, Grites, & Associates, 1984; Frost, 1991; Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000). Given the similarity of desirable qualities cited for mentors and advisors, coupled with research suggesting that mentoring may be effectively delivered by networking multiple mentees with one mentor, it would seem warranted to suggest that the retention-promoting potential of mentoring programs may be achieved as effectively (and more efficiently) through advisement programs, particularly if advisors are well prepared and adequately rewarded for this role. Since advisement focuses on an issue so central to the personal lives of students—the connection between their present collegiate experience with their future life plans—and is delivered by an experienced person who has already navigated a similar course, it appears that mentoring is an integral and inescapable element of effective academic advisement. As such, academic advising programs at some institutions may be restructured in a manner that enables them to co-function with, complement, or augment the development of faculty-student or staff-student mentoring programs.

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