





Introduction

Emory University's approach to mentoring is central to its faculty success strategy and serves as a model for fostering effective mentoring relationships and promoting a culture of successful faculty development. Through structured programs, institutional commitment, and a focus on data-driven improvements, Emory has developed strategies that enhance faculty development, satisfaction, and retention.

Why Mentoring Matters at Emory

The decision to invest deeply in mentoring at Emory stems from recognizing its critical role in faculty success and institutional excellence. Dr. Pearl Dowe, Emory's Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, has spoken passionately about the transformative impact mentoring had on her own career. She emphasized that mentoring is not only about professional guidance but also about creating a culture of belonging where "everyone matters." As she explained, "If we're talking about eminence, we have to have a culture that says all of our faculty contribute to that eminence, whether it's teaching, mentoring students, or research."

The commitment was further bolstered by data from COACHE faculty surveys, which highlighted gaps in faculty satisfaction and professional development. For example, faculty indicated a need for clearer pathways from associate to full professor and expressed feelings of isolation, particularly among those with unique research interests. This feedback underscored the need for a comprehensive and flexible mentoring strategy, which Emory quickly designed and implemented.

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Emory's Innovative Approach to Mentoring

Emory's Center for Faculty Development and Excellence (CFDE) has been instrumental in implementing a multi-faceted mentoring framework. Recognizing the traditional one-on-one mentoring models might not meet the needs of all faculty, Emory introduced alternative approaches, such as mentoring cohorts and cross-departmental groups. These models were informed by COACHE data and tailored to specific faculty needs.

For example, the College of Arts & Sciences established College-wide mentoring groups where senior faculty mentor small cohorts based on shared characteristics, such as discipline, career stage, or underrepresented status. This model not only fosters interdisciplinary collaboration but also addresses feelings of isolation among junior faculty.

Dr. Dowe noted the importance of empowering schools and colleges to design their own mentoring initiatives: "We didn't dictate how they should support their faculty. Instead, we provided the data and allowed them to act on it." This decentralized approach has been a hallmark of Emory's mentoring strategy, enabling each unit to address its unique challenges

Leveraging Strategic Partnerships and Resources

Emory has strategically partnered with NCFDD to provide extensive mentoring resources. Through Emory's NCFDD Institutional Membership, faculty have access to tools like the Mentor Map and the Faculty Success Program (FSP), a comprehensive 10-week program designed to enhance productivity, work-life balance, and academic excellence for faculty at all stages of their careers. Dr. Dowe's office actively promotes these resources through newsletters and targeted communications. "We're really trying to push out more information because we know faculty gravitate toward these programs," she said.

The FSP has proven particularly impactful. The program's effectiveness lies in its multifaceted approach, which includes weekly small-group coaching sessions, peer networking opportunities, and personalized coaching. These elements provide faculty at Emory with practical strategies, accountability, and a supportive community to help them navigate the challenges of academia and achieve long-term success. "We've retained almost 90% of the faculty who participated in the [FSP] program," Dr. Dowe noted, highlighting the correlation between mentoring support and faculty retention.

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Measuring Impact and Driving Change

Emory measures the success of its mentoring initiatives using longitudinal data and satisfaction surveys like those from COACHE. Insights from these tools have driven targeted improvements, such as addressing gaps in the promotion process from associate to full professor. Dr. Dowe shared, "The data from COACHE showed us that while faculty understand the path to tenure, there's a gap when it comes to moving from associate to full professor."

These findings have informed interventions, including mentoring programs tailored to different career stages and disciplines. Regular data collection and analysis allow Emory to refine its mentoring strategies continuously." The data showed us where we needed to focus, and we are intentional about addressing those areas," Dr. Dowe said.

Compelling Results

Emory's comprehensive mentoring strategy demonstrates the university's commitment to fostering faculty success and engagement. By creating a supportive culture and aligning mentoring initiatives with institutional goals, Emory has achieved notable outcomes:

- Record participation in mentoring programs
- More faculty reporting the importance and effectiveness of mentoring resources provided to them
- Increased faculty satisfaction
- Enhanced faculty attraction and retention efforts

One poignant example of mentoring's impact involved a faculty member who felt undervalued within their department. Dr. Dowe collaborated with the dean to organize a symposium showcasing the faculty member's work, inviting peers from across the country. "Instead of him going there, we brought them here to showcase his work," she said. This effort elevated the faculty member's profile and strengthened their connection to the university. "He's still here," Dr. Dowe remarked, demonstrating the impact of personalized mentoring efforts.

As Dr. Dowe succinctly put it, "Why would we bring faculty here and not be 100% invested in their success?"

By fostering a supportive culture, leveraging strategic partnerships, and aligning mentoring initiatives with institutional goals, Emory University has established a robust framework for faculty success. That framework created an environment where faculty feel valued and inspired to stay. As Dr. Dowe succinctly put it, "Why would we bring faculty here and not be 100% invested in their success?"