Steven Faerm

Introduction to Design Education

Theory, Research, and Practical Applications for Educators

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Introduction to Design Education

This practical, engaging book offers design educators a comprehensive, hands-on introduction to design education and pedagogy in higher education. Featuring instructional strategies and case studies from diverse design disciplines, including fashion design, architecture, and industrial design, from both the US and abroad, award-winning author Steven Faerm contextualizes design pedagogy with student development—a critical component to fostering successful teaching, optimal learning, and student success in this ever-evolving industry. Features include the following:

- Advanced pedagogical methods and strategies to improve design students' learning, holistic development, and design school experience.
- Insights into the changing nature of the design industries and future challenges faced by design educators within higher education, and how design programs can be strengthened to better respond to these challenges.
- A range of practical, flexible teaching methods and pedagogical techniques that design educators can easily adapt to their own settings.
- Diverse international case studies and interviews with thought leaders in design, design education, and higher education.

Written by a leading educator in fashion design, Faerm offers educators, school leaders, and administrators the context and skills to understand the evolving nature of the design industry and design education, and to improve design students' learning and design school experience.

Steven Faerm is an Associate Professor of Fashion at Parsons School of Design. A Parsons alumnus and Designer of the Year Nominee, he has been teaching for over twenty years and is the author of *Fashion Design Course: Principles, Practices, and Techniques* (3rd edition, 2022) and *Creating a Successful Fashion Collection* (2012). His work has been translated into nine languages and his scholarly research has been published in leading academic journals and other publications.

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22 Faculty Mentorship

Mentorship is an essential component to achieving success as a design educator. Faculty members bring a tremendous amount of professional design experience and knowledge to their students and schools, but they cannot be expected to learn and grow as academic professionals in isolation. Therefore, while the previous chapters in this Section presented extensive methods for self-developing and strengthening one's pedagogical skillsets in design higher education, this final chapter serves to underscore the imperative that we cannot and should not do it alone. It is with this guiding ethos that best practices for establishing and developing mentorship programs for design educators are examined.

Introduction to Mentorship

Mentorship, in its simplest form, is taking an active interest in your coworkers, providing practical guidance, and sharing your knowledge and networks (Harvard University [HU], 2016). It is about collaborating with and learning from one another to develop as professionals. As the American politician John Crosby famously stated, "Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction."

In the mentoring relationship, a **mentor** is someone who goes beyond the obligatory or conventional supervision or engagement: mentors demonstrate a genuine, concerted interest in overseeing and nurturing another person's development. Effective mentors advise, coach, and support. They "have an understanding of the organization's values, culture and norms so they can pass these along to mentees. The mentor should be sensitive to the mentee's needs and wishes, and enhance the mentee's career potential, while simultaneously looking for ways the mentee's potential can benefit the organization" (The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania [WS], 2007, n.p.).

The **mentee** is someone who desires to learn and gain from someone else's knowledge and experience—professionally and/or personally through a period of guidance and support (University of California, Davis [UCD], n.d.). Effective mentees take ownership of their learning

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and developmental needs, are proactive in requesting feedback, and drive the mentor-mentee relationship forward. This requires them to establish and maintain contact with their mentor, arrange meetings, create agendas with objectives, maintain accurate meeting notes, and record their progress throughout the mentoring relationship.

Common Functions, Responsibilities, and Activities of Mentorship

Kram (1985) posits two key functions of mentorship: to support career development and to provide psychosocial support. Career-oriented functions "are those aspects of the relationship that enhance learning the ropes and preparing for advancement in an organization" (p. 22). These functions encourage work productivity. Psychosocial-oriented functions "are those aspects of the relationship that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in a professional role" (p. 22). These functions enhance work satisfaction. Through mentoring, psychosocial development is fostered by the close interpersonal relationship that engenders mutual trust and increasing intimacy (Kram, 1985). Although these two functions are defined separately, they are complementary and need to be practiced together during the mentorship. As Bland et al. (2009) note, "[i]t is common for mentors to focus quickly on the career development activities of mentoring, but effective mentoring attends to both components of the mentoring process. Doing so optimizes the likelihood of productive, satisfied faculty remaining at an institution" (p. 6) (Figure 22.1).

To develop these two functions, a scope of general responsibilities and activities are undertaken by both the mentor and the mentee. These include:

- getting to know each other genuinely as people, scholars, and teachers;
- cultivating a trusting relationship;
- meeting, at minimum, once per semester;
- establishing a multi-year plan for the mentee that lists appropriate goals, expectations, deliverables, and measures of progress, along with a longer term career vision;
- finding ways for the relationship to be mutually beneficial; and
- maintaining the confidentiality of the relationship (e.g. Bland et al., 2009; Columbia University [CU], 2016).

Mentors must also *socialize* their mentees into the organization, particularly if a mentee is new to the profession and/or organization. Socialization is "a mechanism through which new members learn the [unwritten] values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, and the interpersonal and

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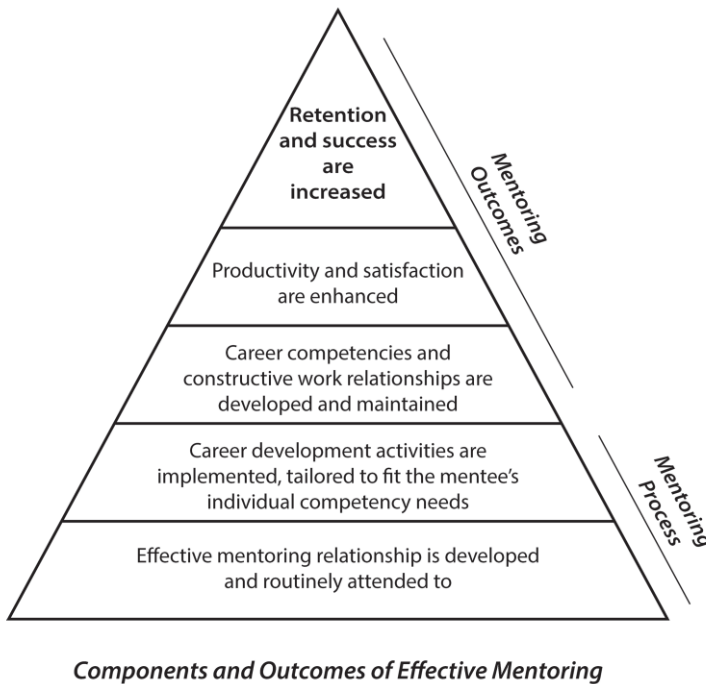

Figure 22.1 The Model of Effective Mentoring.

Source: Adapted from Bland et al. (2009).

other skills that facilitate role performance and further group goals" (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978, p. 423). The process of socialization schools the mentee in the organization's particular language and ideology that help guide the member's everyday experiences, namely "models for social etiquette and demeanor, certain customs and rituals suggestive of how members are to relate to colleagues, subordinates, superiors, and outsiders, and a sort of residual category of some rather plain 'horse sense' regarding what is appropriate and 'smart' behavior within the organization and what is not" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 210).

Socialization is especially necessary for new design teachers who are long-term design industry professionals and unfamiliar with academia. For these mentees, socialization illuminates not only those areas discussed above, but also the ways to navigate successfully and fulfill the three areas of their work as design educators—teaching, research and/or creative practice, and service—that are reviewed during annual evaluations and typically determine promotions. Accordingly, through socialization, the design educator is positioned for achieving success in the design Academy. When performed successfully, socialization of the individual facilitates effective performance, develops deep commitment to

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the work, stimulates motivation, and bolsters productivity and achievement throughout their career (Clark & Corcoran, 1986).

Specific mentoring responsibilities and activities commonly practiced in each of the three areas of work can include but are not limited to those presented in Table 22.1 (e.g. CU, 2016; HU, 2016).

Guiding Principles and Characteristics of Mentorship

To support and guide these responsibilities and activities throughout the mentor-mentee relationship, specific principles and characteristics are practiced (e.g. Bland et al., 2009; CU, 2016; UCD, n.d.; WS, 2007). These include:

- **Collaboration**. Mentoring is a reciprocal, collaborative partnership that, in the traditional model, relies on the expertise of experienced faculty as mentors and the dedication of mentees to grow and improve their professional abilities (Bland et al., 2009).
- **Commitment**. Mentorship requires dedicated engagement by each participant. Mentors and mentees need to invest their time and effort in the process while also bringing high levels of enthusiasm and willingness to the partnership. This includes always fulfilling expectations and requirements in a timely manner.
- **Purpose.** Participants need to adhere to a defined purpose that is guided by structured, deliberate, and goal-oriented interactions. Meeting agendas, trajectories for development, recorded meetings (e.g. note taking), and reflective practice bolster this shared sense of purpose.
- **Evolution**. The mentor-mentee collaboration is not static but evolutionary; it can range in focus for the mentee depending on where they are in their career, what their professional goals are, and how much guidance they need. "Thus, [mentorships] may be enduring, long-term relationships that evolve over time into collegial rather than mentoring relationships, or they may be more transient relationships focused on specific areas of guidance at key career points" (CU, 2016, p. 7).
- **Trust**. The mentoring relationship flourishes best within a trusting, safe, and supportive environment—not an evaluative one. The relationship must be one in which the mentee feels free from judgment yet is able to receive thoughtful, constructive, and accurate feedback (HU, 2016; UCD, n.d.). The relationship is about "having a sounding board and a place where it's safe to be vulnerable and get career advice. It's a relationship where one can let one's guard down, a place where one can get honest feedback, and a place, ideally, where one can get psychological and social support in handling stressful situations" (Klein, as quoted in WS, 2007, n.p.).
- **Benefits**. The mentor-mentee partnership offers a myriad of formal and informal benefits. These include enhanced teaching skills, scholarly

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Table 22.1 Examples of specific responsibilities and activities commonly practiced in faculty mentorship

Teaching	*Research and creative practice*	*Service*
• Observing each other's classes and offering helpful feedback afterward. • Showing past syllabi and reviewing those in development. • Discussing effective pedagogical methods along with those that are less successful. • Offering support for advising and working with students. • Sharing relevant course materials and organizational tips. • Co-teaching a course or designated session(s) or creating other collaborative teaching opportunities. • Reviewing current teaching assignments and strategizing future courses; this can also include developing new courses. • Providing helpful resources about teaching and student development, such as books, articles, and websites. • Reading students' course evaluations and discussing ideas for pedagogical improvements and revisions for the next term.	• Advising the development of academic and/or creative outputs across short- and long-term trajectories. • Discussing each other's work and giving constructive feedback. • Offering advice about approaching publishers for works in preparation. • Helping connect mentees with potential journals, galleries, and similar networking opportunities for disseminating their output. • Providing insights into internal and external funding sources, professional groups, and academic organizations. • Reviewing grant proposals and discussing those that have been successful as a learning tool. • Advising on the output types viewed favorably by the institution that are beneficial for advancement and promotion. (This is especially important for tenure-track mentees.) • Sharing tips for balancing the research and/or creative practice workload with other institutional responsibilities and demands.	• Strategizing and answering questions about service commitments—both service to the institution and service to the field. • Providing advice about what to expect from service commitments, such as committees and leadership appointments. • Explaining how to navigate the institutional and departmental structure(s), culture(s), and governance. • Discussing the numerous ways mentees can increase their visibility and impact at the institution and in the field. • Reviewing service to the field and focusing on those that offer substantial value for academic and professional growth. • Offering ideas for performing service to the field, such as serving on editorial boards and design organizations, performing peer reviews for publishing houses, sitting on juries and external committees, and conducting program reviews at peer institutions.

independence, internal and external networks, and preparation for professional advancement. Mentoring is about cultivating agency and independence in the mentee. It is also about preparing the mentee to become a highly skilled mentor at the institution in the future.

- **Accessibility**. Mentorship must be made available to *all* levels of faculty, and not limited to new, junior-level faculty. While the aims of the mentoring partnership may differ depending on the individual's professional experience and unique goals, everyone can—and should—benefit from mentoring.

Developing a Mentor-Mentee Relationship

While there is no "right" way to develop a mentor-mentee relationship, there are best practices and select models that participants should consider before deciding which specific approach(s) will suit their personal goals and needs best. The first step is to decide if the approach to mentorship should be formal or informal.

Formal mentoring is often organized and driven by the school; it adheres to certain institutional structures and provides direct guidance on how to initiate and work in the mentoring relationship (Galanek & Campbell, 2019). In this model, mentors are typically provided training so they can follow institutional guidelines and expectations. An example of formal mentoring is a senior-level faculty member who works with a junior-level colleague as they prepare for tenure review. During the specified timeframe, the mentor provides standardized information and guidance about the dossier's components, submission guidelines, crafting an effective personal statement, and key deadlines.

Informal mentoring fosters a more organic connection between colleagues. It might even look and feel like a somewhat casual friendship (Galanek & Campbell, 2019). In this sense, the partnership typically offers additional psychosocial support and longer-term career guidance. An example of informal mentoring includes peer faculty sharing best practices for teaching, writing syllabi, advancing within the institution, and developing and disseminating research and/or creative practice in the field.

Whichever approach is adopted, mentoring partnerships can be formed by assigning pairs or small groups, allowing participants to self-select, or a combination of the two. However, research suggests the relationship is often more successful when both persons are afforded choice—though institutions may also consider the colleagues' scholarship/creative practices for mentorship pairings (CU, 2016).

Mentorship Models: Traditional, Peer, and Group

Once the general approach to mentoring has been determined, the faculty member(s) need to consider which mentorship model will provide

the mentee(s) with the appropriate support. There are three common mentorship models: traditional, peer, and group mentoring.

- **Traditional mentoring**, the most common model, involves a senior colleague (or a senior-level team) working with a less experienced faculty member. While this is the most hierarchical of the three models, it allows mentees to gain the wide-ranging knowledge, organizational insight, contacts, and experience that come from working with senior colleagues (Bland et al., 2009). One possible drawback, however, is the perpetuation of the status quo if the senior colleague chooses to keep things "just as they are" (Bland et al., 2009). It is best for mentees to avoid mentors who are their direct supervisors, or a conflict of interest could arise.
- **Group mentoring** is a more collaborative model wherein one or more facilitators (usually seniors) assemble a small cohort of faculty (of similar or near rank) for professional development. Group formats can be especially useful and efficient under two conditions: when providing general guidance and when the information needs to be made transparent and standardized (such as the institution's set procedures for a tenure review). Group mentoring can also facilitate valuable networking opportunities and a stronger sense of community among faculty; the feeling that "we are all in this together" is promoted through group members' mutual sharing of experiences, challenges, questions, and ideas for solving problems.
- **Peer mentoring** involves a pair or trio of faculty at similar career stages who convene for professional development and support. Kram and Isabella (1985) note the relationship is based not on a senior-junior dynamic, but rather a peer-to-peer construct whereby the absence of steep hierarchies among participants can make communication, mutual support, and collaboration easier to establish. Accordingly, this model fosters a safe environment for each colleague to discuss their challenges candidly, gain different perspectives, achieve expertise, and build networks without the possible scrutiny or judgment of more senior faculty (Bland et al., 2009). Moreover, this model often provides a beneficial sense of equality and empathy among the participants, which can sometimes be absent from the other models (e.g. Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Although these three models are presented separately from one another, there are several areas of overlap and they are highly adaptable; multiple models can be employed during the mentoring period to address the diverse needs, goals, and contexts of the mentee(s). Engaging across modalities may also reduce the strain of mentoring on individual senior faculty, as well as junior faculty's reliance on a single mentoring relationship (CU, 2016). Working with more than one mentor can be

particularly beneficial for mentees, given the extensive roles faculty play that, in turn, result in the need for different types of expertise and guidance from each respective mentor.

Establishing the Mentoring Relationship

When faculty begin mentorship, it is necessary to establish key principles and practices that will ensure their mentor-mentee relationship is well grounded, clear, and meets everyone's needs. These include:

- **Setting a time commitment**
  When and how often will meetings occur? What will be the length of each meeting? Is there an end-date, or a time when assessments will be made about continuing the mentorship? Extensive sources about faculty mentorship (e.g. CU, 2016; HU, 2016) affirm regular, structured meetings yield the most productive engagement with lasting impact. Meetings should occur as frequently as once a month, and no less than once a semester. An "open-door" policy should also be established so that the mentee can contact their mentor at any time with questions or concerns.

  Over time, the frequency of these set meetings may change to reflect the mentee's growth and evolving needs. And while the typical length of mentoring relationships last 3.3 years and averages four hours of talking time per month (Olivet Nazarene University [ONU], 2019), these frequencies can change to meet participants' needs and schedules. Regardless of the time commitment, it is critical that the mentorship include an annual comprehensive review that assesses the mentee's overall progress and future plans.
- **Determining the scope of the mentorship**
  No matter which mentorship model is chosen—traditional, group, or peer—it is necessary to determine the overall scope of the mentorship. Will the focus be pedagogy, scholarship/creative practice, institutional service, holistic career development, or a combination of these? To answer these questions and subsequently define the scope, the mentee must first reflect on *why* they need a mentor, what can be realistically accomplished within the specified timeframe, and the type of guidance the mentor can actually provide.

  Another effective method to determine this scope is for the mentee to create a career plan that envisions what they would like to accomplish within the next three to five years. The plan could, for example, outline the mentee's "overarching vision of the impact on a field they wish to have, the specific areas (mission) in which they will work to realize that vision, and then the specific goals (strategic goals) with timelines for accomplishments that will mark progress within their field" (CU, 2016, p. 18). This plan will then reveal

the types of competencies the mentee will need to acquire and/or strengthen, along with the "benchmarks" that need to be achieved to show progress. Over time and with the mentor's counsel, the mentee's plan may change, but this initial iteration constructs the necessary preliminary framework that grounds and strategizes future conversations and actions.

Additionally, when determining the mentoring scope, it is advisable to set boundaries for what will and will not be discussed. Are there any topics that might be off-limits or derail the relationship's focus? These topics should be clearly articulated to avoid potentially undermining the mentorship experience, set timeframe, and pre-established goals.

- **Recording the meetings**
  Throughout the mentoring process, both mentor and mentee need to maintain written records ("meeting minutes") of their conversations. The ongoing minutes' format and level of specificity or generalization should be mutually decided. However, the ultimate goal of these notes is to serve as a beneficial tool for visualizing and remembering thoughts and ideas, actionable items, and designated commitments. They also afford ample opportunities for reflection and assessment, particularly during annual reviews when the minutes are read by both partners to better understand the mentee's holistic progress.

The Benefits of Mentorship

Extensive research reveals high-quality mentoring produces substantial benefits and positive outcomes for the mentee, the mentor, and the institution itself (e.g. Allen et al., 2004; Bland et al., 2009; CU, 2016).

The mentoring relationship enables **mentees** to acquire different approaches to work, build contacts for psychosocial support, and come to understand better the broader institution's operations and inherent culture. Consequently, they are better equipped to overcome professional challenges; feel more confidence and vitality toward their work; determine a vision for their career path; establish short-, mid-, and long-term goals; and learn strategies for meeting these goals. Thus, mentees commonly experience higher levels of socialization in the academic profession, productivity of research and/or creative practice, teaching effectiveness, and job satisfaction and commitment. A study of approximately 8,000 full- and part-time workers across the US found that over 90% of employees who had a mentor at work were satisfied with their jobs, including 57% who noted their job satisfaction as "very satisfied" (Wronski & Cohen, 2019). The same study noted "[a]mong those who don't have a mentor, each of those numbers drop by double digits" (n.p.). Moreover, studies reveal mentored employees have less stress, feel happier at their jobs, earn more money, and get promoted more rapidly than

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non-mentored employees (Melicher, 2000; ONU, 2019; WS, 2007). Mentees are also more likely than those without mentors to state they are well paid (79% versus 69%, respectively) and to feel their work is valued by their colleagues (89% versus 75%, respectively) (Wronski & Cohen, 2019).

Mentors, too, receive substantial benefits from the mentoring relationship. They gain personal satisfaction by helping colleagues advance, experiencing career rejuvenation and intellectual stimulation, recognition of and perspective on their leadership role, new friendships, broader networks at the institution and in the field, and credit for strengthening the institution through faculty development (e.g. CU, 2016; HU, 2016; UCD, n.d.). Mentors are provided other positive outcomes from the work, including career advancement and financial reward. For example, a study of more than 1,000 employees over a five-year period revealed mentors participating in a mentorship program were promoted six times more frequently than those not in the program, and 25% had a salary change as opposed to just 5% in the control group (Holincheck, 2006, as cited in WS, 2007).

For the **institution**, mentoring programs serve as a central mechanism for promoting long-term, sustainable success. Mentored employees are more knowledgeable, productive, satisfied, and committed to their work—and the institution itself. These attributes, in turn, directly affect institutional performance and its finances. For instance, in a survey of forty-five organizational leaders in the private sector who engage in formal mentoring, "71% said they were certain that company performance had improved as a result. Strong majorities reported that they were making better decisions (69%) and more capably fulfilling stakeholder expectations (76%). More than anything else, these [leaders] credited mentors with helping them avoid costly mistakes and become proficient in their roles faster (84%)" (de Janasz & Peiperl, 2015, n.p.).

Furthermore, effective mentoring positively impacts faculty retention. In the aforementioned five-year study, mentees (72%) and mentors (69%) had much higher retention rates than employees who did not participate in the mentoring program (49%) (Holincheck, 2006, as cited in WS, 2007). And in another study of 8,000 employees, more than 40% of respondents who did not have a mentor said they had considered resigning in the last three months, compared to 25% of those who were being mentored (Wronski & Cohen, 2019).

In design higher education, significant negative financial implications can arise from high faculty turnover and the consequential need to recruit replacements. Recruitment and start-up costs (e.g. travel, interviews, meals, and associated events) for a university can surpass $100,000 US (e.g. Demmy et al., 2002; Wingard et al., 2004). Institutional expenses also rise from hiring new faculty who often command a higher salary: for example, a new assistant professor may require an additional $10,000 US

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per year to replace a departing assistant professor (Hobbs et al., 2005). Financial implications like these can be especially pronounced in the private sector where mentoring can save a firm $10 million US annually from the cost of recruiting and training new employees (Boyle, 2005, as cited in Bland et al., 2009). Thus, while the cost of mentorship is free, its positive impact and benefits on all those involved—including the design school itself—are exponential.

Conclusion

At its core, mentorship is about sharing human capital (HU, 2016). It is about encouraging the exchange of ideas, stimulating each other's professional development, advancing our work, and strengthening the institution. It is about creating a highly positive, collegial work environment. It is, in sum, about empowering everyone engaged in the process so that they can do their very best work in a supportive environment.

Mentorship is particularly essential for new design faculty who are typically highly experienced design practitioners and are, understandably, unfamiliar with how the design Academy operates. Mentoring affords them the necessary emotional support, community, and assurances that they are not alone in their challenges. In time, these mentees gain confidence, autonomy, motivation, agency, self-direction, and connectedness to the institution, all of which are necessary for them to achieve optimal success in their teaching careers. As evidenced through extensive research, mentoring positively impacts the following outcomes for faculty-mentees: scholarly output (e.g. research studies, design projects, and publications), promotions, career satisfaction, feeling valued and supported by the institution, networking, and self-efficacy related to attaining career goals (e.g. Bonilha et al., 2019). While mentorship is imperative for new design faculty, those representing all levels of experience in the Academy can benefit equally from mentoring relationships.

Together, with their mentors, faculty-mentees grow into more talented, productive, knowledgeable, and contributing colleagues, school citizens, educators, leaders, and even future mentors—both at the institution and in their respective fields.

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