Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs: A Comprehensive Handbook

David Kiel

Denver, CO: Academic Impressions, 2019 (xii + 569 pages, ISBN 9781948658089, $75.00)

Reviewed By

Forrest Clingerman
Ohio Northern University

A faculty mentoring program is both valuable and complex work. Valuable, insofar as good faculty mentoring advances student success, institutional goals, and a faculty member's work satisfaction. Complex, because a good mentoring program navigates several layers of an institution, promotes individual and corporate objectives simultaneously, and relies on "soft skills" and at times maybe even a bit of luck.

Given mentoring's value and complexity, Kiel's handbook is a resource for faculty who are directing a departmental or institutional program, whether that program is designed for new, mid-career, or senior faculty (or all three). *Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs*' biggest strength is its comprehensiveness. The first chapter sets out ways of framing the objectives, identifying design criteria, and undertaking the practical work of a mentoring program. The following chapters focus on particular stages in a faculty member's professional life; Kiel also is explicit about how mentoring can address the recruitment and retention of faculty from underrepresented identities. The final chapter offers ten practical suggestions for starting and maintaining continuity, such as how to integrate a program into existing institutional policies, how to identify assessment practices, and how to plan to produce action. Included throughout the book are concrete examples for a wide array of institutional types.

Appendices take up half of Kiel's handbook, offering worksheets that direct developers through a process of planning and implementation. The workbook allows the reader to apply Kiel's suggestions in a guided way.

While this book was not written with religious studies departments or theological schools in mind, it is directly applicable to these situations. There are many great examples and ideas in Kiel's volume for anyone who is involved in a departmental mentoring program (including the mentoring of graduate students as teachers and scholars), or participates in campus-wide initiatives.

Yet the strength of *Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs* might very well limit its usefulness for many readers. Sometimes Kiel's book seems so focused on cataloging information that he neglects the streamlined synthesis necessary for understanding how the pieces fit together. At its worst, parts of the book seem like a file of raw material about mentoring instead of an analysis of that material – this makes the lack of an index all the more surprising! The crush of facts and examples becomes especially evident when comparing Kiel's book to other mentoring handbooks, such as Susan L. Phillips and Susan T. Dennison's *Faculty Mentoring: A Practical Manual for Mentors, Mentees, Administrators, and Faculty Developers* (Stylus, 2015). For example, Phillips and Dennison's handbook has one sixth the page count as Kiel's book. Yet *Faculty Mentoring* similarly contains worksheets and guidelines for setting up a mentoring program. What makes Kiel's work so lengthy are the extensive examples (in some cases Kiel gives verbatim passages from websites and the like) and the diversity of its institutional application. Even though Phillips and Dennison's book misses the nuance of Kiel's approach, its advantage is how it offers a simplified synthesis for approaching mentoring work.

For readers wishing to do a deep-dive into mentoring, or who have specific questions related to an institutional type or faculty career stage, Kiel's handbook has a wealth of information. For these just dipping their toes in the water, however, *Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs* might be slightly difficult to navigate.