

**MENTORING PEDAGOGY IN A LEADERSHIP  
CURRICULUM DESIGNED FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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Sharon K. Strouse  
Assistant Professor, County Director  
Community Development Educator  
Ohio State University Extension, Holmes County  
[strouse.1@osu.edu](mailto:strouse.1@osu.edu)

Christopher M. Sieverdes  
Professor, Program Director  
Palmetto Leadership  
Clemson University

[csvrds@clemson.edu](mailto:csvrds@clemson.edu)

**Presentation Track:** Practice

Mentor relationships are significant life experiences for individual leadership development. This mentoring pedagogy emphasizes the theory and practice of successful protégé-mentor experiences to improve psycho-social and early career relationships. Through leadership class instruction and assignments Generation-Y college students learn to distinguish and analyze the leadership characteristics of mentors.

Sharon K. Strouse. The Community Development Educator with Ohio State University Extension, Holmes County, also serving as county administrative director. Sharon is noted for her work in teaching and developing nonprofit organizations, especially leading strategic planning initiatives and evaluations.

Christopher M. Sieverdes. Dr. Chris Sieverdes is a Professor and Community Development Extension Specialist in the Department of Applied Economics and Statistics at Clemson University. Chris teaches full-time courses in leadership and community development. He is the Community and Economic Development major advisor. In addition to teaching, he serves as Director of Palmetto Leadership, conducting leadership training seminars with Extension personnel statewide. He also serves as the Clemson chapter advisor and the National Executive Director of Blue Key Honor Society.

# **Mentoring Pedagogy in a Leadership Curriculum Designed for College Students**

## **Introduction**

Mentor relationships impart significant life experiences. The pedagogy of mentoring has deep roots influenced by our culture and society. Success in life, and specifically success in college as part of career preparation, draws on past experiences and relationships. Self discovery and reflection are critical components of decision making for career preparation. The importance of mentoring in self-discovery and career preparation is the focus of this mentoring pedagogy.

## **Learner Objectives:**

- Understand the role of protégé-mentor relationships in leadership development.
- Acquire knowledge about the dimensions of mentoring and the protégé-mentor relationship.
- Analyze, reflect, and report on a current or past mentor relationship and its phases.
- Aspire to seek additional mentor relationships.

## **Background**

Akin to a historic architectural landmark, success in life depends upon building a solid foundation. To determine who you want to become, it is imperative to already know who you are. Effective leaders seek thorough self understanding and honest self evaluation prior to reaching that same level of understanding of others who they consider leading. A protégé-mentor relationship fosters self-understanding and evaluation by the protégé. The protégé over time is encouraged to engage in a series of relationships with others first as a protégé and eventually as a mentor to others. The protégé-mentor relationship can be seen as a segment of a journey during which different growth opportunities emerge and develop. Mentoring, a term with its origins in Greek mythology, has been attached to the process of education and care by an older, experienced person. This person helps the protégé overcome challenges, increase confidence, and grow personally as a part of life's journey.

In very early adulthood, on the cusp of late adolescence, traditional college students can learn by reflection. Learning is most effective when it involves both action and reflection. Early adulthood focuses on "role identity vs. role confusion" and "intimacy vs. isolation" as identified by Erickson (1963, 1968). During these early adulthood years, individuals form their occupational identity as well as their personal dreams, and are capable of forming a mentor relationship (Levinson et al., 1978).

Mentors have long been identified as a medium of learning. Reilly (1992) reflects that some students learn best in mentorship programs. Mentor relationships provide an ideal setting in which students can excel in an area of interest. Successful mentorships are not easy to establish notes Reilly. Kram (1983) identified the phases of mentorship in an occupational setting. Kram (1983) established that protégés in early adulthood gain occupational knowledge, skills and support in both areas of psychosocial and career development from their mentor during a four stage process of 'initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition.' Phillips-Jones (1982) explored mentoring relationships and described six developmental phases in which a mentoring relationship progresses. Like

Kram, the last phase is transformational, and can become conclusive to the relationship. Development of peer-like friendships may become a primary outcome of the last stage as the protégé seeks new opportunities.

### **How it works**

Students, mostly sophomores and juniors, enrolled in leadership classes are primarily exposed to the pedagogy of mentoring through the class lectures and self-study assignment. The class lectures on mentoring, address the value of the protégé-mentor relationship as a means to gain a richer life experience and enhance one's leadership development capacity.

The reflection essay is evaluated as partial credit for the first test grade in the course. The assignment is utilized as a study and research method to demonstrate self-discovery and reflection about the protégé-mentor relationship. It serves as a critical decision making component for students. Student feedback has indicated that this aspect of the course was very rewarding. Each student protégé states and analyzes:

- how a mentor has had an impact on his or her own leadership behavior and development.
- how the mentor “advised, taught, counseled, and influenced” the protégé “to develop leadership capabilities.”
- their placement in one of Kram's Four Mentor Relationship Phases (1983).
- key decisions or successes experienced as a result of the mentor relationship.
- the contribution of a non-family mentor to stretch the protégé's capacity to achieve.

### **Results to date**

Students have gained insights about their personal leadership development through a mentor relationship. Student illustrations confirm that mentoring by family friends, coaches, religious leaders, business operators, teachers, and community leaders play an important role during teenage and young adult years. Success in life, and specifically success in college as part of career preparation, draws on past experiences and relationships, as exemplified by student protégé Veronica Valentine:

One of my main key decisions that I have experienced while being connected to Mrs. Carolyn Venner (teacher) is the desire to attend college. College was not the path that I wanted to choose. I had full intentions of joining the military and making that my career for the rest of my life. Mrs. Venner stepped in and proved to me that I am intelligent and I have the resources to aspire to become anything that I wish. She went above and beyond the call of duty as a mentor.

The mentoring assignment, as part of the entire mentoring pedagogy, gives students an opportunity to express themselves about new insights they have as a result of the reflection opportunity.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

The protégé-mentor relationship analysis is a valuable dimension of leadership development in the classroom setting. Students need to be challenged to think about

protégé-mentor relationships as they relate to leadership development capacity. They must understand the distinction between a role model and a mentor. Getting students to think beyond family role models and mentors and extend their non-family learning experiences with mentors has proven valuable to understanding the value of lifelong mentoring. The richness of leadership development and learning is the process of moving from mentor to mentor throughout life. This presentation addresses the need for a research base so that this paradigm can be shared with other professionals involved in leadership development curriculum formation at colleges and universities.

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