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ABSTRACT

This 39-month project at Temple University (Pennsylvania) provided mentoring services by retired senior professors to untenured, full-time junior faculty. The program has involved a total of 58 junior faculty from 20 disciplines and 15 retired professors from 10 disciplines. Mentors received a stipend of $500 per protege per semester. The mentors met regularly with their proteges for confidential discussions of any aspect of teaching and professional development. The program was based on three elements: all mentors were retired (thus would play no role in future decisions regarding contract renewal, tenure, or promotion), all transactions between mentoring pairs were confidential, and all participants were volunteers. Among activities pursued by the mentoring pairs were mentors' observations of proteges in actual classroom situations; mentors' review of course syllabi, experiment designs, and examinations; and mentors' advice on grading, professional networking, and research/publication. Evaluation indicated that program participants, both mentors and proteges, found the program effective and enjoyable. A booklet and brochure about the program are appended. (DB)

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ED 415 755

THE SENIOR MENTORING SERVICE AT TEMPLE:A THREE-YEAR FIPSE GRANT

FINAL REPORT, MARCH 22, 1994

COVER SHEET

Grantee Organization:

Temple University
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Grant Number:

P116B00074

Project Dates:

Starting Date: October 1, 1990
Ending Date: January 1, 1994
Number of Months:39

Note: A no-cost extension from October 1, 1993 to January 1, 1994 was granted by FIPSE (issued by a FIPSE Grants Officer on 6/26/93) to complete several of the funded activities originally scheduled for the third year of the project ending September 30, 1993. Thus, this final report is being made by the FIPSE deadline of "within 90 days of the completion date for your project."

Project Director:

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Philadelphia, PA 19122
Telephone: 215-843-3799

FIPSE Program Officers:

Dr. Helene Scher and Dr. Joan Krejci

Grant Award:

Year 1	$41,396
Year 2	$67,632
Year 3	$70,660
Total	$179,688

SUMMARY

The Senior Mentoring Service, which has continued with Temple University funding since the end of the FIPSE grant on October 1, 1993, makes available to all untenured, full-time faculty volunteers the mentoring services of retired senior professors who meet regularly with their young protégés for completely confidential discussions of any aspects of teaching and professional development they consider relevant. Among the many activities pursued by the mentoring pairs, especially noteworthy are mentors' observations of protégés in actual classroom situations. Since senior mentors are retired and thus play no part in future decisions concerning contract renewal, tenure, or promotion, newer faculty members can be franker with them about their teaching difficulties than they can be with current senior members of the faculty.

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Project Report:

"Temple University's Senior Mentoring Service"

(copies available from Professor Rackin)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY'S SENIOR MENTORING SERVICE

Temple University
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Project Director (1990-93):
Professor Donald Rackin
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A. PROJECT OVERVIEW:

The Senior Mentoring Service of Temple University's College of Arts and Sciences offers every full-time junior faculty member the opportunity to work privately on teaching skills with a seasoned Temple teacher. Established in 1990 and originally funded by a three-year, $179,000 FIPSE grant, the program is currently funded by the University. It makes available to untenured faculty volunteers the mentoring services of senior professors now retired from the College faculty--professors recognized for their teaching effectiveness, their demonstrated willingness to help younger colleagues, their continuing enthusiasm and energy, and their broad knowledge of Temple's academic culture. The program's success rests substantially on three elements: all the mentors are retired, all transactions between them and their junior protégés are private and completely confidential, and all participants in the program are volunteers who independently determine the scope and progress of their mentoring activities.

In its first three and a half years of operation (October 1990-December 1993), the Senior Mentoring Service involved a total of fifty-eight junior faculty members from twenty different academic departments. During these first years, protégés remained in the program, on average, 2.4 semesters. As of December 1993, a total of fifteen retired professors from ten different disciplines had served as mentors, their terms in the program averaging 3.5 semesters. In any single semester since January 1991, the Service has involved approximately thirty participants--ten mentors and twenty protégés.

B. PURPOSE, BACKGROUND, ORIGINS:

The principal aim of the Senior Mentoring Service is to strengthen the culture of teaching at Temple University. Temple's long tradition of high-quality instruction is rich in accumulated strategies for motivating learning among its unusually diverse students, but regular efforts are required to sustain, enrich and transmit this teaching culture to new generations of junior faculty. By passing on the experience and wisdom of those who have demonstrably succeeded as Temple teachers and by fostering a sense of an ongoing teaching

community, this program helps Temple achieve its central educational mission.

Most university faculty members arrive at their first full-time positions with little or no systematic training as teachers; some even begin with the assumption that command of subject matter is in itself sufficient for good teaching. Students often have no choice but to suffer the obvious educational disadvantages of studying under faculty members who, at best, are learning their teaching skills on the job--unaided, unguided, and by sheer trial and error--or who, at worst, postpone or neglect entirely that learning as they devote their energies to the research that will gain them tenure and professional advancement. The situation at Temple is no exception to this national problem. Indeed, the wide diversity of Temple's undergraduates in age, race, ethnic background, and quality of academic preparation often poses an even more difficult pedagogical challenge for fledgling faculty often trained in graduate programs at elite universities and thus unfamiliar with such a heterogeneous student body--or with an institution, moreover, in which the overwhelming majority of undergraduates (approximately ninety percent) and almost all the faculty are commuters living far from the campus and the communal learning advantages of a residential campus life. Because Senior Mentors have many years of experience with these aspects of Temple's academic culture and have faced and overcome the obstacles they present, they can provide valuable Temple-specific guidance for their young colleagues.

C. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Mentors receive a stipend of $500 per protégé per semester (protégés receive no stipend for their participation). Most mentors work with two protégés throughout the semester; a few work with three and a few with one. The mentoring pairs meet in all sorts of venues (some over lunch in the faculty club, some in their homes, some in off-campus restaurants, most in their offices).

The mentors and their assigned protégés set their own schedules, meeting approximately ninety minutes every two or three weeks during the academic year for one-on-one discussions of any aspects of teaching and professional development they consider relevant. Mentors typically review protégés' course plans, syllabuses, writing assignments, experiment designs, and examinations. Often they visit and report on protégés' classes or discuss videotapes of those classes. They are likely to help with questions concerning grading procedures and standards, time management, handling especially challenging students, or even negotiating the university's bureaucratic mazes. In addition, most mentoring pairs occasionally discuss protégés' concerns about research and publication, professional networking and advancement, departmental service commitments, and tenure and promotion. Although the choice of topics and procedures is entirely up to the participants, in all cases mentors are expected to meet

with their protégés on a regular basis and to share with them their responses to Temple's teaching challenges--their own strategies and techniques, developed over many years of successful teaching at Temple, for making class meetings more dynamic and courses more rewarding for Temple's particularly diverse student population.

After each formal mentoring session (many informal contacts occur via telephone, memoranda, electronic mail, chance meetings on campus, etc.), both participants are expected to file promptly with the Service's director a completed one-page report form, indicating the time and place of the meeting, the principal topics discussed, and the participants' general reactions to the session. This simple, undemanding reporting system allows the program director to keep track of each mentoring pair's activities without being intrusive and without violating the crucial confidentiality of the meetings. Pairs that are not meeting on a reasonably regular basis are thus quickly identified; in such cases, the director usually sends a memorandum gently encouraging the participants to meet and report more regularly. The hundreds of reports filed from the fall of 1990 through the fall of 1993 indicate that during that period, on average, mentoring pairs met 5.3 times a semester, each session lasting approximately ninety minutes (several pairs met as many as ten times per semester, while several pairs met only twice).

D. EVALUATION/PROJECT RESULTS:

In order to secure a comprehensive assessment of the program's first three years of operation, during the fall of 1993 a thorough review was conducted of a wide variety of pertinent materials, including a formal evaluation based on a site visit at the end of the second year by an external evaluator (Dr. Martin Finkelstein, Director of the New Jersey Institute for Collegiate Teaching and Learning). Among the most important data for this assessment of the program's effectiveness were many hundreds of mentoring session reports in the Service's permanent files, dozens of end-of-semester evaluations from program participants, the external evaluator's summaries of his private interviews with a cross-section of program participants, and the findings of an extensive questionnaire completed by twenty-four program participants at the end of the Service's second year.

These data demonstrated, first, that a high proportion of the protégés thoroughly enjoyed the mentoring process and found it especially valuable as part of their own education as educators, as well as their socialization into the Temple professional milieu. Second, the mentoring sessions were particularly valuable in the junior faculty members' first year when they lacked any practical experience and familiarity with the particular bureaucratic, political, and pedagogical demands of Temple. Third, participants appreciated the opportunity to become acquainted, through program-sponsored workshops, with young as well as retired colleagues from other departments and unfamiliar disciplines, colleagues they otherwise would never have met.

Dr. Finkelstein's May 1992 report concludes that "the program is, to a significant degree, fulfilling its promise (objectives)." It states that "most of the mentors. . . view the program as a constructive way to maintain their ties to Temple and to their professional careers," and most of the protégés "find the mentoring relationship, including the classroom visits, to be of significant value for their adjustment to Temple for their teaching and their careers." Dr. Finkelstein also reported that "the crucial element of confidentiality. . . has been admirably and scrupulously maintained (to the point where several [protégés] from the same department did not know of each other's participation until they met at a . . . workshop after nearly an entire semester of participation)."

The elaborate questionnaire issued to all participants at the end of the second year was completed anonymously in order to insure objectivity of response. Of the nineteen junior faculty participating in the Service at the time, fifteen (79 percent) returned their completed questionnaires, while all nine senior mentors returned theirs. Questionnaire items include questions about the importance of matching academic disciplines in establishing mentoring pairs, topics discussed in mentoring sessions, level of satisfaction with mentors and the program, and general assessments of the program.

All those protégés who completed the questionnaire responded enthusiastically and fully to the question "In what respects do you feel your teaching has improved this year?" The improvements most mentioned are:

- more confident of one's own teaching;
- better class participation and student preparation;
- clearer understanding of students and more realistic expectations for students;
- better teaching philosophy and more effective methodology;
- better communication, and/or relationships, with students;
- improved speech skills and presentation in lectures;
- better selection and handling of teaching material.

In their questionnaire responses, those mentors who had been with the same protégés for more than one semester offered some especially useful insights about changes in the teaching effectiveness of their protégés over a period of a year or more. In these responses, mentors detailed the gratifying improvement they had observed. The following improvements are most often mentioned:

- better learning for students;
- greater understanding and improved skills for the protégé;
- a greater sense of security in the protégé;
- protégés manifesting a stronger desire to become the best teachers they can be by constantly striving to strike a balance between fostering active learning and content coverage;
- increased enjoyment working with students and helping them grow;

demonstrating greater ability to absorb and act upon new ideas that the mentors suggest;
gaining in confidence and self-assurance;
more likely to spot their own shortcomings and correct them.

E. CONCLUSION:

An important question remains: how does one determine the actual effect of such a mentoring system on a junior faculty participant's students, on the learning that goes on in that faculty member's courses? This is, after all, the central issue, the raison d'etre of the program. Unfortunately, such evaluations are statistically questionable and notoriously difficult to construct and administer effectively--finally impossible, many would argue. At one point early in the development of the Senior Mentoring Service, the inclusion of before-and-after student evaluations of participants' courses was contemplated; but the idea was dropped after its shortcomings became obvious, especially the nearly impossible task of assembling a proper control group and the dangers such an evaluation process posed for the intimacy and trust between mentors and protégés upon which the program's success rests. So in some sense the problem of accurate evaluation remains unsolved. On the other hand, all the varied evidence provided by the participants themselves makes it absolutely clear that the program helped its protégés enormously with a crucial step in teaching improvement: they became <u>conscious</u> of their teaching effectiveness, they began to put their own teaching practices under the objective scrutiny usually required for assessment and improvement. Classroom observations by the mentors played the principal role in triggering such essential consciousness raising.

FINAL REPORT

Attached is a booklet, prepared in fulfillment of the commitment made in the original FIPSE proposal of 1990, that provides the necessary background and details associated with this project. It has already been sent to some 300 academics in the United States and Canada, most of them directors of teaching improvement and faculty development programs in their own colleges and universities. It is submitted here in lieu of the final report described in the July 1, 1993 mailing from Director Karelis. If members of the FIPSE staff would like copies to distribute to grantees and others, I would be happy to supply them.

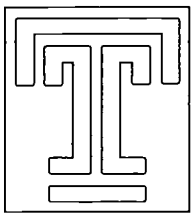
I am especially grateful for the advice and help I received from the FIPSE staff, in particular, Helene Scher and Dora Marcus.

Donald Rackin
Professor of English
Temple University
March 23, 1994

Temple University

College of Arts and Sciences

SENIOR MENTORING SERVICE



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Temple University's Senior Mentoring Service

February 1994

I. AN OVERVIEW

The Senior Mentoring Service of Temple University's College of Arts and Sciences (with a student enrollment of approximately 8,000 and a full-time faculty of 450) offers every full-time junior faculty member the opportunity to work privately on teaching skills with a seasoned Temple teacher. Established in 1990 and originally funded by a three-year, $179,000 grant from the federal Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE), the program makes available to untenured faculty volunteers the mentoring services of senior professors now retired from the College faculty--professors recognized for their teaching effectiveness, their demonstrated willingness to help younger colleagues, their continuing enthusiasm and energy, and their broad knowledge of Temple's academic culture. The program's success rests substantially on three elements: all the mentors are retired, all transactions between them and their junior protégés are private and completely confidential, and all participants in the program are volunteers who independently determine the scope and progress of their mentoring activities.

The mentors and their assigned protégés set their own schedules, meeting approximately ninety minutes every two or three weeks during the academic year for one-on-one discussions of any aspects of teaching and professional development they consider relevant. Mentors typically review protégés' course plans, syllabuses, writing assignments, experiment designs, and examinations. Often they visit and report on protégés' classes or discuss videotapes of those classes. They are likely to help with questions concerning grading procedures and standards, time management, handling especially challenging students, or even negotiating the university's bureaucratic mazes. In addition, most mentoring pairs occasionally discuss protégés' concerns about research and publication, professional networking and advancement, departmental service commitments, and tenure and promotion. Although the choice of topics and procedures is entirely up to the participants, in all cases mentors are expected to meet with their protégés on a regular basis and to share with them their responses to Temple's teaching challenges--their own strategies and techniques, developed over many years of successful teaching at Temple, for making class meetings more dynamic and courses more rewarding for Temple's particularly diverse student population.

In its first three and a half years of operation (October 1990-December 1993), the Senior Mentoring Service involved a total of fifty-eight junior faculty members from twenty different academic departments. During these first years, protégés remained in the program, on average, 2.4 semesters. As of December 1993, a total of fifteen retired professors from ten different disciplines had served as mentors, their terms in the program averaging 3.5 semesters. In any single semester since January 1991, the Service has involved approximately thirty participants--ten mentors and twenty protégés.

Distribution of Mentors and Protégés, October 1990-December 1993
Total Number of Mentors is 15, from 10 Departments:

Biology	1	Intellectual Heritage	1
Chemistry	1	Mathematics	1
English	4	Psychology	1
French	1	Sociology	1
History	3	Spanish	1

Total Number of Junior Faculty Participants is 58, from 20 Departments:

American Studies	1	Intellectual Heritage	3
Anthropology	3	Italian	1
Art History	1	Mathematics	2
Chemistry	3	Philosophy	2
Classics	1	Physics	5
Criminal Justice	6	Political Science	3
English	12	Psychology	1
German	1		
Geography and		Religion	2
Urban Studies	1	Sociology	5
History	1	Spanish	4

II. TEACHING EXCELLENCE THE PERENNIAL GOAL

The principal aim of the Senior Mentoring Service is to strengthen the culture of teaching at Temple University. Temple's long tradition of high-quality instruction is rich in accumulated strategies for motivating learning among its unusually diverse students, but regular efforts are required to sustain, enrich and transmit this teaching culture to new generations of junior faculty. By passing on the experience and wisdom of those who have demonstrably succeeded as Temple teachers and by fostering a sense of an ongoing teaching community, this program helps Temple achieve its central educational mission.

In addition to direct practical advice about effective classroom performance and management, the Service also provides its junior participants with valuable professional advice and emotional support which often translate into more effective teaching. The Service operates on the premise that junior faculty members will be better teachers if they enjoy the measure of emotional security provided by completely confidential, professional relationships with older, knowledgeable, and thoroughly experienced members of the academic community (five of the fifteen retirees serving as mentors from 1990 through 1993, for example, had been chairs of large departments: English [2], History, Mathematics, and Spanish). Since all the mentors are retired and will therefore play no part in future decisions concerning contract renewal, tenure or promotion, newer faculty members can usually be more trusting and franker with them about their professional anxieties and their need for guidance than they can be with current senior members of the faculty. For instance, it often happens that the young, untenured teacher is confronted by the daunting complexities of collegial politics, but is still excluded from an important role in decision-making processes that can have a substantial influence on his/her professional career and teaching experiences. Senior mentors and their protégés find that this problem of professional status and political insecurity generates feelings of isolation which can seriously impair the young teacher's ability to act effectively as a classroom leader. In such cases, the untenured faculty member needs a friend who understands, who can advise knowledgeably, who can encourage and instill the self-confidence upon which effective college teaching so often depends. The Senior Mentoring Service can and often does provide that sort of friendly disinterested support, so rare and precious in large and impersonal, highly competitive institutions.

But even more important is the basic instruction in simple pedagogical matters that the Service offers to new teachers. Most university faculty members arrive at their first full-time positions with little or no systematic training as teachers; some even begin with the assumption that command of subject matter is in itself sufficient for good teaching. The recent burgeoning of faculty development programs and teaching improvement centers in American institutions of higher learning attests to a belated recognition of this problem and of its serious consequences for undergraduates: students often have no choice but to suffer the obvious educational disadvantages of studying under faculty members

who, at best, are learning their teaching skills on the job--unaided, unguided, and by sheer trial and error--or who, at worst, postpone or neglect entirely that learning as they devote their energies to the research that will gain them tenure and professional advancement.

The situation at Temple, and particularly in the College of Arts and Sciences (which is central to the university's core curriculum), is no exception to this national problem. Indeed, the wide diversity of Temple's undergraduates in age, race, ethnic background, and quality of academic preparation often poses an even more difficult pedagogical challenge for fledgling faculty often trained in graduate programs at elite universities and thus unfamiliar with such a heterogeneous student body--or with an institution, moreover, in which the overwhelming majority of undergraduates (approximately ninety percent) and almost all the faculty are commuters living far from the campus and the communal learning advantages of a residential campus life. Because Senior Mentors have many years of experience with these aspects of Temple's academic culture and have faced and overcome the obstacles they present, they can provide valuable Temple-specific guidance for their young colleagues.

III. DETAILS OF OPERATION

A. STIPENDS, MEETINGS, REPORTS

Mentors receive a stipend of $500 per protégé per semester (protégés receive no stipend for their participation). Most mentors work with two protégés throughout the semester; a few work with three and a few with one. The mentoring pairs meet in all sorts of venues (some over lunch in the faculty club, some in their homes, some in off-campus restaurants, most in their offices).

After each formal mentoring session (many informal contacts occur via telephone, memoranda, electronic mail, chance meetings on campus, etc.), both participants are expected to file promptly with the Service's director a completed one-page report form, indicating the time and place of the meeting, the principal topics discussed, and the participants' general reactions to the session. This simple, undemanding reporting system allows the program director to keep track of each mentoring pair's activities without being intrusive and without violating the crucial confidentiality of the meetings. Pairs that are not meeting on a reasonably regular basis are thus quickly identified; in such cases, the director usually sends a memorandum gently encouraging the participants to meet and report more regularly. The hundreds of reports filed from the fall of 1990 through the fall of 1993 indicate that during that period, on average, mentoring pairs met 5.3 times a semester, each session lasting approximately ninety minutes (several pairs met as many as ten times per semester, while several pairs met only twice).

B. RECRUITING

The program director recruits junior faculty participants by several means, but principally by sending, shortly before the beginning of each new semester, an invitational letter and descriptive brochure to all untenured, full-time College of Arts and Sciences faculty members (a copy of this material is also sent to all department chairs, along with a cover letter urging them to encourage their junior members to take advantage of the Service). Some young faculty join after hearing about the program's effectiveness from others who have participated, and a few are attracted by the presentation the director makes at the dean's annual late-August orientation for new College faculty members.

Recruitment of larger numbers of protégés has been a continuing problem. Although it became easier each semester to enlist the twenty to twenty-four protégés that the initial grant budget allowed after the first-semester pilot phase (probably because the Service's reputation was spreading among the junior faculty), it has been difficult to enlist many beyond that original cut-off number. What is needed to increase the level of participation, it seems, is a more vigorous recruitment effort that begins in mid-summer and that probably includes visits by the director to individual departments to explain the program's benefits to chairs and untenured faculty face to face, stressing particularly the fact that participation in the program actually saves them time.

Many junior faculty members are of course wary of adding any unnecessary professional commitments to their already overloaded schedules, which often include serious home responsibilities as well as the heavy demands of teaching new courses, adjusting to a new academic culture, and--most important--responding to the pressure to publish in order to secure tenure. This helps explain why, despite the Service's varied efforts at recruitment and the considerable publicity the program has received in Temple publications and by word of mouth, the program has failed to attract more than approximately fifteen percent of those eligible to participate.

However, junior faculty who do join stay in the program on average for more than two semesters, some for as much as six or seven semesters. One reason for this high retention rate is the fact that those who join quickly discover not only the Service's inherent pedagogical and developmental benefits, but also its time-saving features: protégés typically learn from their mentors a variety of efficient methods to increase their teaching effectiveness while decreasing their labor, so the approximately ninety minutes spent every two or three weeks with a mentor can easily translate into the saving of many hours in a teacher's work week. As this fact is made better known among prospective protégés, the program should attract more junior faculty participants.

Turnover among mentors is minimal. But when new mentors are needed, the director carefully selects prospects from the current pool of retirees, taking into account the need for adequate representation from the three major disciplinary divisions--humanities, sciences and social sciences--and the desirability of increased representation by women and minorities, whose numbers are predictably greater among newly hired assistant professors than among the cohort of retirees (three women and three members of minorities had served as mentors through December 1993). The criteria the director uses for making these selections include such items as retirees' general reputations as teachers and academic citizens (for example, people who have served successfully as chairs or undergraduate chairs of their departments, or people who have won major awards for teaching excellence), recommendations from current or former department chairs and other senior members of the active and retired faculty, and--most important--the director's personal, direct knowledge of the retirees. This last criterion makes it almost imperative that the director of the Service be a long-term member of the faculty with a wide acquaintance among his/her colleagues--ideally, someone still actively teaching but close enough to retirement to be well acquainted with the cohort of retired professors making up the pool of potential Senior Mentors.

Experience clearly demonstrates that finding suitable retired senior faculty members willing to serve as mentors is an easy task: in order to secure the fifteen people who served as mentors through 1993, for example, the director had to ask only nineteen prospects. This rate of favorable response indicates that at Temple, and probably across the country, there are many retirees eager to continue the teaching life that mentoring can be. And there should be no mistake about it: this sort of mentoring is, as many of the participants in the Senior Mentoring Service assert in their written reports and conversations with the director, an important continuation of the active teaching life--albeit in a different format and with a different pedagogical approach. Thus, besides benefiting the new faculty, the Service often benefits the retirees by continuing their active connections with their young colleagues, their profession and their university at the same time that it introduces them to a new, stimulating phase of their teaching careers--a rewarding master-apprentice vocation that can last for years beyond what is officially called "retirement."

Throughout the semester, the program maintains a continuous open-enrollment policy. Thus, whenever any junior faculty member expresses a wish to join after the semester is under way, the director does everything possible to pair that faculty member immediately with a current mentor, regardless of the point in the semester. It may take considerable effort for a new college teacher to overcome ordinary shyness or the fear that asking for such help might reveal serious teaching deficiencies: it would be a real mistake to say at that critical juncture, "We'll find you a mentor for next semester." By next semester, that potential protégé might very well have lost his/her nerve or incentive.

It is, as the numbers above indicate, not difficult to find retired faculty willing to join the Service, once they understand how interesting and rewarding this sort of mentoring is, how valuable their wisdom and practical experience can be to new faculty, and how flexible the program is about mentors' fulfilling their obligations. But it is important to emphasize that, obviously, not all retired senior professors (even those with reputations as excellent teachers) can make effective mentors and that the possibility of serious recruiting mistakes always exists. Thus, in the program's first three and a half years, the director found it necessary to refrain in three cases from inviting the retired professors to continue beyond their first semester as Senior Mentors. It should be noted, finally, that the pool is not limited, as it was initially intended, to recently retired faculty; in fact, several of the program's most energetic, conscientious, and effective mentors have been well over the retirement age (two of these are over 78 years old).

C. SETTING UP MENTORING PAIRS, KEEPING IN TOUCH

In early September (and again in January) the director establishes mentoring pairs (based on the

participants' explicit wishes, if they express any, and on such matters as compatibility of interests, disciplines, etc.), and asks each mentor to initiate the process by telephoning her/his assigned protégé(s) to schedule the first meeting of the semester. The director then sends every participant a welcoming letter with a supply of report forms and a list of the program's ground rules, the most important one being the strict confidentiality of the entire process, especially as it regards the substance of the discussions during mentoring sessions. After that, the pairs are on their own.

An important question confronted throughout the program's first years was the advisability of pairing mentors and protégés from differing disciplines. Because the total numbers of participants each semester were always too small to allow for consistent matches of people in the same or similar disciplines, the director was frequently forced to establish mentoring teams of people from widely disparate fields. However, the reports from these teams were generally indistinguishable from those in which the two colleagues were from the same department, or even from exactly the same sub-discipline (in one case, for instance, where both the mentor and protégé were specialists on the same American poets). Indeed, the most successful mentoring pairs, those that have lasted three years or more, include one in which the mentor is from the Biology Department and the protégé is from Political Science, one in which the mentor is from English and the protégé is from German, and one in which the mentor is from English and the protégé is from Criminal Justice. As a matter of fact, a number of participants report that they find working on pedagogical issues and teaching effectiveness with a partner from an entirely different academic discipline a distinct advantage. The roster of participants for the fall semester of 1993 is typical:

Team 1: mentor: History of Science; protégés: Art History, English
Team 2: mentor: Biology; protégés: Political Science, English
Team 3: mentor: English; protégés: Criminal Justice, American Studies
Team 4: mentor: English; protégés: Spanish, English
Team 5: mentor: Psychology; protégé: Criminal Justice
Team 6: mentor: Sociology; protégé: Sociology
Team 7: mentor: History; protégé: Sociology
Team 8: mentor: Spanish; protégés: Spanish, Criminal Justice
Team 9: mentor: English; protégés: Intellectual Heritage, Geography and Urban Studies, German
Team 10: mentor: Mathematics; protégés: Psychology, Mathematics, Physics.

In order to maintain consistent but non-intrusive contact with all participants and to give protégés simple, pragmatic ideas for teaching improvement, each participant is given a subscription to The Teaching Professor. All the copies of this monthly newsletter are mailed from the publisher to the director, who then sends one to each participant with a brief cover letter that usually includes notices about noteworthy upcoming events such as college-wide workshops on pedagogy, or reminders about some aspect of the Senior Mentoring Service such as the importance of prompt reporting and confidentiality and the value in the mentoring process of class-observation visits by the mentor. This monthly mailing provides a low-key, informal but regular means to maintain participants' awareness of the director's presence and of the Service as a stable, coherent, ongoing professional project. Moreover, a number of the protégés report that they regularly find in Teaching Professor articles practical methods that help them make their daily teaching more effective. This newsletter also serves an important function in the mentoring process itself by providing protégés and their mentors with pedagogical topics and teaching strategies to discuss in their mentoring sessions.

At the end of each semester, the director writes to all mentors and protégés, reminding them to turn in their end-of-semester evaluations of the program and to return a form that indicates whether they want to continue next semester, and whether they want the same mentoring partner(s) for that new semester. A large proportion of mentoring pairs elect to stay together for more than one semester--in fact, several have lasted for over five semesters and one has lasted for seven. While there are obvious advantages in long-term mentoring relationships, there are also advantages in trying out new people with new approaches to teaching (several protégés have done this). In any case, it seems best to let the participants make these choices entirely on their own.

D. WORKSHOPS AND GRANTS-IN-AID OF TEACHING

Another means used to foster a sense of professional community among the participants in the

Service is an ongoing series of college-wide workshops devoted to specific teaching issues such as writing across the curriculum, teaching critical thinking in a variety of disciplines, computer enhanced instruction, classroom applications of recent developments in cognitive theory, cooperative and collaborative learning, time management for new teachers, and audio-visual resources available to Temple faculty. Until the end of the FIPSE funding in September 1993, these workshops, conducted on a fairly regular basis (approximately six per year) and co-sponsored by the College's Teaching Improvement Center, often featured a well-known expert on teaching improvement from outside Temple. After FIPSE funding ceased, the workshops continued but without financial support from the Service. Turnout during the first three years was usually about twenty-five, of whom approximately twelve were Senior Mentoring Service participants. (Videotapes of these workshops are permanently housed in a collection on teaching improvement in Temple's Media Learning Center.) Workshops that featured prominent outside presenters cost approximately $1,000 each. Service participants' questionnaire responses generally indicate that these workshops played only a minor role in the success of the program, although they did provide more pedagogical topics for some mentoring pairs to discuss and another way for them to get together informally. It turned out that the most popular workshops were those that drew on Temple faculty experts, rather than distinguished outsiders. For example, the most enthusiastically received workshop of the first three years consisted of a panel of four College of Arts and Sciences professors who had, among them, amassed seven major College or University awards for distinguished teaching: the workshop was held several weeks before final examinations and its topic was "Final Examinations: Philosophy, Theory, Practice."

Like the workshops, another project aimed at making participation in the Service tangibly rewarding and thus more attractive to junior faculty--annual, competitive Grants in Aid of Teaching Effectiveness--turned out to have no measurable effect on recruitment or retention. Ranging from $300 to $1875 a year, offered each spring to all active protégés, and funded out of the FIPSE budget, these grants were awarded by a committee of three mentors to the winning protégés for such well-defined expenditures as the purchase of videotapes, films, and software used in teaching; travel expenses to attend conferences on teaching improvement or to work at distant libraries and other sources of materials employed to enrich specific courses; and the preparation of customized textbooks, workbooks, and reading packs. As it turned out, approximately half of the protégés did not even apply; and the semester after the FIPSE funding stopped (fall 1993) and the grants were therefore no longer available, the number of junior faculty who enrolled in the Service remained the same as it had been during the semesters when eligibility for the grants was one of the incentives for joining. Thus, the experiences with both the funded workshops led by external experts and the grants in aid of teaching demonstrate rather conclusively that the essential attraction of the Mentoring Service for junior faculty resides in the (relatively inexpensive) one-to-one mentoring relationships it offers.

IV. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

In order to secure a comprehensive assessment of the program's first three years of operation, during the fall of 1993 a thorough review was conducted of a wide variety of pertinent materials, including a formal evaluation based on a site visit at the end of the second year by an external evaluator (Dr. Martin Finkelstein, Director of the New Jersey Institute for Collegiate Teaching and Learning). Among the most important data for this assessment of the program's effectiveness were many hundreds of mentoring session reports in the Service's permanent files, dozens of end-of-semester evaluations from program participants, the external evaluator's summaries of his private interviews with a cross-section of program participants, and the findings of an extensive questionnaire completed by twenty-four program participants at the end of the Service's second year

These data demonstrated, first, that a high proportion of the protégés thoroughly enjoyed the mentoring process and found it especially valuable as part of their own education as educators, as well as their socialization into the Temple professional milieu. Second, the mentoring sessions were particularly valuable in the junior faculty members' first year when they lacked any practical experience and familiarity with the particular bureaucratic, political, and pedagogical demands of Temple Third, participants appreciated the opportunity to become acquainted, through program-sponsored workshops, with young as well as retired colleagues from other departments and unfamiliar disciplines, colleagues they otherwise would never have met.

In their narrative responses to questionnaire items and their various other reports to the director, many participants expressed the belief that the close personal relationship developed between protege and

mentor was the most valuable benefit they had received from the Senior Mentoring Service. The absolute trust and assurance of confidentiality fostered by the program allowed protégés to discuss with complete frankness many professional and personal matters. A number of mentors also described the mentoring relationship in similar terms: some of the mentors felt that they had taken on the role of the "academic therapist"; others enjoyed being young colleagues' "cheer-leaders" on the sidelines; still others described readily "lending an ear" to the problems voiced by a new teacher. Mentors also described serving as a "sounding board" for a new teaching technique the protégé was trying out. Because of the warm encouragement, constructive criticism, and timely feedback protégés received from their mentors, these new faculty members considered the program a valuable "confidence-booster."

Protégés also reported that they had adapted and incorporated into their teaching repertoires various practical suggestions made by their mentors, from the use of a structured article summary sheet which students are required to fill out when reading an article for class, to the practice of random attendance checks in larger classes; from detailed changes in syllabuses, to various techniques for giving students regular feedback.

These data also indicate that class visits by the mentors have become more frequent and have proved very helpful to junior faculty who need specific suggestions about teaching. Even though the program does not make it a requirement for mentors to visit and report on their protégés' classes, it does regularly urge participants to consider such visits as an important component of their mentoring efforts. As of December 1993, over seventy percent of the junior faculty had invited their mentors to observe their teaching performance at least once each semester (and some as many as three times a semester).

Dr. Finkelstein's May 1992 report concludes that "the program is, to a significant degree, fulfilling its promise (objectives)." It states that "most of the mentors. . . view the program as a constructive way to maintain their ties to Temple and to their professional careers," and most of the protégés "find the mentoring relationship, including the classroom visits, to be of significant value for their adjustment to Temple for their teaching and their careers." Dr. Finkelstein also reported that "the crucial element of confidentiality. . . has been admirably and scrupulously maintained (to the point where several [protégés] from the same department did not know of each other's participation until they met at a . . . workshop after nearly an entire semester of participation)."

The elaborate questionnaire issued to all participants at the end of the second year was completed anonymously in order to insure objectivity of response. Of the nineteen junior faculty participating in the Service at the time, fifteen (79 percent) returned their completed questionnaires, while all nine senior mentors returned theirs. Questionnaire items include questions about the importance of matching academic disciplines in establishing mentoring pairs, topics discussed in mentoring sessions, level of satisfaction with mentors and the program, and general assessments of the program.

All those protégés who completed the questionnaire responded enthusiastically and fully to the question "In what respects do you feel your teaching has improved this year?" The improvements most mentioned are:
more confident of one's own teaching; better class participation and student preparation; clearer understanding of students and more realistic expectations for students;better teaching philosophy and more effective methodology; better communication, and/or relationships, with students; improved speech skills and presentation in lectures; better selection and handling of teaching material.

One questionnaire respondent expresses emphatically the general sentiments of many other junior faculty respondents when she writes:
"I found my mentor to be indispensable. He provided a long-range view helping me put together my first [teaching] portfolio, and suggesting ways I might approach some delicate situations in the department. These were all things I am grateful for--and had these been the only things I took away from the mentoring relationship, I would have been pleased. But I am particularly pleased that he provided such consistent evaluation of my teaching; we are often so isolated in our classrooms that we roll along thinking we are doing a good job, when there IS a better way to go about things. My students have certainly responded favorably, and I can see that when I teach this course for the 10th year in a row, I will still be approaching the material with a fresh look. Experience, distance from the particular situation, and thought about the aims of teaching all contributed to my sense of confidence in his advice and my increasing confidence--and competence--in teaching."

Another questionnaire respondent, a protégé who had as a mentor first a retired professor from another department and then a retired professor from his own department, sheds light on an important facet of the

question of interdisciplinary mentoring pairs. With the mentor from outside his department, he felt that he could completely be himself: "I found that my mentor from outside my department often did not know many of the faculty in my department and was not aware of internal departmental politics, factions, etc. As a result, I always felt and assumed that my mentor was in my corner, listening to my concerns from my perspective . . . . I found it more useful to bounce ideas about teaching off someone not in my discipline because the feedback is more generalizable and not attached to someone's theoretical or substantive bias within the field. . . with a mentor from my own department. . . there is almost too much 'inside stuff' . . . . I found myself wondering, 'what does he think about this person?' or 'Maybe he is good friends with this person and I should be careful what I say.'"

In their questionnaire responses, those mentors who had been with the same protégés for more than one semester offered some especially useful insights about changes in the teaching effectiveness of their protégés over a period of a year or more. In these responses, mentors detailed the gratifying improvement they had observed. The following improvements are most often mentioned: better learning for students; greater understanding and improved skills for the protégé; a greater sense of security in the protégé; protégés manifesting a stronger desire to become the best teachers they can be by constantly striving to strike a balance between fostering active learning and content coverage; increased enjoyment working with students and helping them grow; demonstrating greater ability to absorb and act upon new ideas that the mentors suggest; gaining in confidence and self-assurance; more likely to spot their own shortcomings and correct them.

V. A LESSON LEARNED, SOME PROBLEMS UNSOLVED

A. ADMINISTRATIVE FLEXIBILITY

It seems apparent that the low profile and flexibility of the program's administration played an important role in achieving success. Except for a one-day retreat at the beginning of the fourth year, the participants were never asked to meet as a group. At one point, several mentors suggested a meeting of mentors to learn from each other and to initiate new mentors into the process, and it did seem a very useful proposal. However, when such a meeting was scheduled, only three mentors showed up and none of them were newcomers to the program. That of course does not mean the idea should not be tried again. Indeed, the Finkelstein evaluation cited above asserts that "a project such as this must grapple at once with the need to provide sufficient structure without intruding into the essential privacy of the mentor-protégé relationship. . . . One suggestion that emerged [from Finkelstein's private meetings with participants] for providing the structure/guidance, albeit outside the focal dyad, was to bring the mentors together periodically to discuss their experience." On the other hand, to schedule general meetings for protégés would probably be a mistake: they are usually very pressed for time, and if such meetings were not really useful to them, their disappointment might sour them on the program itself.

Another feature of administrative flexibility was the loose and liberal attitude maintained toward mentors' requests for scheduling adjustments. For example, there is the question of meeting frequency. Some retired people travel frequently and for relatively long periods. The program would have lost some of its best mentors if it had not been fully receptive to their requests to meet their protégés at longer intervals but for longer periods than originally planned. Similarly, protégés sometimes got caught up in attendance at professional conferences at points as widely separated as California and Germany. The consequent absences necessitated make-up work for their courses and departmental obligations, making it difficult to maintain a regular program of mentor/protégé conferences. This situation was similarly responded to by fewer, but longer, sessions.

B. SOME PROBLEMS

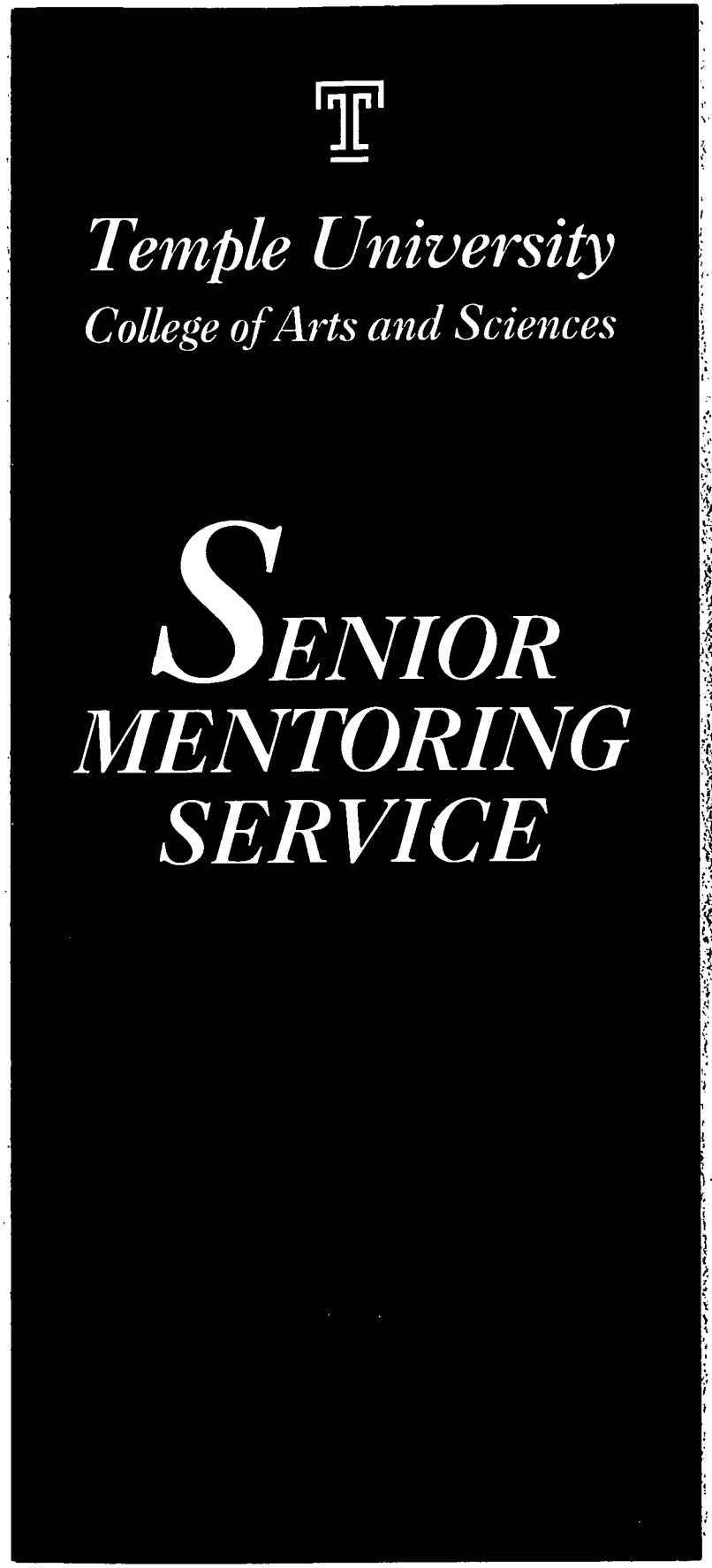
Besides the problem of recruiting larger numbers of protégés mentioned above, there is the more pressing recruitment question of how to enlist more women and minority faculty to serve as senior mentors. Unfortunately, although the program's pilot mentoring staff of five began in October 1990 with two women (one of whom was African American), one of those women was forced by ill health to drop out at the end of her first year, and as of December 1993 there were only two women among the ten retirees serving as mentors, and no African American mentors. (On the other hand, the program has served a reasonably large number of female and minority junior faculty. For example, in the fall semester 1993, among the twenty protégés were eight women and five minority members.) Since the mentoring process

is such an intimate one, and since young female and minority faculty members often feel more comfortable and freer to discuss teaching difficulties and shortcomings with mentors who have personal experience with and sympathy about the special difficulties and prejudices they face as teachers and colleagues, it is very important to employ as senior mentors more women and representatives of minority groups. However, the problem of finding such mentors is exacerbated by the historical fact that because of systemic discrimination in the academy in the past, the pool of women and minorities among retired senior faculty is small. It can be hoped that in the future, the growing numbers of retired female and minority faculty will help to alleviate this deficiency.

Another problem concerns program evaluation: how does one determine the actual effect of such a mentoring system on a junior faculty participant's students, on the learning that goes on in that faculty member's courses? This is, after all, the central issue, the raison d'être of the program. Unfortunately, such evaluations are statistically questionable and notoriously difficult to construct and administer effectively--finally impossible, many would argue. At one point early in the development of the Senior Mentoring Service, the inclusion of before-and-after student evaluations of participants' courses was contemplated; but the idea was dropped after its shortcomings became obvious, especially the nearly impossible task of assembling a proper control group and the dangers such an evaluation process posed for the intimacy and trust between mentors and protégés upon which the program's success rests. So in some sense the problem of accurate evaluation remains unsolved. On the other hand, all the varied evidence provided by the participants themselves makes it absolutely clear that the program helped its protégés enormously with a crucial step in teaching improvement: they became conscious of their teaching effectiveness, they began to put their own teaching practices under the objective scrutiny usually required for assessment and improvement. Classroom observations by the mentors played the principal role in triggering such essential consciousness raising.

Finally, one perennial problem that haunts this and every other teaching improvement effort in large research universities has to do with structural and philosophical matters far beyond the control of those who consider good teaching a central responsibility of the faculty. Despite all the positive reports about the value of the Mentoring Service, one mentor puts in a word of warning. He points out that there is little evidence that future tenure and promotion decisions about the protégés will be based to any significant degree upon their performance as teachers. Funded research and scholarly publication continue to be the criteria that really matter. Indeed, if one cares to follow this idea to its logical conclusion, he declares, one would have to say that if our young teachers want tenure and promotion they have been wasting their time in the Mentoring Service: "Should we, as honest mentors, have been telling them, 'Use this program only for learning how to cut short the time you spend on teaching so that you will have more time for that which will help you to advance'? (Could it be that those eligible for the mentoring program who have not elected to use it understood this and have acted accordingly?)"

The solution to this problem is of course not a goal the Senior Mentoring Service seeks. In any case, most of those junior faculty who participate in this program are fully aware from the outset that improving teaching effectiveness will, unfortunately, help little in their pursuit of tenure and promotion. For them, we might assume, it is a question of virtue being its own reward: in many cases they simply want to be good at what they do, regardless of the tangible rewards. Moreover, many of them presumably have acted on their recognition of a professional responsibility to their students; for by entering into this very private, unremunerated, and largely unrecognized mentoring relationship, they are likely to better fulfill the trust they took on when they became college teachers.



Temple University

College of Arts and Sciences

SENIOR MENTORING SERVICE

The Senior Mentoring Service offers every full-time junior faculty member in Temple University's College of Arts and Sciences the opportunity to work privately on teaching skills with a seasoned Temple teacher. Established in 1990 and originally supported by a grant from the federal Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE), the program makes available to untenured Arts and Sciences faculty volunteers the mentoring services of senior professors recently retired from the College faculty—professors recognized for their teaching effectiveness, their demonstrated willingness to help younger colleagues, and their broad knowledge of Temple's academic culture. Relations between mentors and their protégés are informal and completely confidential, and mentors are selected to insure representation from a wide variety of academic disciplines.

The mentors and their protégés determine their own mentoring goals and schedules, meeting approximately ninety minutes every two weeks during the academic year for one-on-one discussions of any aspects of teaching and professional development they consider relevant. Mentors might, for example, review protégés' course plans, syllabuses, writing assignments, and examinations; they might visit and report on protégés' classes or discuss videotapes of those classes; they might help with questions concerning grading procedures and standards; they might offer advice on handling especially challenging students or even on negotiating Temple's bureaucratic mazes. Mentors are also likely to answer their protégés' questions about research and publication, professional networking and advancement, service commitments at Temple, and tenure and promotion. The choice of topics and procedures is entirely up to the mentoring pairs, but in all cases mentors will share their own responses to Temple's teaching challenges—their techniques for making class meetings more dynamic and courses more rewarding for Temple's particularly diverse student population.

Participants are also invited throughout the academic year to workshops sponsored by the Senior Mentoring Service and the College of Arts and Sciences Teaching Improvement Center. Led by experts from inside and outside the University, these workshops are devoted to specific teaching issues such as writing across the curriculum, teaching critical thinking in a variety of disciplines, computer enhanced instruction, classroom applications of recent developments in cognitive theory, cooperative and collaborative learning, time management for new teachers, and audio-visual resources available to Temple faculty.

Besides emphasizing the importance of teaching in their Temple careers, this service has provided many dozens of junior faculty members with an invaluable aid to their adjustment to Temple: a completely confidential professional relationship with a thoroughly experienced faculty member. Since senior mentors are retired and will therefore play no part in future decisions concerning contract renewal, tenure, or promotion, newer faculty members can usually be franker with them about their difficulties and their need for help than they can be with current senior members of the faculty.

The principal aim of the Senior Mentoring Service is to strengthen the culture of teaching at Temple University. Temple's long and widely-recognized tradition of quality instruction is rich in accumulated strategies for teaching its unusually diverse students, but this culture requires regular efforts to sustain, improve and transmit it to new generations of junior faculty. By passing on the experience and wisdom of those who have succeeded as Temple teachers and by fostering a sense of an ongoing teaching community among young and old professors, this service helps Temple achieve its central educational mission.

For further information about the College of Arts and Sciences Senior Mentoring Service, call or write:

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