Utilizing a Competency-Based Assessment Tool to Facilitate Faculty-Student Mentorship

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Abstract

In this case study, the authors discuss the utilization of a competency-based assessment tool that was used to facilitate leadership-based mentorship (Meents-DeCaigny et al., 2016). Effective faculty-student mentorship revolves around a relationship that is grounded in "explicit guidance to cultivate and clarify necessary skills" (Feldon et al., 2014 p. 4) and through student self-assessment and mentor assessment guidance and expectations are outlined.

Mentorship

Colleges and universities play an incredible role in creating the next generation's leaders. Utilizing a mentorship model that includes immersive learning experiences, creates the perfect cross section to enhance the knowledge, skills and dispositions of graduate students. But what is mentorship?

"Faculty mentorship is considered essential in the development of graduate students'"

(Feldon et al., 2014, p. 1)

This relationship that is created and fostered by the faculty member and is essential in developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the next career professionals. Daloz (2012) stated that "if mentors did not exist, we would have to invent them" (p 17). A copious amount of research indicates that when a student is mentored, there are skills obtained by the students that would not otherwise be present at graduation. Shalka, Corcoran, & Magee (2019) found two competencies bridging mentorship to practice:

"socially responsible leadership and leadership self-efficacy".

When mentoring graduate students, it is critical to create a relationship that fosters transparency, dialogue, intentional support and self-reflection. According to Cambiano, Murphy and Eversole (2020), the Collaboration, Engagement and Motivation (CEM) Leadership Framework when

"intertwined creates the foundational support in which ... leadership is fostered and can occur."

The CEM Leadership Framework "sets the stage for a safe place to have critical reflection and rational discourse" (in press).

Leadership

Higher education is the center of student leadership development and across the country, there are many programs that are built on the ability to train leaders. According to Lunsford, Crisp, & Wuetherick (2017),

"In the last two decades, understandings of leadership have evolved, with a discernible movement away from the traditional concept of developing 'leaders' to the contemporary notion of developing 'leadership'."

Through a student-faculty mentorship model, students excel and mentors have the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue that enhances not only themselves but the curriculum as well.

Results

The results of this conversation brought out the following key theme:.

Identification of passion for leadership

When the graduate student was asked what his perspective of professional mentorship using a competency-based assessment was, he stated that:

"This instrument gave me an in-depth look at myself, the profession, mentorship and how, when used together with mentorship, has the potential to really force people, particularly students, to reflect on what they know, look at what they need to change or improve upon, and work toward better competency in various areas of student affairs. If he had to do it over again, there are always ways to improve, but he would do it again the same way in a heartbeat."

How would you characterize changes as incremental, or as a fundamental change in form and structure? How so?

"I would say values and knowledge are incremental changes. I know that I will always be an active academic and my knowledge will reflect what I have learned on a daily basis. Concerning values, reflecting and acting on that reflection was a slow process due to having to make hard decisions with hard conversations about self confidence and not internalizing conversations or values due to not wanting to hurt or anger others."

Do you believe that you are now experiencing views that are different than you used to? If so, in what ways?

"Yes. I believe that while I feel that I used to try to listen and try to have different views, now I actively try to look at every situation from a different perspective and try to change how I look at being a professional as someone who looks at situations differently. Instead of what we can't do, I look at each situation as what can I do to help this student in this moment."

The *Professional Competencies Self Assessment and Development Plan* addresses this under the Leadership competency. "Leadership involves both the individual role of a leader and the leadership process of individuals working together to envision, plan, and affect change in organizations and respond to broad-based constituencies and issues" (Freeman, 2016, p. 19).

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ACPA/NASPA Competency Rubric

The *Professional Competencies Self-Assessment & Development Plan* is derived from the ACPA/NASPA Competency Rubrics (Freeman, 2016; Meents-DeCaigny et al., 2016). The tool utilizes self reflection to assess leadership competency. The tool uses a Likert scale where individuals are asked to think about and reflect on leadership competencies as well as determining the importance of each competency in a student affairs career. The measurements are centered in knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by student affairs professionals working in higher education.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this project was to investigate the utilization of a competency-based assessment tool to facilitate leadership-based mentorship.The question that guided this investigative project was:

From a student perspective, how did a competency-based assessment tool facilitate leadership-based mentorship?

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