

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

TASK FORCE ON RACIAL EQUITY

INSTRUCTIONAL FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

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Recommendation Title: Mentoring Champions

Working Group Champion

David Owusu-Ansah

Problem Statement/Issue

Barriers to effective mentoring abound for faculty of color ([Davis et al., 2021](#)), among them negative mentoring experiences (which can be worse than no mentoring at all), difficulty finding mentors, lack of institutional support, and a dearth of post-tenure mentorship. Various studies promote the importance of mentoring and mentoring networks for faculty who are Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); mentoring not only bolsters hiring and retention efforts, but also supports establishing equity and belongingness. While some faculty mentoring/support programs exist at JMU, this working group recommendation centers the cultivation of *intentional mentoring networks*, within and outside of the academic unit and related Colleges, for BIPOC faculty. Further, it underscores the importance of mentors serving as advocates and champions—and receiving both the professional development support and related recognition to thrive in their mentoring roles.

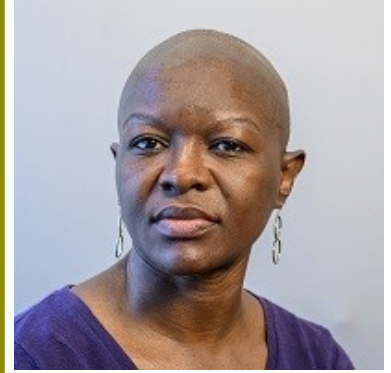
Recommendation:

We recommend that the University prioritize a self-study of mentoring, tied to results of the Climate Study, that explores the *specific steps* and *needed interventions* below. This necessitates the establishment of an ad hoc working group on mentoring, supported by the Provost, that will develop an implementation timeline and oversee an implementation plan based on the recommendations outlined below. This group should contain at least one member of the instructional faculty development working group. Sufficient resources will be needed to support these recommendations; there will also need to be assessment of impact tied to baseline data.

1. Perform a thorough investigation of best practices for the mentoring of BIPOC faculty including, but not limited to:
 - Send a delegation of faculty to the UNM Mentoring Institute's [14th Annual Conference](#).
 - Review descriptive and empirical pieces on mentoring, like [those listed on this UK website](#) or [found on UMass's site](#).

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WORKING GROUP LEADERSHIP



Besi Muhonja, Leadership Council



David Owusu-Ansah,
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2. Ensure BIPOC faculty at JMU have the opportunity to engage in mentoring (and mentoring networks) beyond the early career phase, with established initiatives focused on mid- and late-career states; the CFI already has a well-established initiative (NFA) supporting first-year faculty, for which BIPOC faculty self-report positive outcomes.
3. Cultivate and institutionalize peer mentoring clusters or multi-mentor networks (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007) at JMU; these are reciprocal spaces where individuals lift each other up, explore areas of common interest, and create cross-college support networks. View these not as “add-ons,” but as efforts that foster faculty well-being, sense of belonging, and success. See NYU’s [“multifaceted mentoring approach”](#), Ithaca’s [“mentoring and advocacy network”](#), and [“Tufts’ mutual mentoring program”](#).
4. Cultivate and institutionalize peer mentoring clusters or networks for BIPOC faculty that are cross-institutional; see this [best practice](#) across community colleges in WA and pursue 4-VA funds to create one within SCHEV.
5. Relieve the well-cited challenge of mentors (especially BIPOC and women mentors) being “stretched thin” given their already exorbitant service responsibilities. Elevate conversations and practices surrounding mentor recognition, documentation, and compensation (e.g., establish clear forms of documentation of mentoring labor, compensation for labor, and criteria for rewarding mentoring.)
6. Bolster the pertinence of White faculty serving as advocates and champions to their BIPOC colleagues; create professional development pathways to developing mentoring competencies.
7. Create, localize, and sustain a mentoring institute (e.g., speaker series, workshops, conferences). Attending to forms of equitable mentoring, mentor competencies, and mentor strategies, such initiatives must bring forth “...a paradigm shift in terms of how institutions understand mentoring—all mentoring is not good mentoring” (Davis et al., 2021, p. 14). Utilize prominent national institutes as possible models for JMU. Ensure faculty participants are recognized and rewarded. We recommend Provost-level commitment of funding for this institute reflecting appropriate level of institutional commitment.
8. Expand mentoring beyond the coordination/work of CFI and Access and Inclusion; centralize coordinating efforts in the Office of the Provost.

See Rationale and Success Measures for Mentoring Champions on Page 3

Rationale:

The broader context for this recommendation is well articulated in the [Academic Affairs Anti-Racist and Anti-Discrimination Agenda](#): “A commitment to inclusive excellence is central to how the division functions, and this mindset will drive our strategies for the future. Beyond our division, JMU recognizes it cannot sustain what we think of as our excellence without authentically embracing inclusivity.” While mentoring efforts occur in some departments and programs (e.g., NFA), JMU does not currently benefit from coordinated cross-campus mentoring support, and expectations for engaging in faculty mentoring are not clearly established. The lack of an established mentoring practice and culture at JMU leads to significant variability in the quality of interactions and support junior faculty experience in their first years at the institution. New BIPOC faculty may be particularly at risk for experiencing support gaps—lack of connection with colleagues, lack of access to information and opportunities essential to their success, dealing on their own with departmental practices, politics, culture, and microaggressive (or worse) behaviors. Personal narratives shared through faculty networks suggest that early career BIPOC faculty at JMU often face daunting choices about their professional development and institutional commitment in the face of these negative experiences.

Not to centralize, reward, and support mentoring, mentoring networks, and mentoring champions then perpetuates a complacent, privileged form of “institutional gradualism” that promotes homogeneity—and ultimately holds the University back from achieving its academic potential. This recommendation, along with the steps and interventions associated, maps to the following of the Provost’s five goals:

Goal 1: Identify and correct practices, structures, and policies that contribute to oppression.

Goal 3: Create academic communities that celebrate interconnections and recognize intersectionality.

Goal 5: Strategically allocate resources—money, space, and personnel—to dismantle racist and discriminatory practices.

Bevvies of research support our plan of action; in fact, each of the steps outlined under “recommendation” is evidence-based (see hyperlinked references or web-links above). Further evidence supporting the need for mentoring can be found in the COACHE 2012, 2016, and 2020 reports, in addition to sets of data gathered in other campus spaces.

We recommend the appointment of an ad hoc working group of mentoring in late summer, with one-year duties commencing at the start of the academic year. Given that the establishment of this group is our primary recommendation, success will be measured by the group’s progress—which should be reported monthly to the Provost, in close alignment with present Task Force efforts. Specific benchmarks are suggested:

Success:

1. Provost names implementation champion: 1 Sept 2021
2. Provost and working group chairs name additional members: 1 Oct 2021
3. Working group establishes timeline, goals, and key deliverables: fall 2021
4. Working group collates data and develops proposed action steps: spring 2022
5. Implementation of action steps begins: summer-fall 2022