

MENTORING-IN-A-BOX: Women Faculty in Computing

Mentoring Basics – A Mentee’s Guide

This guide explains why women faculty in computer science need mentors, how you can benefit from being mentored, and the qualities and activities of a mentoring pair.

WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a process through which individuals get professional expertise and support from a more experienced colleague. Mentors serve as teachers, counselors, and advocates to their protégées, or “mentees.” In the university setting, mentoring is a form of professional development that leads to better instructors, increased retention, greater understanding of academic values, and self-confidence in the skills needed for academic success.

WHAT IS NCWIT’S MENTORING-IN-A-BOX: WOMEN FACULTY IN COMPUTING?

Mentoring-in-a-Box: Women Faculty in Computing is a modular kit of mentoring resources designed for use by a mentoring pair. The intent of the *Box* is to guide the growth of young women faculty so they establish a high-arc professional trajectory toward becoming accomplished researchers, notable scholars, and influential leaders in computer science – and yes, to secure tenure. When you are ready for mentoring, share this resource with individuals who might mentor you. *Mentoring-in-a-Box* can help you structure your mentoring relationship, from setting expectations to addressing issues on a variety of themes.

HOW DOES MENTORING WORK?

Mentoring works on multiple levels, supporting you in meeting essential duties of teaching, research and service, and also helping you envision and take steps toward the professional goals you wish to attain. Mentoring combines instruction in professional behavior with affective support. Your mentor may fulfill several roles, or you may have several mentors, each fulfilling one role:

Advisor – Shares institutional and professional wisdom, critiques performance and work products, suggests strategies and improvements in work processes and products.

Role Model – Offers insight on how he or she met professional milestones and progressed to the position now held.

Coach – Helps you learn new skills and practice new behaviors.

Advocate – Sponsors, provides exposure and visibility in the department, university and wider field.

Protector – Helps you find new and challenging opportunities while protecting you from adverse forces and “dead-end” assignments.

Guide – Brings critical information, opportunities, or experiences to your attention.

Supporter – Listens with a sympathetic ear, explains unwritten rules, and acknowledges disappointments and celebrates triumphs.

WHY DOES FORMAL MENTORING ESPECIALLY BENEFIT WOMEN FACULTY IN COMPUTER SCIENCE?

Paltry representation of women at the higher echelons in academia means that women in computer science lack ready access to role models and mentors, and they may be excluded from the informal networks that can facilitate advancement (Boyce, 1998).

Mentoring overcomes these conditions by giving women access to the specialized knowledge that is otherwise less available.

As a result, mentoring improves effectiveness, work satisfaction, and talent retention while increasing the representation of women in computer science.

AM I A CANDIDATE FOR MENTORING?

Getting support through mentoring is a smart thing to do at any stage in your career. *Mentoring-in-a-Box* focuses on pre-tenure women faculty in computer science, but has advice, activities, and support that can benefit any faculty member.

You are ready if you:

- » have an ambition to advance and increase your contribution to the institution and the field
- » seek constructive feedback and act on it
- » are willing to explore new behaviors and skills
- » can invest time and effort to your professional growth
- » are interested in being mentored

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HOW DO I START?

Establish purpose. Begin to identify what you hope to gain from mentoring. The *Set-the-Stage* template will guide your thinking as you plan. It is part of the mentoring kit found at www.ncwit.org/facultymentor. Now think about colleagues who have traits or accomplishments you wish to emulate. When you are clear on your goals and the qualities and expertise you are looking for in a mentor, you will have short list of colleagues to approach to ask for mentoring.

Express your interest. Discuss your interest in mentoring with potential mentors or an administrator who can connect you to the right mentor. Share *Mentoring-in-a-Box: Women Faculty in Computing* and discuss how it can support your mentoring partnership.

Plan. After you and a mentor have agreed to work together, plan how your efforts will proceed. Use the *Set-the-Stage* template to set goals and establish the parameters of your relationship. Research on mentoring shows that frequent, regular and purposeful meetings contribute to the formation of an effective mentoring relationship that yields results. Another form, the *Meeting Plan* template, structures your ongoing work. It guides your meeting agendas, prompts you to track short- and long-term goals, and suggests activities between meetings.

Focus on goals and challenges. The *Activities Guide* in *Mentoring-in-a-Box: Women Faculty in Computing* offers support in these specific areas:

1. Success in Academia
2. Time Management and Work-Life Balance
3. Women in a Male-Dominant Field
4. Teaching and Interacting with Students
5. Becoming an Accomplished Researcher
6. Career Advancement
7. Communications and Collaboration

Persist. As you begin your partnership, be aware that it may take several months of steady engagement before you feel bonded and find your meetings habitual and natural. Be persistent and your effort will yield benefits for you and your mentor.

Examine and share *Mentoring-in-a-Box: Women Faculty in Computing* resource with your colleagues. You can find it on the NCWIT website at www.ncwit.org/facultymentor.

The mission of the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) is to ensure that women are fully represented in the influential world of information technology and computing. Learn more about NCWIT at www.ncwit.org.

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