Proposal for AIS Mentoring Program[1]

Prepared for presentation at the 2001 AAA-IS section business meeting
by the Education Issues Committee—
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The main purpose of this program is to meet the needs of new AIS faculty members to develop the skills necessary to become successful in the teaching portions of their careers.

The Faculty Mentorship Committee proposes developing a mentoring program for teaching.

A mentorship program for the IS section members makes sense due to several factors:

- New faculty, even those with background in teaching AIS courses, are pressured by the need to be productive in both teaching and research.
- Experienced faculty often move into teaching AIS courses.
- Most schools have only one person teaching AIS and the subject is unfamiliar to the other accounting faculty. This isolates a new AIS teacher and reduces the possibility of teaching support.
- There are (depending upon the particular bias) no or multiple models for teaching AIS. Regardless of the view taken of the teaching models, there is considerable uncertainty in choosing an AIS teaching model.

The mentoring program would pair a tenured AIS faculty who has expertise in AIS teaching with one new faculty (for purposes of this proposal, a new faculty member means that he/she has less than three years experience teaching AIS). The tenured faculty member should be available for guidance on identifying an appropriate teaching model and on methods for successfully implementing that model.   The mentor will share course syllabi, projects, and feedback on lessons learned in teaching AIS.

Who will be the mentors?

Tenured faculty who have experience in successful AIS teaching.

How many new faculty will a mentor work with?

We feel that the mentor should only work with one new faculty at a time to accomplish the goals of the program.

What are the mentor's responsibilities?

The mentor will provide guidance to the new faculty with regard to the different ways that AIS is taught in different programs. The mentor will not necessarily be familiar with all the models, but should be able to direct the mentee to sources that will suffice.   In addition, the mentor will provide

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[1] We have liberally plagiarized the information from the Tax Section of the AAA for this proposal. The version we found was on the Tax Section's website during Fall term, 2000.

guidance regarding how to implement the chosen model. This guidance could come in the form of course syllabi, course notes and problems, identifying or developing class cases, identifying new and innovative developments that should be considered, sharing of practical experience in the field, and answering questions the junior faculty member might have.

During this stage of the mentor-mentee relationship several tasks must be accomplished. These tasks include: the initiation of a trusting and supportive relationship, establishing appropriate expectations and boundaries within this relationship, and identifying the structure of your process of communication.

The mentor is responsible for recognizing that mentees need some contextual support as well as content. Specifically, mentees need:
- to see that the relationship is mentee-driven, that the relationship is to provide the for the mentees' needs, which may differ from the mentors (particularly since they are unlikely to be at the same school)
- you to be a trusted confidante. This may be particularly important for new faculty who have moved in to the AIS area from another area. There is likely to be some apprehension, and potentially some ego issues that need to be carefully dealt with.
- to discover that their problems are universal. The major reason for this proposal is the universality of the problems with teaching AIS. This is not necessarily known by the mentee and should be addressed.
- an objective perspective. Although the mentors will have some specific ways of teaching, they should recognize that all schools, people, and situations are not the same and will not necessarily respond similarly.
- to know that your role with them is not evaluative. The mentor is there to help, not criticize or evaluate, except in a constructive way.
- structure regarding how you will discuss and manage new crises or learning opportunities. Mentors and mentees must agree on how they will contact each other and the kinds of demands they can reasonable place on each other.

What is the motivation to be a mentor?

The mentor will have several incentives for providing this service. First, of course, is the connection with a new member of our community. The mentor will have a potential collaborator for various forms of scholarship, including research, depending upon the individuals involved. Second, the mentor will be improving the overall state of the AIS profession, by advancing the skills and knowledge of the mentee. Third, the mentor will go through a self-review of his/her understanding of our discipline, in order to articulate the discipline clearly to the mentee. And fourth, the mentor will be providing a needed service to the profession.

Who will be the mentees?

New faculty who have been teaching AIS for less than three years.

What are the mentee's responsibilities?

The mentee must initiate the mentoring relationship by contacting the Faculty Mentorship Committee. The committee will arrange a mentor, and the mentor will contact the mentee. The mentee will need to make him/herself available to fit the mentor's schedule.

The mentee is responsible for acquiring and becoming familiar with the materials and resources that the mentor and mentee mutually agree upon. The mentor is not responsible for providing materials, although the mentor will probably often guide the mentee to sources.

The mentee must be forthright about his/her needs and concerns. Without honest responses and interactions, the mentoring relationship will be of little value to either party.

What outside resources will the Section provide?

The Committee will be a clearing-house for the potential mentors and mentees, and will keep all the applications. The Committee will be in charge of notifying mentors when there is a potential mentee, and will facilitate the initial contact between the mentors and mentees.

The Committee will have continuing responsibility to gather and promulgate a variety of resources that can be accessed by either the mentor or the mentee (as well as other IS section members). The resources will range from sample syllabi to lists of relevant journals to proceedings from educational conferences to specially developed AIS cases and projects. These resources will be web-accessible through the IS section website. The Committee will, on a regular basis, request contributions to the website from the Section membership, remove obsolete materials, review and modify the organization of the resources to meet the membership needs, and review the overall process for providing resources.

How will the Mentor Program work?

Tenured faculty will be asked to sign up to be mentors. As a part of the sign-up process, the mentors will complete a short questionnaire about the characteristics the mentor would prefer in a mentee—for example, size and Carnegie classification of school; mentee's research interests; geographic location; etc. There would be no guarantee of an exact match between the mentee characteristics and the mentor preferences, but this information would be useful in trying to create the mentor/mentee pairs. The Faculty Mentorship Committee will keep a list of the names of mentors and their indicated preferences.

New faculty who would like to have a mentor will request one through the Faculty Mentorship Committee, who will notify the mentor. Mentee's will complete a form that captures the characteristics useful for matching with a mentor, as described above.

The Chairman of the Faculty Mentorship Committee will pass the request along to the mentor who will contact the new faculty member. We believe the first move needs to be made by the mentor for this program to be successful, because some new faculty may not feel comfortable contacting a tenured professor at a different school for help.