Focus on: Reverse Mentoring

While mentoring is a widely-used development approach in higher education, reverse mentoring is a more recent phenomenon. The approach is growing in popularity inside and outside the university. The BBC[1] is the latest organisation to come on board, with senior staff assigned young mentors in efforts to keep them engaged with the younger generation. The approach holds great potential in helping HE leaders understand the viewpoint of students and the potential of technology in enhancing teaching and learning. Indeed, it offers an effective way of capturing the student voice and in helping to advance the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion across universities.

Reverse mentoring has become more prominent across sectors, increasing the competence and knowledge of experienced generations in a variety of disciplines, particularly digital technology. Pioneered by Jack Welch at General Electric in the 1990s to increase Internet expertise among his management team, reverse mentoring can be considered a mentoring partnership where a younger individual mentors a more experienced individual. This reinforces the idea that the mentor, in this case a student, has a specific set of knowledge and expertise to share, yet at the same time leverages the know-how of both generations [2].

In the context of Crannóg, it involves matching a student with a head or dean. The student mentor will introduce the head/dean to the span of apps and sites that they use to acquire and create learning and knowledge. The partnership will enable a journey into the most recent trends and methods of creativity and social communication.

> "I think for me it's really a two-way system where the mentor advises me on how to do things or he does things himself but it's a sort of teamwork. He has the technical skills I haven't got and I have the overall design idea and the vision of what the site should deliver. It's teamwork so I don't see that as a challenge. I think it's a benefit as it is a student (and) it brings in the student voice and experience in the project". [3]
>
> Nicole Duplain from the Student Mentor project, University of Hertfordshire Business School, 2006

Advantages of Reverse Mentoring

Mentoring is incredibly important to the intellectual and academic vitality of the university. Reverse mentoring provides an innovation on traditional mentoring, offering many advantages in the areas of technology and generational values (e.g. diversity, sustainability etc.).

- It supports the university's efforts to promote of diversity and inclusion, increasing communication and engagement across generations.[2]

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[1] Senior BBC staff given 'youth mentors' to stay in touch with under-30s
https://ph.news.yahoo.com/senior-bbc-staff-given-youth-mentors-stay-touch-30s-143355307.html

[2] Reverse Mentoring: A Social Exchange Tool for Keeping the Boomers Engaged and Millennials Committed
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239772131_Reverse_Mentoring_A_Social_Exchange_Tool_for_Keeping_the_Boomers_Engaged_and_Millennials_Committed

[3] The Student-Staff Mentoring Project at the University of Hertfordshire
http://uhra.herts.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2299/2929/S106.pdf?sequence=1

- *It reinforces a commitment to student engagement and respecting the student voice and an opportunity to respond ensuring that we maintain a high quality student experience, aligning with the National Student Engagement Programme (NSTEP)*
- *Reverse mentoring facilitates the foundation of fruitful, cross-generational relationships that offer new perspectives for both participants.*
- *It gives Heads and Deans an opportunity to gather insights into teaching, learning and technology from students, in terms of deficits and unexplored territories.*
- *Heads and Deans can find out more about what resources students use for learning and explore new learning media and methods.*
- *It provides occasion to adapt how Schools work with younger generations and potentially implement changes in work culture.*
- *Such programmes have been shown to connect participants to organisations and to improve job satisfaction and engagement.[4]*

What makes a good student mentor?

Student mentors would be selected for this project through a process of written application and short presentation. For Crannóg, we will intentionally select student mentors with the following characteristics:

- *Demonstrable engagement with teaching and learning methods – ability to differentiate, rate, and make suggestions*
- *Demonstrable digital and technological capability*
- *Excellent listening and communication skills*
- *Proactive and organised, with ability to propose new approaches and ideas and run with them*

Best Practices for Reverse Mentoring

Best Practice	Details
Create a plan up front for the mentoring partnership [5]	*Create a programme framework. Participants need a starting point and a set of guidelines to help them get started.*
Make sure you have a clear goal for the mentoring	*The purpose and goal should be clear to both parties and communicated up front.*
Pair people intentionally	*Pair people in an intentional manner, taking into account personalities and skills. Screen mentors and mentees carefully, as they will constitute representatives of the programme.*
Communicate the process and desired outcomes	*This ties back to the plan – clearly communicate the process, expectations, number of meetings and expectations.*

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[4] *4 How HR Can Support Reverse Mentoring: https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0517/pages/sharing-knowledge-and-skills-through-reverse-mentoring.aspx*

[5] *How to succeed with reverse mentoring: 7 steps: https://enterprisersproject.com/article/2017/8/how-succeed-reverse-mentoring-7-steps*

Kick-off with a workshop	Design a workshop that allows participants to meet and interact and where expectations can be communicated.
Run the programme for a finite period	Encourage participants to attend planned meetings and run the programme for a finite periods so that participants are aware of the commitment.
Arrange for thorough informal and formal feedback [6]	Documentation requirements and a schedule of feedback meetings should be communicated at the outset. With the help of the coordinator, results and feedback should be analysed for patterns and insight, anonymised as appropriate and a report compiled on what the learning was. This facilitates sharing the learning and experience with colleagues.

Resources:

General

Tips for Reverse Mentoring https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV6U_u2Yd0E

Developing Leaders Through Mentoring: A Brief Literature Review
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED517965.pdf

Ted Talks: How to be a good mentor:
https://www.ted.com/playlists/400/how_to_be_a_good_mentor

Association for Psychological Science: How To Be a Good Mentee
https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/how-to-be-a-good-mentee

The National Student Engagement Programme (NSTEP) http://usi.ie/nstep/

New York Times: Executive Mentors Wanted. Only Millennials Need Apply
https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/15/technology/millennial-mentors-executives.html

Characteristics of Successful and Failed Mentoring Relationships: A Qualitative Study Across Two Academic Health Centers https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3665769/

JISC

Developing successful student-staff partnerships: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/developing-successful-student-staff-partnerships

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[6] [6] Use a recent graduate as a career mentor and tap the millennial mindset
https://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/sep/10/recent-graduate-career-mentor-younger-generation