

New Voices Takes a New Look at Mentorship

By Hannah Hayes

Educational Development's (AED) NewVoices program and enlisted Kathy Brady, a senior staff attorney at the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) in San Francisco, as her mentor. The fellowship gave Junck the boost she needed and allowed ILRC to hire her to provide technical assistance and training to lawyers and the community.

Mentoring the Mentor

While the concept of mentoring is not new (in the *Iliad*, Odysseus leaves the care of his son to his friend, Mentor), New Voices structures mentorship with formal agreements and training for mentors and mentees. Funded by the Ford Foundation and launched in 1999, the program's goal is to assist nonprofits in developing leaders among young people.

"It started through a conversation in which young associates were asked what sort of initiatives they thought were needed," New Voices Director Ken Williams says. "They argued that there were not enough leadership positions for the social justice sector, particularly for folks just coming out of college."

Fellows must enlist at least one mentor in their field to work with them through the program. In addition to paying the fellow's full salary the first year and partial salary the second year, AED provides training and professional development opportunities for both the fellows and their mentors.

A training session at the beginning of the program brings everyone together to focus on goals and objectives. New Voices also arranges quarterly conference calls to provide support for the mentors, and a listserv to discuss progress, goals, and issues that arise.

During the two years of their fellowship, mentees attend five leadership training seminars, sponsored by New Voices, where they discuss everything from overcoming discrimination to networking. They also have the opportunity to participate in workshops aimed at basic leadership skills, such as public speaking.

The new leadership skills obtained by the fellows through New Voices's workshops and seminars get passed on to other staff members at the host organization. Essentially, the program formalizes and provides structure to allow mentor-mentee relationships to flourish past the life of the fellowship.

Fellows are given a \$1,500 stipend to use for professional development in their field and a \$1,000 grant to fund an external mentor. New Voices encourages its fellows to seek a second mentor outside their host organization because some people may be more comfortable showing their vulnerabilities to or asking questions of someone outside their immediate job circle.

Why Mentorship

With many baby boomers approaching retirement age, the need for succession planning and the transfer of knowledge is one reason why many law firms establish formal mentoring programs. Mentoring programs ensure new employees or recruits from law school have the necessary skills and know their way around the firm. In addition to drawing people into the company culture, a one-on-one relationship can accelerate learning and build a competent base of lawyers, particularly in areas of specialization.

However, without administrative support or a clear set of objectives, a mentoring program can be ineffec-

When Angie Junck graduated from University of California Hastings Law School in 2004, she knew exactly the type of law she wanted to practice. Moved by the experience of an immigrant woman deported to Mexico after spending 23 years in a U.S. prison, Junck was drawn to immigration and criminal law because of the ramifications it often has on families and communities.

However, getting there on her own wasn't so easy. "I wanted to work with the leading experts in the field, and it's a very tight, small circle," Junck says. "It would have been nearly impossible for someone like me, with not that much experience, to step right up [and find a job]."

Junck applied for a fellowship through the Academy for

Unstructured and unplanned relationships may result in unproductive and uneasy roles. A mentor who doesn't live up to the responsibility for oversight and guidance may treat a new recruit as an extra assistant or recipient of undesirable work.

AED recently published its report on how managers can foster relationships in the workplace. Using the fellowship program experiences as a base, the report, *Mentoring the Next Generation of Nonprofit Leaders*, outlines 12 steps managers can take to improve workplace mentoring.

Toward a Diverse Workplace

While the desire to maintain a diverse workforce has led many organizations to bring in more women and minorities, it's not easy for them to immediately feel a part of the company culture. A recent report in the *New York Times* Business section citing the low numbers of women partners in top firms pointed directly to the lack of mentoring opportunities for women lawyers.

Many women's bar associations have a Mentoring Committee with the goal of furthering women in the legal profession. Minnesota Women Lawyers, for example, has an attorney-to-attorney mentoring program, as well as an attorney-to-student program. The Mentoring Committee meets once a month and brings in guest speakers to discuss topics like networking and work/life balance.

Holly Fujie is chairperson of the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles' (WLALA) Mentoring Committee and also sits on the Advisory Board of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County. "When I started out many years ago, I knew almost no Asian lawyers. Those of us who have succeeded need to help those who are just starting out."

WLALA's Mentoring Committee also has separate initiatives for law students, while another provides new lawyers with the opportunity to meet with more

senior lawyers. A third program targets mothers to encourage them to stay in the legal field.

"We match people by practice area and geographics so it's convenient, and altogether they've had very good relationships," Fujie says. A primary goal, she adds, is to keep women from leaving law practice.

As noted above, New Voices encourages fellows to work with a mentor within their organization, as well as someone from outside. An external mentor allows the mentee to learn practices they may not be exposed to from within a company or area of expertise and also gives them a comfortable venue to ask

questions or explore issues relating to company practice they may not want to ask an internal mentor.

Mariza Gamez-Garcia, a 2003 fellow for the Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project, found an external mentor in family law. "I went to her about family law issues I came across in my work, but she did a lot more for me. I can ask her questions about how to deal with inner-office politics, and we discuss how I could improve and what goals I want to set for myself."

Gamez-Garcia used the stipend provided by New Voices to meet with the mentor and attend professional

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Strategizing for Successful Mentoring

The following is adapted from the AED report *Mentoring the Next Generation of Nonprofit Leaders: A Practical Guide for Managers*. A copy of the full report is available at <http://newvoices.aed.org>.

Set Clear Objectives

Written plans and agreements can help focus on learning, while honing in on an individual's strengths and weaknesses. Whether it's coaching a specific skill or having a goal to increase an individual's knowledge of a particular issue or area of law, mentorships can have broad and different goals.

A specific project may be used to take an employee through the design, implementation, and evaluation of a given project. Leadership challenges unique to an individual may need to be addressed, and new recruits may require coaching in particular skills and expertise.

Formalize Agreements

A formal agreement that defines the roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and mentee should guide the process. Mentors should be recruited based on their competencies, interests, and willingness to commit the time and energy.

New Voices arranges a conference every year for mentors to attend with their mentees, and the program provides a stipend that allows mentors to be compensated for the time they spend outside work with their mentees. It can be used for site visits or meals, or attending conferences to learn about models or best practices.

Both the mentor and mentee should have input in the mentoring agreement. This should include the type of feedback desired by the mentee and required by the mentor.

Provide Mentor Support

While New Voices provides and requires that mentors attend training, the program also encourages organizations to link mentors through listservs or even telephone contact with a staff person who is designated to oversee the mentoring program. Time spent with their mentees should be considered with workloads and billable hour requirements.

Celebrate Success

One way an organization can show support for a mentoring initiative is to highlight the program in company newsletters or sponsor social events. Interviews with successful partnerships could provide models for other relationships, and annual events encourage relationships to continue.

The 16th Annual Margaret Brent Achievement Awards Luncheon

Please join the Commission on Women in the Profession for the 16th Annual Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Awards Luncheon at the Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, on Sunday, August 6, 2006, from 11:30 A.M.–1:30 P.M. in the Kalakaua Ballroom at the Hawaii Convention Center, 1801 Kalakaua Avenue.

The ABA Commission on Women established the Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award in 1991 to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women lawyers. This award honors outstanding women lawyers who have achieved professional excellence in their area of specialty and have actively paved the

way to success for other women lawyers. The award is presented to five women lawyers who excel in a variety of professional settings and who personify excellence on the national, regional, or local level.

The 2006 Honorees:

Ellen Godbey Carson, director, Alston Hunt Floyd & Ing, and community activist; from Honolulu, Hawaii.

Constance Slaughter-Harvey, civil rights attorney and activist, former assistant secretary of state of Mississippi, and champion of education of youth; from Forest, Mississippi.

Peggy A. Quince, justice on the Florida Supreme Court and first African American woman to serve on the court in Tallahassee, Florida.

Betty Roberts, former justice on the Oregon Supreme Court and first woman to serve on the court in Salem, Oregon.

Joan C. Williams, distinguished professor, Hastings College of the Law, University of California, and author of groundbreaking scholarly contributions to the field of work/life studies; from San Francisco, California.

Pay tribute to the 2006 Margaret Brent honorees by purchasing a table (each table seats 10) and/or a special tribute in the commemorative awards program book. Tributes can be made to the five honorees or other women lawyers who have touched your life or the lives of those around you. Reserved tables are \$1,500, and full-page tributes are \$1,000. Corporate sponsorship opportunities also are available. For more information, contact Julia Gillespie at 312-988-5668, send an e-mail to gillespj@staff.abanet.org, or visit the Commission Web site at www.abanet.org/women.

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development workshops on litigation.

The leadership skills the fellows learn are often translated into formal workshops for other staff. Furthermore, the money invested into the fellows breeds a desire to mentor. At the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, Junck has been able to work with community members as well as staff. "I have a young woman I am mentoring now," Junck says. "She really wants to be a lawyer, and it's exciting to work with her."

Approximately one-third of the organizations with New Voices fellows are in the legal field. While the goal has been "to create leadership opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to diversify leadership" in the social justice sector, the AED report offers a model for mentoring in any field. But their biggest success, Williams says, is "the success of our fellows and their programs." 

Hannah Hayes is a Chicago area freelance writer.

Books for Your Library

Dear Sisters, Dear Daughters: Words of Wisdom from Multicultural Women Attorneys Who've Been There and Done That

This book features letters offering advice, guidance, and lessons learned from experienced multicultural women attorneys to their younger colleagues. It focuses on the multicultural woman attorney's career, family and personal life, and

private self. The diverse letter topics include the following:

- Building a practice.
- Managing a career and family.
- Raising children as a professional woman.
- Navigating office politics.
- Directing one's own career.
- Pursuing an alternative career.
- Coping with lack of mentoring.
- Dealing with disrespect.
- Overcoming stereotypes.
- Building bridges with other women of color.
- Identifying career goals and values.
- Developing the art of self-promotion.

The letters are organized into three groups:

Inspiration speaks to identity as a person and as a professional and explores the concept of success. These authors share how they have built a foundation that allows them to transcend obstacles and beat odds that to some would have been insurmountable.

Path contains letters from women who are pioneers in their law firms, companies, government agencies, and law schools, and on the bench. These letters detail the varied professional paths chosen by multicultural women attorneys who broke the trail, and in so doing left markers enabling those who follow to know that they are traveling the right route.

Big Picture letters examine how a woman attorney's individual journey fits into the larger context of family and community. These authors step back from the details of navigating life's daily challenges to attain perspective on the collective well-being. This well-being begins with the individual but spirals outward to encompass mates, children,

friends, mentors, and community organizations.

The contributors to the project are multicultural women attorneys who graduated from law school more than 10 years ago. They come from diverse practice areas, and some no longer practice law. Some are married; some are not. Some are mothers, some are not. Some have had "traditional" careers; others have charted unique career paths. Each, however, is a survivor in one fashion or another who has valuable insights for those seeking to make careers in the law.

To order online, go to www.ababooks.org or call 800/285-2221. 369 pp. 6 x 9 paper. Product code: 4520009. Price: \$24.

Empowerment and Leadership: Tried and True Methods for Women Lawyers

Based on the results of focus groups held nationwide as well as other research, this guide presents best practices in seven main areas that impact women's advancement: firm and corporate culture, marketing practices, internal women's groups, networking, work assignments, management participation, and compensation.

The guide presents information about institutional and individual approaches that foster women lawyers' progress into positions of power and leadership at law firms and corporations. Successful strategies are included from senior women lawyers, managing partners, general counsel, and rainmakers. Resources are listed that can assist women to get beyond the second glass ceiling and bring others along with them.

Some of the institutional practices discussed are designed to help retain women in an organization. All of the practices examined, whether institutional or personal, are concrete examples of what works to enable women to move into positions of power and leadership in their organization.

To order online, go to www.ababooks.org or call 800/285-2221. 48 pp. 6 x 9 saddle-stitch. Product code: 4920034. Price: \$25.

