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## Faculty Mentoring: Priceless (Letter to the Editor)

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# Faculty Mentoring: Priceless (Letter to the Editor)

Donald D. Miller

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Dear Editor:

The study by Gwyn, (The Quality of Mentoring Relationships—September/October, 2011, demonstrated the importance of nursing faculty mentoring and how this impacts commitment to the professoriate. As a novice faculty member myself, I could relate to the issues and concerns that Gwyn had identified and discussed in her study. The shortage of nursing faculty appears to be an even larger problem than the nursing shortage in clinical practice. Obviously, those nearing retirement will have an impact in the very near future, but the other factors that Gwyn has identified are also areas of concern, which include increased workload because of faculty vacancies, which have become difficult to fill, the increased need for faculty to earn advanced degrees, and low salaries. Many of these issues, as Gwyn stated, do not necessarily increase the number of nurses leaving the profession, but they do impact the probability that excellent nurses will not enter the professoriate.

Two important impressions that were discussed focused upon the idea of mentoring being connected to how nursing faculty feel about teaching nursing (affective occupational commitment) and whether faculty have a sense of loyalty to the nursing professoriate. These two thoughts are vital to the quality of a faculty mentoring program and/or relationship and contribute to a sense of commitment. However, universities and colleges of

nursing recruitment and retention strategies can also play a vital role in enhancing the mentoring experience for novice faculty.

If we want younger nurses to begin thinking about the possibility of a teaching career in nursing, we can begin by understanding generational differences and the characteristics that help to define these generational differences. The recruitment strategies used 15 or 20 years ago do not apply to the new group of younger nurses joining the ranks of the professoriate. Hessler and Ritchie (2006) provided a list of 10 ideas that could help to recruit, retain, and foster a sense of commitment to teaching, especially during a time when nursing faculty is at a serious shortage. She suggested, for ensuring a meaningful orientation, that the colleges of nursing provide guidance, foster a positive socialization, encourage flexibility, conduct a meaningful orientation, provide support, facilitate collaboration, allow for mistakes, coordinate teaching assignments, grow your own, and offer rewards that are not necessarily always related to salary.

Dunham-Taylor, Lynn, Moore, McDaniel, and Walker (2008) support Gwyn's study and emphasize the importance of a good mentorship, suggesting that this mentorship can be the most influential way to develop and retain new nursing faculty. She also indicates that if colleges of nursing do not take the time to mentor, then the problem of faculty shortages will persist. Good mentoring should not stop after a new faculty member's first semester. Mentoring should continue for several semesters. The idea of mentoring should not only be focused on new faculty but also on seasoned faculty. By doing this, a culture of collegiality can be fostered. We might not think of horizontal hostility existing within academia, but unfortunately, it is alive and well. Nursing faculty also sometimes need to be reminded that what we do has a profound effect on those we teach and the nursing profession.

Finally, the transition from a clinical nurse to academe is a major transition, which many new faculty do not fully understand. A good mentor program should include what the challenges for new faculty are because they move through such an important transition. This might be one of the biggest challenges that contribute to the departure of excellent new faculty. Duphily (2011) discusses the disconnect that exists between this transition from clinician to academician and the profound positive impact mentoring can have for new faculty's decision to remain within the professoriate. We need excellent nursing faculty for the future, and excellent mentoring is the best investment any college of nursing can make.

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