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# Book review: Mentoring for wellbeing in higher education

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133

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by Benjamin Kutsyuruba and Frances K. Kochan  
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This book is one of the volumes in Emerald's Perspectives on Mentoring series, which also includes *Mentoring for Wellbeing in Schools* by the same editors. The editors, Kutsyuruba and Kochan, are leading scholars in the field of mentoring in education, and as such, I was excited to review this book situated within the context in which I work.

It is well acknowledged within this edited collection, but wider too, that the higher education (HE) landscape is ever changing and that promoting wellbeing among students and staff has assumed a greater focus. There is widespread understanding that wellbeing is essential for all to thrive personally, academically and professionally, and so this book is a helpful reminder that we must keep up and ensure that our mentoring in this context is meeting the needs of those we intend to serve. This book is a good way to find out what has worked well in differing changing circumstances and to take away valuable lessons as mentors, academics, faculty and leaders within the HE context.

This edited collection is divided into three sections, representing three focus areas within HE. **Section I** takes an undergraduate student focus, with eight chapters. **Section II** takes a (post)graduate and/or doctoral student focus specifically, with four chapters, and **Section III** focuses on faculty and leaders, with three chapters and a concluding chapter by the editors which summarises the key learning throughout the book and makes recommendations for the future.

Throughout the collection, multiple types of mentoring programmes are shared from a variety of different contexts and diverse participant groups, all from within the United States and Canada. These multiple case studies vary by type of mentor, mentee, focus and context, all of which can be easily applied in wider global HE settings.

All chapters follow a similar pattern: introduction, literature review, findings, discussion and conclusions and limitations. Each chapter starts with the authors' definitions of wellbeing, mentoring and other key related concepts, and a mixture of methodologies is shared. Many authors had a personal connection to the case studies and contexts, so it was extra special to read about their experiences and evidence-based reflections throughout, too.

In Chapter 1, the editors begin by stating that the key goals of the book are to bring greater attention to the need for mentoring in HE to focus on wellbeing and that they hope this volume will promote the impressive work happening in this field and create space for further reflection, research and action. They share their hope that this collection of chapters, offering practical suggestions and a better understanding of the contextual factors within HE, will demonstrate how wellbeing is an essential part of mentoring and should be promoted for all. This it does.



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In addition, in Chapter 1, the editors helpfully discuss the benefits of positively positioning the importance of wellbeing and not taking the deficit approach – this helps to frame the whole ethos of the collection, which is framed around a strengths-based view throughout.

### Section I

The first chapter in this section (Chapter 2) by Mascolo and Legro focuses on Compass, a year-long credit-bearing mentoring programme whereby teachers are matched with new underprepared students to support their transition into HE. There are clear examples shared of how the teacher-as-mentor approach fosters intellectual–emotional–motivational skills over time.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) by Cordova and Kutsyuruba focuses on mentors’ perceptions from two institutions of their online mentoring experiences and the impact on their and their students’ self-efficacy and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges and learning are shared, which guide us towards hopeful practices for future times of significant change.

Arnold, in Chapter 4, shares how deliberate mindfulness activities within courses and through mentoring exchanges within a community college setting have enabled students to navigate challenges and to thrive. Chapter 5 sees Holland describe the Next Step (NS) programme, a partnership between a private university and four feeder schools, whereby undergraduate student mentors, as NS scholars, regularly support school children through building positive relationships and achieving goals. Mentoring helped to foster greater happiness, meaning and wellbeing.

Kroll and McMillian-Roberts, in Chapter 6, share the lived experiences of female basketball players and their participation in a year-long peer group mentoring programme. This study shows the importance of cultivating synergistic relationships to come together and support each other, and by doing so, we can increase resilience and strengthen self-efficacy.

In Chapter 7, Nasser and Hutson explain how a multi-modal mentoring framework can transcend a more traditional mentoring approach towards a more flexible, tailored strategy, and how this may be the most appropriate way to support the diverse needs of STEM students. Nava, Nava and Chavez continue the focus on diversity in STEM in Chapter 8, with a specific focus on a mentoring programme for under-represented women, calling for the development of more cultural competence in supporting more students of colour in STEM.

In Chapter 9, Young brings in his experiences of symbiotic leadership mentoring with undergraduate students in supporting them to develop into leaders. He shares how there have been huge benefits for both parties, including professional rejuvenation for mentors. This is a good reminder that both parties benefit from (dyadic) mentoring – a message that is reinforced throughout this book.

### Section II

Chapter 10 sees Wlodarsky and Sewald share a number of experiences and examples of how mentoring can support wellbeing during and after COVID-19 for graduate and doctoral students, making the point that reflection is key in supporting the mentor and mentee to succeed as “whole people”. Orsini, in Chapter 11, focuses on the same group and highlights some of the typical psychological states that may mean they don’t persist with their studies – for example, imposter syndrome, burnout, reduced self-efficacy and self-worth – and how mentorship can help to promote student wellbeing.

In Chapter 12, Cromley, Mirabelli, Jensen and Kelly also discuss doctoral students sharing similar concerns, including work–life balance and the importance of being supported through mentor–advisee relationships, this time specifically within an engineering context, reflecting that good mentoring corresponds to good job supervision in the workplace.

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Rodriguez in Chapter 13 shares her decades of experience working with doctoral students as a mentor and how practical mentoring can support those navigating the doctoral journey to feel valued and ultimately find success.

### Section III

Makhamreh in Chapter 14 shares views from the doctoral supervisor–student context and how this relationship is enjoyed and treasured by supervisors. They use mentoring strategies, such as practising a growth mindset, to promote their students' wellbeing but also to nurture and maintain their own wellbeing as supervisor-mentors.

In Chapter 15, Duna, Cai and Song utilise [Seligman's \(2018\)](#) positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment model, which is also introduced in Chapter 5, to reiterate how peer mentoring enhances wellbeing, focusing on a woman-to-woman mentoring group. They relate their findings to nurturing the growth of a flower from planting the seed to blooming – a neat way of illustrating the stages of growth and development through mentoring, which reminds us of the organic nature of mentoring activity.

Chapter 16 by Madufo, Shelleyann and Scott shares a literature review demonstrating the synergies between leadership development, coaching and mentoring, and their positive impact on wellbeing. Key leadership theories are shared, and then interconnections are made with mentoring and wellbeing.

Kochan and Kutsyuruba conclude in Chapter 17 by sharing key themes from all the previous chapters and making recommendations for the future. They emphasise the importance of creating a healthy culture of wellbeing and how mentoring can be a key vehicle to achieve this. They share key factors that can help or hinder mentoring success: programme design, delivery and relational strategies, as well as aspects of mentor effectiveness. They conclude that wellbeing should be the focus of mentoring conversations and relationships, that one size does not fit all and that culture and context impact wellbeing, just as they affect the effectiveness of mentoring programmes.

Throughout this book, the repeated messages and key takeaways for me are about recognising the power of mentoring to enhance wellbeing, the importance of taking a strengths-based approach to mentoring, the need to pay attention to the needs and relational factors of both mentors and mentees and the huge impact that creating the right culture and climate can have on mentoring participants' opportunities to learn, grow and thrive.

The editors conclude that wellbeing impacts us all. With this in mind, this is a must-read for anyone who works within the HE landscape or who will be supporting individuals travelling into and through HE now and in the future, in the United States, Canada and elsewhere. The lessons from the multiple case studies on mentoring and wellbeing hold true in any mentoring context, not just in HE. For this reason, I recommend this edited collection to all mentors, irrespective of context, as well as to anyone who supports the wellbeing of others. There are so many lessons in here for us all to share.

### About the author

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