



Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme

Best practice case studies

Introduction and overview

The Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme was launched in 2017 as part of the University of Nottingham's activities to develop an inclusive culture. It signalled a personal commitment from Vice-Chancellor Professor Shearer West CBE to support senior leaders with protected characteristics more fully.

An annual programme open to senior leaders across all job roles in the university, it combines personal 1:1 mentoring meetings with the Vice-Chancellor; shadowing a minimum of two senior university meetings – one of these being a University Executive Board meeting; Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessments; and connecting together as a mentee group.

Now in its third year, 26 individuals have been mentored personally by the Vice-Chancellor. 57 unsuccessful applicants have also been matched to alternative Executive Board and other senior leader mentors, demonstrating the university's continued commitment to supporting and developing the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda through personal connections.

This case study provides an insight into the experiences of one of the unsuccessful candidates who were matched to an alternative mentor, their reasons for applying, and what they gained from the experience, even though they didn't make it onto the programme.

For further information about the University of Nottingham's Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme, contact Carol Steed, Leadership and Management Director.
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Professor Aimee Aubeeluck,
Deputy Head – School of
Health Sciences,
University of Nottingham.

Q. Why did you apply for the Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme?

A. I have worked at the university since 2015 and have been through a process of personal and professional growth over this time. I became Deputy Head of School in June 2019 and it broadened my thinking in terms of how Schools are linked to Faculty and the university more widely. The VC mentoring programme seemed to be a great opportunity to learn more about the wider university vision and how to represent, amplify and deliver this at a school level. From a personal perspective I also wanted to learn more about strategic leadership and meet new people / network across the university.



Q. Are there specific challenges you believe you faced that you thought this programme could help you overcome or deal with more effectively?

A. Working at a School level, it is not always easy to see the impact or implications that decision making may have within the university or with regards to external stakeholders – it can be a bit like a jigsaw but you don't know what pieces are missing – I didn't know what I didn't know. I felt this programme would help me with my lack of confidence and some naivety in terms of fully understanding how the university functions at its most senior level.

Q. You weren't successful in gaining a place on the programme because of the high volume of applicants, but you were offered an alternative option – what happened and how did that work out for you?

A. I was offered a mentoring opportunity with a Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor outside of my own Faculty. This has been a fairly informal process where I am able to bring some of the more wicked problems I am dealing with and bounce ideas and solutions around on a monthly basis. This opportunity has allowed me to gain insight into how things work in a different Faculty to my own, expanding my thinking. I have also had the privilege of learning from someone who is much further on in their career trajectory than I am and has encountered many of the situations I bring to discussion – they can offer advice about what might work and also what definitely won't based on personal experience.



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Q. Has engaging with an alternative mentor had any impact on you, your learning and/or your career, and if so, how?

A. Yes, it has helped with my confidence, provides a space where I can test out the right questions to ask to get the information, support and growth that I need. It gives me a sounding board outside of my team. It allows me to better understand the wider university.

Q. Are there any specific elements of learning that you have found useful, and have you been able to apply these into your workplace/working practices?

A. I have learnt how to question more and think strategically and objectively, reflecting on what has gone well and where I can do better. Such reflection has allowed me to also take care of myself and build resilience so that I can develop my skills in compassionate / authentic leadership. This opportunity has helped me grow in my School level role and has allowed me to begin to create my own vision for the School and to consider succession planning and legacy.

Q. What advice would you give to others who might be considering getting involved in a mentoring programme?

A. Go for it – having personal and tailored input from a senior member of the university has been invaluable to my professional development.

Q. Are there any other insights or thoughts that you wish to share?

A. Take every opportunity you can to learn from new people in wider university, it will change the way you see your workplace and the returns will far outweigh the time commitment you put in. Find the time to do it!