Faculty Mentoring Faculty

It was the end of an especially trying day, the type that is all-too-familiar to new teachers on college campuses across the country, and **Melissa Browne** was dejected, searching for an infusion of confidence and assurance, when she bumped into colleague **Alex Jakubowski** on the steps inside Morrison Hall.

Five minutes later, Browne, in her initial year as a full-time instructor in the English and Foreign Languages Department, walked away rejuvenated. Similar encounters between established veterans and newcomers to the College are happening much more often across the SUNY Orange campus thanks to the new Faulty Mentoring Program established last fall by the Center for Teaching and Learning.

"I was feeling like a failure and doubting myself," recalls Browne, who spent 2005-06 as an adjunct instructor in the fall and a full-time temporary instructor in the spring before acquiring her present full-time tenure track slot prior to this year. "But Alex said, 'That just means you are asking all the right questions.' His insight reaffirmed for me that I was on the right track, and that as long as I am learning as a teacher, I'm doing OK.

"Instead of floundering, I walked away from that conversation knowing I was in the right spot," Browne adds.

According to **Dr. Jennifer Merriam**, CTL director, regular exchanges of that nature are exactly what the College envisioned when it constructed this program, spawned from ideas put forth by three recently retired faculty emeriti and former department chairs (**Chris Godwin**, **Peg Scribner** and **John Cummins**). Fifteen mentors and 16 mentees are presently participating in the program, which is just one component of the College's faculty orientation structure.

"In general the mentees have greatly valued being able to go to their mentor with questions and have another friendly face to ask questions, seek advice and bounce ideas off of," Merriam explains. Those experienced faculty and staff members who volunteered to be mentors completed an orientation workshop last summer and many were then paired with new faculty or staff this past fall.

Browne credits Jakubowski with providing creative ways of reaching out to her students, engaging them in classroom participation and introducing them to challenging topics, while Jakubowski, soon to complete his 15th year at the College, has benefited from his involvement in the program as well.

"As I talk about things with Melissa, it gives me a chance to re-examine what I am doing in the classroom, which is always beneficial," Jakubowski says. "It's a nice forum to share ideas and get feedback from her. Many times I've come away feeling validated and having re-affirmed in my mind that I'm on the right track as well.

Mentoring Program Participants

Mentee	Mentor
Edmond Lugo	Madeline Torres-Diaz
Anouk Verheydan-Gillikin	Steve Winter
John Gensch	Max Schaefer
Pamela Burns	Barbara Fiorello
Stephen Meagher	Diane Bliss
Khristan Doyle	Jim Tarvin
Melissa Browne	Alex Jakubowski
Erich Won Short	Mary Ann Vanbenschoten
Erich Won Short	Darlene Walsh
Katherine Jezik	Amy Hillick
Katherine Jezik	Darlene Walsh
Anita McGlynn	Cheryl Ward-Simons
Janet Gargone	Cheryl Ward-Simons
Marcia Clark	Helen Marie Boyle
Patricia Marton	Helen Marie Boyle
Teresa Turi	Eileen Drabik
Maria Masker	Roberta Smith
Ann Prial	Flo Hannes

"I remember how overwhelming it was during my first year," Jakubowski says. "I felt a lot of pressure to fit in and make a good impression. It's hard to learn the attitude of the campus, things like grading expectations, assignments and workload expectations. New employees need to know they are on the same page as everyone else, and to be reassured."

"When you are new, you are reluctant to ask questions because you don't want it to appear as if you don't know what you are doing," Browne says. "But this program gives me 'permission' to ask questions, and Alex has been tremendous about letting me call, e-mail or stop by his office anytime. It's been extremely valuable to me."

There is little doubt the Faculty Mentoring Program has eased the transition process for Browne and others, generating self-confidence among the instructors and enhancing the learning experience for students. Sometimes all it takes is five minutes.