

About the Purdue-SBBCLE and Subramaniam Coaching and Resource Network (CRN) Model & Support Circle

The Purdue-SBBCLE and Subramaniam Coaching and Resource Network (CRN) Model was formally announced in May 2019 and became operative in fall 2019. The CRN is not a typical mentoring program focused on advice and guidance for research or grant writing. It is intended to provide broader support for faculty who may be isolated, face challenges that cannot be typically shared within the department or college, and who need encouragement and the confidence to succeed. Success of faculty, especially women and underrepresented faculty, is central to the mission of the Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence. The CRN continues to be offered as an initiative for faculty. The CRN has been **positively cited in scholarly work, featured in a podcast interview, and referenced in an interview.**

In the midst of the two 2020 crises – COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing protests against racial injustices – there has been much anxiety and stress among faculty, staff, and students on campus. In an effort to respond to these experiences and mitigate stress, the Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence (Butler Center) created the ‘Support Circle’ as a care network. Started in August 2020, the Support Circle complements the CRN by providing a space for group sharing and mentoring.

Purdue-SBBCLE and Subramaniam Coaching and Resource Network (CRN) Model

I initiated the Coaching and Resource Network (CRN) for assistant and associate professors in fall 2019. The main goal of the network is to coach and mentor faculty. The members of the CRN coach assistant and associate professors beyond disciplinary needs and requirements to develop a long-term ongoing relationship. The CRN is created outside the appeal and evaluative process.

Why the CRN?

The basic premise of the CRN is that faculty members, particularly women and faculty of color, may be better served by a portfolio of mentors. Mentoring programs involving sponsorship - including the sharing of credibility and standing in the field – can prove useful. By emphasizing that the CRN is not for discipline focused mentoring (such as advice about which journals to publish in or review grant proposals) but for coaching, supporting, and mentoring, an actionable program was created based on the theoretical conceptualization of the multiple mentor model relying on a vertical dyadic approach. So, the CRN is not a conventional or traditional mentoring program; it is intended for members to coach, sponsor, and mentor assistant and/or associate professors.

The CRN was initiated to provide a resource for faculty and especially women and women of color who express discomfort and feelings of isolation. These concerns can have a profound impact on the lives and work of faculty members, and therefore on their productivity. In addition,

it may involve a loss of talent and potential to the institution. But the CRN itself is not limited or restricted to women; it is open to all assistant and associate professors considering gender is about how relations of power are structured; it is relational and intersectional and is about both men and women.

CRN Description

The main goal of the CRN is to ‘coach, sponsor and mentor’ assistant and associate professors. The CRN is open to faculty at the West Lafayette campus and the two branch campuses at Fort Wayne and Northwest. Participants are expected to select coaches from outside their department and if possible, college as well.

CRN members will actively coach assistant and associate professors beyond disciplinary needs and requirements. The ‘coaches’ are expected to meet regularly (at least once a month) with the assistant and/or associate professor, discuss concerns, and provide advice and advocate for them. To advocate means to support, believe in, sponsor, and encourage. CRN members are expected to advise faculty mentees about navigating their lives on campus to enable them to be productive. It may include relations they can cultivate for research, encourage them to apply for awards, and suggest their names for collaborations or as experts in their fields; even publicize their accomplishments informally, or simply be encouraging that they can ‘do it’. The CRN is created to be outside the appeal and evaluative process.

What can CRN do for assistant and associate professors?

- Provide one-on-one mentoring and advising
- Build community with women assistants and associates campus-wide
- Have the opportunity to explore a field of interest through exposure to a professional in that field
- Build a network of valuable professional connections
- Have an advocate on campus
- Benefits of having coach/mentor outside your college include:
 - Facilitating candid conversations about concerns especially outside the unit
 - Varying perspectives on issues and on navigating academic spaces

The full professors serving on the inaugural CRN are diverse – by gender, race, and discipline. The members of the inaugural CRN attended a workshop on coaching and networking in May 2019. The same workshop is offered to CRN members who start/ed in subsequent years.

Any assistant or associate professor (tenure track/tenured/clinical/research) at Purdue may select and work with a maximum of two ‘coaches’ from the network. The ‘coaches’ are expected to meet regularly with the assistant or associate professor and advise and advocate for them.

Annual Meetings with Provost

Each spring the Center organized and coordinated a meeting of CRN members and participants with the Provost & Chief Diversity Officer. These meetings provided the CRN members and participants to engage in conversations with the Provost and seek clarifications regarding faculty matters.

Assessing Effectiveness

A study of the effectiveness of the CRN commenced in May 2021. The first phase of the study is designed as a quasi-experimental qualitative study in order to assess the differences, if any, in the coaching, sponsoring, and mentoring experiences of those who participate in CRN and those who do not.

Replication

The Center/Purdue signed agreements with the University of Texas at Austin and Georgia State University to replicate the CRN model. Detailed guidelines for planning and starting the CRN have been created and can be made available to interested institutions. These guidelines have been shared with the two institutions replicating the model.

CRN Connect

The monthly CRN Connect newsletter started in fall 2021 as a platform to recognize achievements, share accomplishments, and even build a community of scholars. It is important to take some time from your busy lives to celebrate successes.

Resources for Members and Mentees

Articles from Alternative Sources

Volpe, Allie. 2019. "Why You Need a Network of Low-Stakes, Casual Friendships", *New York Times*. Download [here](#).

Articles

1. Russell, Aspen. "Attention Men: How to Be an Ally." *AWIS*. Download [here](#).
2. Taylor, Lynn S. 2021. "Work–Life Balance in the Pharmaceutical Sciences: More Essential Than Ever Today of science." *Molecular Pharmaceutics*. Download [here](#).

Online Training

1. The following online training has some excellent resources for mentors and maybe even for mentees. It has several modules and a terrific one on challenges. You may want to plan to review it in parts. You can create a guest account to access the online course. University of Minnesota. <https://ctsi.umn.edu/training/mentors/mentor-training> Online course: Optimizing the Practice of Mentoring (OPM) 101: For Research Mentors of Graduate Students, Fellows, and Early-Career Faculty.

Background and Description of Support Circle

In the midst of the two 2020 crises – COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing protests against racial injustices – there has been much anxiety and stress among faculty, staff, and students on campus. In an effort to respond to these experiences and mitigate stress, I created the ‘Support Circle’ as a care network in August 2020. This informal and flexible Support Circle, aimed at faculty, is to connect, build ties, and to be able to share experiences and ideas about coping in these times. It is about both resilience and vulnerability. This is not intended to replace the formal counseling services, other mental health services, or other formal resources at Purdue. Integral to the success of faculty is institutional responsibility to provide care and support during these challenging times. The Support Circle is flexible and relies on group shared spaces for discussion, unlike the Coaching and Resource Network which was started in 2019 as a vertical dyadic mentoring structure.

See the Support Circle bookmark [here](#).