

## **Christ-Centered Mentorship: A case study of the Faith and Practice Programme of Christian Service University College, Kumasi Ghana.**

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### **Abstract**

Mentoring is very important in every sphere of life. It is the process by which a more experienced person imparts advice, support, insight, and knowledge to a less experienced person. The mentor supports, guides, and counsels a young adult as he or she accomplishes mastery of the issues concerned. This article discusses mentorship from a Christ-centered perspective by using the Faith and Practice Programme (FAPP) of Christian Service University College as a case study. It argues that in order to address the challenges of the current generation and beyond, it is very important that students are introduced to holistic Christo-centric mentoring. The article gives an overview of mentorship and its related issues such as mentor- mentee role and relationship, the institutional leadership factor in introducing and implementing a mentoring programme, as well as the implementation procedure and challenges.

**Keywords:** Mentorship, Mentee, Mentor, Christ-centered, Christian Service University, Faith and Practice Programme.

## **Introduction**

Faith has to do with things we believe in. It includes both will and intellect, directed toward a person, an idea, or—as in the case of religious faith—a divine being. Christian Service University College, believes in the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. The institution also believes in the Holy Bible as an inspired and authoritative word of God, useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, the leadership and staff of the University College are of view the that in order to address the challenges of the current generation and beyond, both students and staff should have a holistic Christocentric approach to teaching and learning<sup>2</sup>. The quest to give students the best training possible and to ensure that Christian virtues are upheld and integrated into their academic life, led to the introduction of the Faith and Practice Programme (FAPP)<sup>3</sup>. FAPP is a Christ-centered mentorship programme which was initially piloted and coordinated in March-April 2013/2014 academic year, with students from the Theology and Communication Departments<sup>4</sup>. It was later extended to the various departments in the 2014/2015 academic year. At this implementation stage, the entire student body was therefore divided into 94 Mentor Groups according to the various sections of students (Regular, Evening and Weekend). The group meetings were therefore scheduled in the second week of every month to discuss the

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 3: 16 - 17

<sup>2</sup> Christian Service University College, *Vision and mission statement*, <http://www.csuc.edu.gh/csuc/p/about-csuc/our-university-college/our-mission-vision> (Accessed 29 May, 2015)

<sup>3</sup> Osei Safo-Kantanka, *Integrating leadership and Christian values in the academic life of the University* (University Council Chairman's proposal submitted to the Executive Committee of CSUC, 2013)

<sup>4</sup> John Ntsiful, *Report on FAPP Pilot Phase* (Kumasi, Ghana: CSUC, 2014), 1

topic for the month. The ultimate objective of FAPP is that, upon successful completion of the programme, students will be equipped to become leaders with scholarly depth, reflective faith, moral uprightness, as well as equipped with the skills to serve and educate the church and society.

Though, there are several articles, researches, and books on mentorship, many of them are geared towards professional mentorship. This article seeks to explore another dimension of mentorship, by focusing on the Christ-centered mentoring programme; as introduced in the CSUC Faith and Practice Programme (FAPP).

The article will discuss the concept of mentoring, Mentor –Mentee -role and relationship, the importance of Christ-centered mentoring in academic life of students, and the institutional leadership factor in the implementation of a mentoring programme. The research also considers the procedure for the implementation of FAPP in CSUC, the mode of delivery and implementation challenges. The article will serve as an information platform for other institutions with a similar vision, and also become a foundation for further research.

### **Methodology**

A mixed research methodology (quantitative and qualitative research methodology) was employed for the study. Primary data were collected through questionnaires, and secondary data were also collected from FAPP memos, meeting reports, relevant books and articles. Alreck and Settle (1985:70) suggest a sample of 10% as fairly representative of the entire population and add that it is seldom necessary to sample more than 10 percent of the population. In the light of this, questionnaires were administered to five hundred (500) students which represents 28.8 % of the

total student population of thousand seven hundred and thirty six (1736) to solicit their views on FAPP. Every department was considered in the administration of the questionnaires. They were administered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks of the month of April, 2015. We went to the various lecture halls to get the views of as many students as possible.

The questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the results were presented in descriptive statistics format. Where averages were mentioned, the authors considered the accumulated percentages of the excellent, good and satisfactory output. Even though, many of the results were integrated in the article, details could be found in the appendixes.

### **The concept of mentoring**

Mentoring is the process by which a more experienced person imparts advice, support, insight, and knowledge to a less experienced person (Alfred, Garvey & Smith 1998:46). A mentor provides guidance in the form of teaching, and support that would help the mentee achieve his or her goals. The mentor encourages and motivates the mentee, and also assists the mentee with career and professional development; that serves as a sounding board and links that enhance the mentee's growth and development (Clutterburg 2001:98). This is achieved through a one to one developmental relationship with a learner or mentee. (Cranwell-Ward, Bossons & Gover 2004:31)

Biblically, there are evidences of mentoring relationships as Moses and Joshua, Eli and Samuel, and Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the disciples, Paul and Timothy (Angel 2009:145, Hurowitz 1994:483, Kislev 2009:430). The ultimate purpose of mentorship is to change the behaviour of mentee(s) in such a way that the protégé functions more fully and effectively- ie, academically,

professionally, spiritually or socially (Masango 2011:1, Kram 1985:2). However, this objective cannot be fully achieved without considering mentor-mentee role and relationship.

### **The importance of Christ-centered mentoring in the academic life of students**

In the context of the teaching and learning process, mentoring has been defined as support and encouragement given to students to help them manage their own learning so that they may maximize their potentials, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be (Parsloe 2001:67). Christ-centered mentoring is defined here as a kind of mentoring that gives preeminence to Jesus Christ in everything. Its focus is to present Jesus Christ as the central figure for addressing issues of life (English & Bowman 2001:37–52).

This approach to mentoring in CSUC is in line with their motto, ‘to know Christ better and make Him better known’. It is also in line with their first Core Value, the Lordship of Christ, which is seen as the most important thing every student and staff of the University College should recognize and uphold. Rock (2006: 54) argues that unlike secular mentoring, Christ-centered mentoring exists to help a person grow in one’s relationship with Christ. It is a relationship marked by spiritual direction, leading to character change. In view of this, students are mentored by persons who are more experienced in their relationship with Christ, faith and Christian character development. During the FAPP groups meetings, both mentors and mentees have opportunities to discuss basic aspects of Christian thought and living. This approach enhances mentees’ ability to articulate faith within real life experiences in the changing dynamics of today’s world (Chiroma 2012:246). In this regard, more than half of the students (50.4%) are of the view that, FAPP has an excellent significant on their spiritual, moral, and academic life. The same applies to 32.2% and 10.4% of the students who rated FAPP to be good and satisfactory as presented below.

<b>How significant is FAPP to you?</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	252	50.4
Good	161	32.2
Satisfactory	52	10.4
Poor	16	3.2
Very poor	19	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **Mentor –Mentee – role and relationship**

The mentoring process begins with building a relationship of trust. (Masango 2011:2). This relationship should aim at meeting a development need of the mentee (s) (Faure 2000:23, Murray 1991: xiv, 15). This relationship must be reciprocal with an intentional agenda, designed to communicate explicit content along with life wisdom from one individual to another (Addington & Graves 2010:329, Henley Management College 2000:67).

In a report submitted to the International Commission on Education for the Twenty – first Century, a sub-committee of UNESCO, Delors, identified the following as the four pillars for learning in the 21st century: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together (Delors et al. 1996:85-97). The researchers are of the view that these are important things every mentee should consider and aim to achieve in mentoring. These four learning indicators constitute an essential foundation for mentoring and the mentor-mentee relationship. For example, in Mark 3: 14-15, we read that Jesus Christ appointed the twelve disciples, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. The text clearly shows the four learning indicators mentioned in Delors et al’s report.

Commitment, communication, punctuality, respect, setting of expectations, and networking are key role and responsibilities for both mentors and mentees (Garcia, Hernandez, Shokar & Hoi 2014:92-94). It is therefore important that each mentor and mentee consider how much time will be devoted to the relationship, what knowledge and support will be beneficial, and individual expectations of the relationship. In CSUC, the mentor groups met once a month for interaction and discussion of the topic for the month. In order to strengthen group relationship and discussions, some of the mentors created a whatsapp platform (a social media) with their mentees.

Our assessment of the mentor-mentee relationship revealed that 37.6 % of the students reported that they did have regular contact with their mentors after their group meetings. It was also discovered that 35.2 % of the students rated their relationship with their mentors as good, and 15.8% were satisfied with their mentor-mentee relationship. Many of the students reported that these contacts were sometimes on either individual basis or in form of a smaller group to deliberate on issues related to their academic life, and financial challenges.

<b>Apart from the normal group meetings how accessible is your Mentor to you?</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	188	37.6
Good	176	35.2
Satisfactory	79	15.8
Poor	39	7.8
Very poor	18	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Even though the indicators here show that the mentor-mentee (s) relationship in CSUC is very good, it is however, not enough for mentors to see their role in terms of teaching and learning, they should also be aware that they have the role of helping their mentees to grasp the wider

significance of whatever is happening in their area of specialisation, as well as in the world (Garvey 2000:216–220).

### **Spearheading the vision of Christ-centered mentoring: Institutional leadership factor**

Leadership is very important in the implementation of ideas and plans. According to Dessler (2012:34), it is the process of influencing the thoughts, emotions and behaviours of followers towards set goals. At a seminar organised by the CSUC for Mentors on October 2, 2014, Prof. Stephen Adei submits that ‘if mentorship programme is not embraced and led by the President/Rector/Vice Chancellor (VC) forget it’. In view of Adei’s argument, the President of the University College, Prof. Mrs. Frances Owusu-Daaku, made it one of her major concerns to see to it that the FAPP is fully implemented. This agenda led to the reconstruction of FAPP Steering Committee which was limited to the Theology Department to include; the Vice-President as the Chairperson, all Dean of the University College (both administrative and academic), the University College Chaplain and the FAPP Coordinator.

After series of meetings by the Steering Committee, Examination Officers of the University College, and the Academic Board, FAPP finally became a University wide Christ-centered Mentorship programme in March 2015.

### **Curriculum development and mode of delivery**

Curriculum refers to all that is planned to enable a learner to acquire and develop the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes (Njeng’ere 2014:1, 3). Seeing the importance of curriculum



development in teaching and learning, the FAPP Coordinator in conjunction with the President of the University College developed a course description and curriculum with a final input of a consultant engaged for the production of FAPP course materials that would be used in the 2015/2016 academic year.

Whiles waiting for the production of the FAPP study materials for 2015/2016 academic year, the President of the University College, sought copyright permission from E. G. Jay Link Stewardship Ministries to enable the University College to use their material on stewardship during the group meetings in the second semester of the 2014/2015 academic year. 41.2% of the students reported that the materials and the topics used for the group meetings were excellent. 32.4% rated it to be good and 18.2% were satisfied with the materials and topics.

<b>How would you rate the teaching materials / topics for FAPP meetings?</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	206	41.2
Good	162	32.4
Satisfactory	91	18.2
Poor	25	5.0
Very poor	15	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

32.4% rated it as good, 18.2% satisfactory. 48.0% of the students reported that the teaching approach of their mentors was excellent.

<b>How do you assess the Mentor's method of presentation?</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	240	48.0
Good	180	36.0
Satisfactory	67	13.4
Poor	6	1.2
Very poor	7	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

44.4% of the student population submits that they had excellent group discussions on the various topics, while 34.0% and 16.8% rated their group interactions to be good and satisfactory.

<b>Please assess the interactions and participation at your group meeting</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	222	44.4
Good	170	34.0
Satisfactory	84	16.8
Poor	18	3.6
Very poor	6	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **FAPP awareness**

Creating awareness is one of the most important steps for success in marketing or advertising an idea or a product. It comes through proper communication, advertisement and educating the community concerned on the importance of the idea or product involved.

FAPP awareness in CSUC, started with the pilot programme in the Departments of Theology and Communications studies in March-April 2013/2014 academic year. This was followed by a seminar for potential mentors on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2014. Two weeks to the start of the programme, another seminar was organized for mentors to discuss issues concerning how students were grouped under the various mentors as well as the study materials for the group meetings. The list of the various mentor groups and mentors were published on a notice board to assist both students and mentors to locate their meeting venues and times.

A campus wide publicity was made through the assistance of the then Student Chaplain, Mr. Prince Appau Bediako and the publicity committee of the Ghana Fellowship of Evangelical

Students (GHAFES). Other means used for FAPP awareness was the hanging of a banner at a vantage point in the University College, as well as the publishing of an online banner on the University College website. Some of the mentors also contacted their mentor groups through whatsapp and telephone calls. In view of these efforts, 40% of the students confirmed that the FAPP awareness was excellent, while 6% and 4% rated FAPP awareness to be poor and very poor respectively.

<b>How would you assess the general awareness of FAPP?</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	200	40.0
Good	178	35.6
Satisfactory	72	14.4
Poor	30	6.0
Very poor	20	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **Challenges with meeting venue, time, and duration**

The major challenge FAPP faced was meeting venues. Due to the number of mentor groups created, some of the groups were made to share meeting places simultaneously. This therefore created inconveniences for such groups. Due to this, some of the groups decided to meet under trees or in offices and some of the groups changed their meetings days and time. In this regard less than half of the students (32.2%) rated their meeting places to be excellent, 31.8% rated it good, and 22.4% were satisfied with their meeting venue.

<b>How would you rate your meeting place?</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	161	32.2
Good	159	31.8

Satisfactory	112	22.4
Poor	48	9.6
Very poor	20	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Furthermore, many of the evening students complained that their meeting time was not convenient for them due to the nature of their work and their closing time. Others also mentioned transportation challenges from their work to the campus. Another concern raised was that while FAPP meetings are in session, some of the lecturers would also be lecturing. This therefore raised the fear of missing lecture periods. In spite of these challenges we had the following ratings for the meeting times: 27% - Excellent, 34% - Good, 22.4% - Satisfactory. This tells us that an average of 27.8% of the students had no problem with their meeting times. An average of 30.8% of the students, were also pleased with the duration of their meetings. For further details please see the table below:

<b>How convenient is your meeting time?</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	135	27.0
Good	170	34.0
Satisfactory	112	22.4
Poor	57	11.4
Very poor	26	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## **Conclusion**

Mentoring is a very important thing in every stage of life. This article presented an overview of of the Christ-centered mentorship programme of CSUC named Faith and Practice Programme (FAPP). The article defined mentorship as the process by which a more experienced person imparts advice, support, insight, and knowledge to a mentee (s). Looking at the focus of the article,

the authors defined Christ-centered mentorship as a kind of mentoring that gives preeminence to Jesus Christ in everything. Its aim is to promote knowledge about Christ through the training of men and women with moral uprightness, academic excellence and passion to serve and transform society. It was also noted that institutional leadership plays an important role in the implementation of such programmes. It was further argued that commitment, communication, punctuality, respect, setting of expectations, and networking are key roles and responsibilities for both mentors and mentees. Though it was revealed that many of students accepted FAPP with great enthusiasm, this does not take away their concerns on meeting place and time.

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