

## S2EP2

### Speaker Key:

EL Emma Lancaster

DF David Fuller

TN Ted Nabung

TY Ty Wiggins

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EL Hello and welcome to the Community Colleges Australia Podcast. I'm Emma Lancaster. You're listening to the second episode in our six-part series on governance and business management. Today we are talking about the benefits of formal mentoring, how to build a successful mentoring program and the positive flow on effects to your organisation and your own personal development. We will also be hearing from two recent CCA mentoring program graduates and what their experience has been, as mentor and mentee. Now, if this is your first time listening you might want to go back and start from episode one. This is Community College Australia's second podcast series where we aim to provide a range of resources to support community education providers and showcase the work of the sector. Kicking us off today is Ty Wiggins, the Principal of Converge Consulting and a little later you'll be hearing from CCA mentor David Fuller, the Chief Executive Office of WEA Illawarra.

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EL And CCA mentee, Ted Nabung, the Principal and CEO of Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Community College.

TN The way it was explained, you'd be looking at a landscape, there are several paths. There is one to the left, one to the right, at the end of the day you will get through and you will be fine.

EL But first up here is Ty Wiggins, an expert in executive coaching and leadership development. We are talking now about building a successful mentoring program, Ty can you, kind of, explain to me what you think makes a good mentor and what makes a good mentee?

TW A good mentor is someone who has a wide breadth of experience but also detailed experience in the area where the mentee is looking for support. It's someone who is open to learning themselves and is very open to sharing, not only how they have done what they have done throughout their career and in those roles, but also why they have done those things.

EL How do you design a best practice mentoring program?

TW You need to make sure that you've got clearly identified needs of the mentee.

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Mentoring really relies on the mentor having done the specific role of the mentee before. So I could coach a lot of people in different roles but I can only mentor people who are doing the role that I have done. So in a mentoring program we need to make sure we align the mentee with the appropriate mentor and it's generally someone who has sat in that chair or in that role before.

EL And then how do you implement it, how do you actually go about creating it and rolling it out?

TW Like any leadership development program it needs to have clear objectives and what success looks like in terms of the outcomes. We need to set rules around the type of information disclosed, the type of areas discussed, meeting frequency expectations on times, on both sides. But most importantly if we can identify what success looks like for the mentee we can make sure that the mentor feels comfortable that they can impart that and then, once we've run the guidelines of the sharing of the information, we should be able to formulate a program that works for both.

EL What if you're a mentor and you find yourself in a situation where you're not sure how to answer a mentee's question?

TW The guideline for the mentor is to impart to the mentee what you did when you were faced with that circumstance or what you would have done. So, with that lens the mentor can easily get around areas where they haven't had direct experience by saying okay, that didn't come up for me but what I would have done in your situation is this. And that is really what the mentee is looking for. So it is okay for them to say they don't know, or they didn't experience that. What the mentee needs from them, though, is based on their process of thinking and approaching the problem what would they have done if they were in that situation.

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EL Do you think, then, mentoring programs increase workplace productivity?

TW Well run mentor programs, absolutely. One of the biggest issues in mentoring is bandwidth. People don't have time to spend with the mentee and the mentors that are in demand are the good ones and therefore they're in increased demand.

EL How do you get around that?

W I think balance. One of the things that we found too, the mentee really needs to drive the process for the mentor. If the mentee isn't hungry and organising and well planned, the process doesn't work so well. So it's unreasonable to expect the mentor to do all of the work; the mentee really needs to drive that. So picking the right mentee that is really looking for support and development is really important.

EL And getting down to the nitty gritty of it, what is the time commitment for being a mentor?

TW It varies from case to case. But I would suggest you need to allocate at least a couple of hours a month to spend some time with the mentee.

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And that will ebb and flow depending on the issues that the mentee has faced or facing. It's a low time requirement but it's concentrated time, so the mentor needs to be aware of that.

EL And do you have any, kind of, parting pearls of wisdom when it comes to building a successful mentoring program?

TW You need to really push the mentee to drive the process. So where I have seen these fail or not work as well, its where we have a very willing mentor and a passive mentee. This is not a classroom environment, this is not someone who is going to come out and hold you accountable to the things you are supposed to be doing. The mentee needs to seek out the mentor on a regular basis. They need to push that communication and those meetings and really be open to accepting that advice which is probably the second bit. If you spend time with a mentor and they give you advice and you don't take it up, you're going to disenfranchise the mentor pretty quickly and they'll just stop. Because, in most cases, they are volunteering their time.

EL One mentor who was highly sought after in the CCA program and who has been volunteering his time is David Fuller.

DF My name is David Fuller, I am the CEO of WEA Illawarra and the role of the CEO is all encompassing. I am also Principal of a secondary school that we run and we have five campuses. So that keeps me busy on a day to day basis.

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EL David, what do you think makes a good mentor?

DF To be absolutely truthful I don't know and I don't know that you do until you have a go and try it. I certainly hadn't ever done it before but I had heard lots of people talk about the advantages for both the person doing the mentoring and the person receiving the mentoring. And it certainly was true in my case; I was a mentor for another CEO and I think I learnt more than he did, perhaps.

EL If you're not sure that a good mentor is then can you tell me what a good mentee is?

DF Well I guess really wanting something to come out of the process was the key to it and honestly. I think once you strip away all of the façade and the excuses and you get down to the real issue that people are dealing with, then I think it's possible for you to be able to reflect upon your own experience and say, you know, I had a very similar example of that or what I do in my situation is this. And then that generally leads to something quite interesting. A bit of personal self-reflection for yourself but for the person receiving that information it helps them dig a little bit and, yes, really reflect upon how they have performed in that particular situation that is causing them some grief or some happiness, depending on what it is.

EL What was the time commitment for you? You were obviously the mentor in this case.

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DF Look it does depend upon, I suppose, the circumstances, the time and often Ted and I would agree not to meet on a particular week. But I would say that it probably

took about an hour or so every two weeks, in face to face or on telephone. I didn't need to prepare a great deal because I didn't know what was going to come up, so all you really need to do, is in the words of that Nike ad, just do it.

EL And were there any questions you couldn't answer and how did you deal with those?

DF There were plenty of things that I didn't have an immediate solution for, but that's not the role of the mentor, is not to solve the problems for the mentee. It is really to reflect upon your own experience and to relate that to the person so they might see how somebody handled a similar situation or somebody who hasn't ever handled that situation but has done something that might be able to relate some help to them. Not all of the situations were ones of need and ones of real concern.

EL The mentee David Fuller was assigned is Ted Nabung. He's been the Principal/CEO of Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Community College since September 2015.

DF I think it was really, for me, I think the real value for Ted might have been the fact that I'd ring him up and he knew that I'd ring him up and I wasn't going to miss out. And it was sort of almost like a level of accountability, knowing he was going to ring and I am going to have to tell him what's been happening and so I am really going to have to think about this. So I think that really helped him and I think anybody enjoys having somebody have an interest in their own life and their own issues. You know, having another person to reflect and bounce things off that doesn't have really any skin in the game much, is really quite a useful thing to do.

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TN My name is Ted Nabung, I'm the Principal and CEO of Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Community College. As a Principal and CEO I am squashed between the operations and the board. So I am the link of what the board desires and I am the person that leads the organisation with regards to the visions and directions.

EL I am keen to hear your thoughts on what makes a good mentor, after going through this program and also a good mentee.

TN A good mentor, I'd picked David for a start because he was actually the Chair of Community Colleges Australia and I suspected he had a lot of experience and he knew the sector quite well, that's the Community College's sector. But some of the qualities that he evidenced, through the process, was that he knew which questions to ask, he was actually a good listener, he was open to share experiences and he was non-judgemental. With regards to a good mentee, at that time I thought I had to explain situations objectively, I had to be honest with my thoughts and my feelings and I appreciate the mentor for his time in sharing experiences. And also able to note the mentor's opinion and/or recommendations going forward.

EL That's great. Good to hear.

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Now I wanted to know a little bit more about why you chose to go through a formal mentoring program instead of other options like coaching or informal mentoring. Why do you prefer the formal program?

TN I think the program is formal with regards to the whole idea of actually getting mentored, but I think the approach was informal. It was informal in way that it was basically conversations over the telephone, we did have lunch at a later date, but it was quite informal. Obviously at governance level mentoring is better suited, I feel. Presumably as senior level most mentees would have long and impressive resumes and would apply their knowledge and skills at certain situations or issues, so there is pre-knowledge there. So mentoring was, I suppose, in my experience it was an informal experience and I thought it was the right one.

EL So, then what do you think's been the greatest lesson for you, Ted, in terms of what you have learned through this process that you can apply to your organisation?

TN I think being objective and remaining objective and seeing it as a case, was important. And so see it not as a person involved but as a person that would, that is explained to you by an outsider, the mentor. So, for me, I saw a lot of things through his eyes, so I became quite dispassionate and just basically watched it unfold, the dynamics as it were. And I did not react to them, I just knew what was coming. So it was good in a way of being dispassionate and not aligned and being objective, they're the key ones.

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EL So you thought having an outsider speaking to someone external to your world gave you a sense of objectivity you wouldn't have had otherwise?

TN Correct. The way it was explained, that he'd be looking at a landscape. H said Ten, here's a landscape, there are the hills, there's the swamps there and the path is... There are several paths, there is one to the left, one to the right. He swooned me, well this is the landscape and this is how you go. You can get through it numerous ways, but at the end of the day you will get through and you'll be fine. So that's the real positive thing.

EL And so were there any kind of clear goals or expectations that you both created together in order to make sure you were getting the most out of the program?

TN He was more like asking me questions. How is it going? He found the way to get the truth out of me. I mean it didn't take long, but he knew that there were... Most CEOs that I knew would have issues and I just spelt them out basically.

EL David and Ted plan to continue their mentoring program in an informal capacity, moving in to the future and both seem to have learnt from one another. Reflecting on what makes a good mentoring program David Fuller as a few final thoughts.

DF I guess it's really easy to see, looking back, but not looking forward. And I guess what a good mentoring program looks like, looking back, is that both the mentor and the mentee have a really good relationship and will probably continue to talk to each other about the issues going forward, in a more informal way.

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I think both feel that they have gained something from the process and willing to engage in it again because of the value of the process for other people involved.

So, yes, I suppose something that is really, sort of, self-propagating in a way, is a successful program.

EL And the big question is will you do it again?

DF Quite possibly. I have had a little rest this year, but I suspect yes, I will probably do it again, yes. If you've never had anything to do with it, you don't really think about it that seriously. But I would encourage people to give some serious thought to it. I think as CEOs or as senior officers within the community education sector, we see the impact education has on the lives of people and a lot of us have mentoring programs built into a lot of our courses and we see the impact it has there. So it's only logical, really, the extension of it to people in senior positions; they are going to benefit the same way. So I think just a little bit of reflection on what you have seen with your own eyes and, if you're a little bit reluctant just think about the benefit that you've seen for younger people that come through our colleges and, if that's possible for yourself and for another CEO then I say get involved quickly.

EL This series is produced for Community Colleges Australia by Heaps Good Media, engineered by Miles Martignoni and produced and presented by me, Emma Lancaster. Next time on the Community Colleges Australia podcast we look at how you and your organisation can succeed through CEO transition. This podcast has been made with funding from the New South Wales Department of Industry, to assist the leadership capabilities of adult and community education organisations. You can find the full list of episodes at [cca.edu.au](http://cca.edu.au). Thanks for listening.

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