



The Leader-Mentor-Learner Role of Faculty in Business Student Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the roles of the business faculty member as leader, mentor, and learner in the faculty-student relationship, calling upon insights from informed scholars in clarifying these roles. Section One provides a literature review summary of the key ideas of scholars about these three roles and integrates those roles into the faculty/student relationship. Section Two identifies five specific benefits for students when faculty adopt an expanded leader-mentor-learner role and provides a framework for business faculty to expand those roles. Section Three identifies the contributions of this paper and challenges business school faculty to examine how they can become more effective by incorporating leader-mentor-learner roles in their own teaching approach.

Key words: Faculty as leader; Faculty as mentor; Faculty as learner; Transformative leadership

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INTRODUCTION

The association between business school faculty and today's business students has evolved as insights about teaching and applying business concepts have redefined the faculty-student relationship. Although some faculty continue to play the role of an all-knowing expert and the

purveyor of wisdom and truth for their students, a growing number of faculty have adopted an expanded set of roles beyond simply conveying information, evaluating student performance on exams, and issuing grades (Borich, 2013). Feedback from employers and from former students confirms that these new roles create value added and increase the ability of business graduates to transition into an increasingly complex work world (Floyd, Xu, Atkins, & Caldwell, 2013).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the roles of the business faculty member as leader, mentor, and learner in the faculty-student relationship, calling upon insights from informed scholars in clarifying these roles. Section One provides a literature review summary of the key ideas of scholars about these three roles and integrates those roles into the faculty/student relationship. Section Two identifies five specific benefits for students when faculty adopt an expanded leader-mentor-learner role and provides a framework for business faculty to expand those roles. Section Three identifies the contributions of this paper and challenges business school faculty to examine how they can become more effective by incorporating leader-mentor-learner roles in their own teaching approach.

1. THE LEADER: MENTOR: LEARNER ROLES

Unfortunately, the evidence about modern teaching methods in American business schools suggests that many leading schools place research and faculty scholarship far ahead of teaching in their decision to award tenure (Alshare, Wenger, & Miller, 2007). Moreover, business school doctoral candidates are only rarely given academic preparation about techniques for effective teaching in the classroom (Berrett, 2012) and faculty mentoring of new faculty about teaching expectations is rarely viewed as effective, even when it occurs (Brightman, 2006). Although business school administrators may give lip

service to the importance of teaching, they typically invest few resources or time to ensure that their faculty members create optimal teaching experiences in the classroom (Anderson, 1992). In this section, we examine the roles of the leader, the mentor, and the learner in the academic literature and relate those roles to the duties of business faculty in today’s business school.

1.1 The Role of the Leader

Rogers (1995) has suggested that the leadership role for faculty was much like the role of the therapist who established personal connection by caring about and seeking to understand the thinking process of a client. This ability to resonate with others to create a relationship that is both healthy for the leader and for those being led has been identified as a key element of emotional and social intelligence (Goleman, 2007) and has been identified as essential for healthy organizations (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Covey (2013, p. 247) has suggested that highly effective leaders begin to create effective relationships by the decision to “first seek to understand, then to be understood.” Similarly, Block (2013) advocated treating organization members like owners and partners. A collaborative leading model, similar to the process used to listen to and help clients, honors the perspective of the German philosopher, Buber (2013) who advocated

treating others as valued “Yous” or ends, rather than as “Its” or a means to achieve the goals or agenda of a leader.

This commitment to create a strong interpersonal connection with student’s contrasts with formerly-advocated thinking that suggested that faculty take an “arms-length” approach in dealing with students. After extensive research about teaching effectiveness, Cornelius-White (2013, Foreword) found that student-centered teaching approaches characterized by empathy, warmth, congruence, and trust are strong predictors of student success. Cornelius-White (2013, Foreword) added that “a person-centered student-teacher relationship enhances social skills, self-initiative, participation, critical thinking, and self-esteem”. The ability of business faculty to adopt a person-centered teaching approach mirrors the leadership definition which Covey (2004, p. 99) articulated, in describing a leader as “treating people so well that they come to discover their potential and strive to achieve it.”

A new model of “transformative leadership” introduced by Caldwell and colleagues (2012) defined leadership as an ethically-based stewardship obligation which integrated key duties of six highly-regarded leadership perspectives to optimize the creation of long-term value for stakeholders. Table 1 identifies parallels between the ethical responsibilities of those leadership perspectives and the roles of the twenty-first century business faculty.

**Table 1
Leadership and Teaching Parallel Duties**

Leadership Perspective	Brief Leadership Summary	Primary Ethical Duty	Parallel Teaching Role	Comment
Transformational	Seeks to manage change in the best interests of the organization and its individual members.	Excellence-based	Prepare students to manage and understand change, achieve goals, and grow personally.	Focus is highly application-oriented and contextually responsive.
Level Five	Combines personal humility with a fierce resolve to achieve excellence	Duty-based	Honors responsibility to achieve learning objectives and to help students succeed.	Teaching role accepts responsibility to remove student barriers to learning.
Principle-Centered	Requires leaders to honor universal laws and values in the pursuit of goals.	Aristotelian or virtue-based	Identifies correct principles and values associated with discipline.	Emphasizes importance of confirming what is and is not correct or valid.
Charismatic	Believes in a noble “calling” and creates personal connection in motivating others to achieve a worthy outcome.	Utilitarian or outcome-based	Relationships are established as part of an effort to help students to discover the importance of learning in their discipline.	Recognizes the profoundly important nature of the learning process and strives to help students become lifelong learners.
Servant	Puts service over self-interest to achieve individual goals and organization success.	Relationship-based	Values each individual student and demonstrates a commitment to their personal growth.	Acknowledges the need to go the extra mile to assist students who are struggling or lack personal motivation.
Covenantal	Pursues new learning and new truth with the leader as teacher, exemplar, and facilitator of learning.	Truth-based	Focused on creating a learning culture, teaches lifelong learning skills, and partners with students in learning.	Becomes a learner along with the students in discovering new insights or creating new knowledge.

Each of these leadership perspectives encompasses duties and responsibilities of the teacher as a leader in the learning process. Table 1 also identifies the importance of a broad set of ethically-related duties associated with their roles in guiding student learning (Caldwell, Dixon, Floyd, Chaudoin, Post, & Cheokas, 2012). It is significant to note that “educate” has as its root the Latin word, *ducere*, meaning “to lead” (Onions, 1966). The role of the faculty member is to lead and engage students as partners in the learning process and to draw out the knowledge, potential, and greatness that is inherent within students.

1.2 The Role of the Mentor

A mentor is someone to whom trust is given to guide, educate, and assist a protégé or mentee to achieve an important goal. Whether as a business mentor or a faculty member, the mentor’s role includes operating as a valued resource who acts with integrity in working for the welfare, growth, and wholeness of the person being mentored. The origin of the word is Greek and Mentor was a friend to whom Odysseus entrusted the teaching of his son, Telemachus. Ghosh (2013) suggested that teacher mentors enable students to discover a path that enables them to redefine themselves. Mentors help others to avoid making mistakes by identifying options and evaluating the feasibility of alternatives (Vanderbilt, 2010). Such mentors are characterized as being altruistic, committed to making the path easier for those who follow after them

(Bloomberg, 2014, p. 89). Great mentors honor duties that stakeholders believe to be essential elements of their psychological contract with their organizations (Zachary, 2011). Lazovsky and Shimoni (2007) noted that mentors also play the key roles of boundary keeper, counselor, consultant, and sponsor. An effective mentor supports and challenges the person being mentored to raise the bar in the pursuit of excellence (Armed Forces Comptroller, 2012), thereby making others feel valued (Benson, 2010). Just as a business mentor establishes guidelines and ground rules for the protégé or mentee within a business context, the teacher/mentor confirms the boundaries and expectations of the classroom, ensures the psychological safety of learning participants, and models the standards of excellence expected of participants (Chen, Liao, & Wen, 2014). Mentoring faculty are long on caring and nurture students with whom they work (Hart, 2009). Although faculty mentors may be role models and may care deeply about their students, they may also be limited by the time involved in fulfilling a mentor: mentee role. Nonetheless, faculty members who take the time and effort to become mentors can change the lives of their students, and help them to redefine their identities and self-expectations (Bell & Goldsmith, 2013).

Table 2 identifies the traditional roles of the mentor and briefly describes how each of those roles applies to the business school faculty member.

Table 2
Mentor Roles in Business and in Teaching

Mentor Role	Business Application	Teaching Application	Comment
Personal Example	Exemplifies organizational values and serves as a personal role model in demonstrating “how things get done” in the organization.	Models personal behavior in establishing a safe classroom culture and in being evidence-based in evaluating the validity of key ideas	The congruence between mentor behaviors and espoused organizational values affirms or undermines those values.
Counselor/Coach	Provides constructive feedback for mentee/protégé about performance. Counsels, encourages, and cautions when performance is deficient.	Assists students who are struggling in meeting expectations about course objectives and provides resources to remediate performance.	The focus of this coaching and counseling role is to be a light and source of help, rather than to simply criticize performance.
Caring Friend	Demonstrates a personal interest in the welfare, growth, and wholeness of the employee being mentored.	Demonstrates a personal interest in the success of each student and looks for opportunities to help students succeed.	Treats individuals as valued “You” rather than as “Its” without crossing the line of propriety in the relationship.
Organizational Sponsor	Serves as the advocate of the mentee/protégé as a sponsor for the employee to assist him/her to be able to take appropriate advantage of organization resources and opportunities.	Recognizes the achievements of students and assists them to obtain resources available to them within the university. Identifies opportunities for struggling students to take advantage of resources as well.	Utilizes information about the organization to benefit individuals and understands how and when assistance and support are needed.
Sounding Board	Offers feedback about ideas or questions posed by the mentee/protégé and uses organizational knowledge to provide insight about context and history.	Provides feedback to students with specific questions about issues, critiques student oral and written comments about the application of concepts, and explains how and why ideas may or may not be on target.	Feedback is often of critical importance in helping mentees to achieve their goals and to assist them to become better informed about critical issues requiring competence.
Boundary Keeper	Provides the mentee with key information about organizational history, policies, rules, and culture.	Provides students with policies, rules, regulations, and guidelines that are critical to academic success.	Helps keep individuals on target in achieving goals and objectives.
Trusted Professional	Keeps commitments, honors promises, and exemplifies personal virtues in all dealings and relationships.	Keeps commitments to students, prepares well, provides timely grading of assignments, and exemplifies personal virtues in all relationships.	Demonstrates personal integrity and exemplifies professionalism and personal virtues in all dealings and relationships.

An effective mentor bridges the gap between academic training and their mentees’ successful entry into the business world. Each of these mentor roles contributes and assists a mentee to transition effectively as a new organization member and to be more successful in accomplishing the tasks for which they are responsible. When the mentor’s roles are effectively carried out, organizations of all types improve their ability to fulfill their organizational purpose – whether that purpose is to create wealth for its stakeholders and society or to improve the ability of students to understand business principles and practices and to succeed long-term in future careers.

1.3 The Role of the Learner

Although business faculty members must be subject matter experts of their individual disciplines, they also play an important role as learners in partnership with their students. The importance of creating a learning culture in the modern organization is well documented in the scholarly literature (Senge, 2006). The ability to manage information and to properly distinguish between important and less important or relevant facts, data, and ideas is a critical skill in the process of decision-making (Simon, 1997). The competencies to successfully innovate, to create new products and services, and to continuously improve the customer’s ability to perform the tasks that need to be accomplished are essential to creating competitive advantage (Christensen & Raynor, 2003) in an economy characterized by change, creativity, chaos, and conflict (Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2005). In addition to providing

students with information, assisting them in developing critical skills, coaching them to improve their performance, and identifying the guidelines and parameters to help them understand boundary conditions, business faculty also serve students well when they model the way (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) as lifetime learners and seekers for new truths and insights (Pava, 2003). Teaching students how to learn, and how to differentiate between information that is and is not true are critical skills of transformational and transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000).

Rogers (1957, Chapter 6 and 7) observed that teaching can be profoundly more effective when students are treated as partners in the learning process, when they are given the opportunity to participate in the topics to be studied, and when their faculty member demonstrates an openness to learning new truths. Similarly, Senge (2006) had observed that a key element in creating a learning organization is suspending assumptions about what is and is not true. Suspending judgment creates open dialogue, facilitates creative thinking, and empowers students to discover new insights. Involving students in the research process, teaching them how to evaluate the quality of research sources, and to understand how to develop and test hypotheses can be highly effective ways for business faculty to model learning behaviors and assist students to become partners in creating new knowledge (Tello et al., 2013).

Table 3 identifies the roles of the learner in the learning organization and the faculty member in the business classroom in contributing to the success of those whom they serve.

Table 3
Learner Roles and Their Significance

Learner Roles	Business Application	Faculty Actions	Comments
Culture Creator	Creating a learning culture empowers team members to inquire, take risks, and challenge the status quo. Participants are rewarded for engaging in learning.	Creating a classroom learning culture helps learners to feel safe and to express opinions in an environment that accepts different ideas and opinions.	The top management team of an organization and the faculty member in the classroom are responsible for creating a safe and supportive learning culture and for providing support to learners.
Process Facilitator	Formalizes the creation of aligned organization systems,, rewards, and opportunities that encourage and reinforce learning at all levels of the organization.	Establishes learning activities that engage students in active discussion, involves them in critical thinking, and requires them to demonstrate learning skills.	Systems and activities for engaged learning align the learning process and reinforce the values and goals which make up the learning culture. Guiding the process requires the facilitator to be open to new ideas.
Agenda Setter	Provides goal-related guidelines for the creation of new insights and learning, consistent with the scope and purpose of the organization and its role serving its customers.	Defines the scope of the course, consistent with course requirements of the business school and department. Creates and communicates course objectives that fit the subject.	Mission, purpose, goals, and priorities play an appropriate place in creating a learning organization. Focusing the learning process requires a delicate balance and an ability to distinguish what is and is not relevant.
Inquisitive Learner	Demonstrates a consistent commitment to learning more and to developing new insights related to organization purpose.	Engaged in inquisitive inquiry about the subject being taught and in acquiring new knowledge about cutting-edge issues.	Learning requires an ongoing pursuit of knowledge and identifying improved ways to accomplish goals that benefit stakeholders and society.
Research Guide	Establishes guidelines for conducting research about innovation and provides resources and oversight.	Teaches research skills and reinforces “best practice.” Critiques research and identifies faults and errors to avoid.	Confirming and disconfirming what is and is not true or valid is critical in business and in academia. Learning how to verify what is correct is a critical skill.

To be continued

Continued

Learner Roles	Business Application	Faculty Actions	Comments
Learning Partner	Actively engages team members in the learning process as a full participant. Contributes personal efforts and skills enthusiastically.	Works in partnership with students on research projects, assists them in creating knowledge and involves them in projects related to the course.	Modeling involvement in the learning process and partnering with others creates a mutual commitment to the learning process and to new knowledge created.
Subject Expert	Contributes expertise about topics of great relevance to the organization, its mission, and its customers.	Offers insights based upon personal knowledge and experience while remaining open to new learning.	Recognizes that expertise is always relative in a world that is constantly changing and improving. Emphasizes the need to continuous learning.
Assumption Tester	Constantly monitors the environment to test assumptions about competitors, customers, and how to compete successfully. Confirms and disconfirms assumptions with best evidence.	Open to testing propositions and hypotheses about the subject, its theories, and the validity of their application in an ever changing world. Encourages students to do the same.	Best evidence confirms that new truths and disruptive innovations must be understood for individuals and organizations to succeed and to compete in a world that is constantly evolving. Being open to new truths is essential to survive in the business world.
Experiential	Although learning content is important, learning from the process of learning is at the heart of experiential learning. Experiential learning involves a number of steps that offer student a hands-on, collaborative and reflective learning experience which helps them to “fully learn new skills and knowledge” (Haynes, 2007).	The faculty guides rather than directs the learning process. In this environment the learner is challenged to: Exploring “Doing” (role-playing, giving a presentation, problem-solving), Sharing/Reflecting “What Happened?” (The teacher and students will discuss their results, reactions and observations with their peers.), Processing/Analyzing “What’s Important?” and drawing conclusions.	Best evidence studies confirms that experiential learning, particularly service-learning and project-based learning, have positive effects on the engagement and academic performance of students

Each of these important learning roles is important for business organizations and for faculty who teach in today’s business schools.

2. BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

In this section we identify benefits to students that can result from business faculty effectively implementing the leader, mentor, and learner roles in their classroom and suggest eight action steps that can be used as a framework to help faculty members in operationalizing these three roles.

2.1 Benefits for Students from the Leader-mentor-learner Roles

The traditional business faculty teaching role has tended to focus on cognitive learning and the development of analytical skills as the primary means of preparing business students for future business careers rather than on the application of behavioral skills in an applied setting or the development of professional character (Mintzberg, 2004). In contrast to other professional schools, schools of business have often focused on the academic rather than the professional preparation of the students (Manju, 2012). Although business school education has grown to be a “big business” for colleges and universities; “there are substantial questions about the relevance of their educational product and doubts about their effects on both the careers of their graduates and management practice” (Pfeffer & Fong, 2005, pp. 78-79).

Despite clear evidence that business students need to improve their behavioral skills (Rasche, Gilbert,

& Schedel, 2013; Bedwell, Fiore & Salas, 2014) and their ability to communicate effectively in writing (May, Thompson, & Hebbelthwaite, 2012; Lentz, 2013; Middleton, 2011; Divoky & Rothermel, 2009; Sapp & Zhang, 2009) the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business no longer requires MBA students to demonstrate competence in writing (AACSB Standards) and business schools have been sharply criticized for overemphasizing creation of shareholder value and maximizing profits but have neglected behavioral and social elements of business.

2.2 Benefits to Students

We suggest that business faculty members who incorporate the leader-mentor-learner roles identified in this paper can substantially benefit their business students in five meaningful ways. We briefly summarize these five benefits to students and suggest that these benefits honor moral and ethical obligations owed by business schools and their faculties to the students that they teach and to society at large that ultimately interact with these students when they become working professionals.

- 1) The roles of leader, mentor, and learner expand the teaching model beyond traditional cognitive learning by incorporating value-based and affective insights to help students understand the importance of relationships, values, and duties that are implicit within the business context.** This benefit addresses the shortcomings of many business programs identified by Mintzberg (2004) and other scholars.
- 2) The focus of these roles is more likely to provide students with opportunities to enhance their**

research, writing, analytical and problem solving skills and to appreciate the importance of verifying the validity of business-related information and theories by the proper use of research methods and by identifying the “best evidence” for making decisions. Students who acquire these important skills enhance their opportunities to succeed in their careers and demonstrate higher level critical thinking competencies in the classroom.

- 3) **Incorporating key leader, mentor, and learner roles integrates the foundation elements of business concepts and subject matter with the factors essential for the application of those concepts within a practitioner context to enable students to assist their future employers in creating organizational value and maintaining competitive advantage.** Developing the ability to apply business concepts and achieving mastery of subject matter associated with their future careers also enable students to prepare for successful careers and increase their value to future employers.
- 4) **The leader, mentor, and learner roles more naturally assist students to become lifetime learners and to invest in ongoing learning to understand customer needs, keep current with competitors, and implement ongoing improvements and innovations necessary to successfully compete.** Becoming lifetime learners and knowing how to stay current with innovations are important qualities for business students. In an information-based economy

the commitment to continuously learning is absolutely essential for long-term economic success.

- 5) **Engaging in leader, mentor, and learner roles helps to create a learning culture wherein faculty become more accessible to students and encourage students to be more fully engaged partners in the learning process while maintaining the appropriate faculty: student professional relationship.** Adopting a role wherein faculty are partners in the learning process, while maintaining professional standards of appropriateness, helps students to invest in the learning process while ensuring that students feel empowered to explore new ideas.

These five learning benefits, as well as other benefits, can accrue for students when business faculty incorporate key elements of the leader, mentor, and learner roles outlined herein. Serving students by engaging in these important faculty: student relationships enables faculty to assist those whom they teach to discover the potential that lies within them and to become more effective students and more successful future employees.

2.3 A Framework of Action Steps

In encouraging business faculty to consider adopting stronger leader, mentor, and learner roles in their classrooms, we have developed a list of action steps that we have identified as useful factors in that process. Table 4 briefly describes each action step, suggests a positive impact for students for the respective steps, and offers a brief comment about the step.

Table 4
Framework for Increasing Leader-Mentor-Learner Roles

Framework Element	Brief Description	Student Impact	Comment
Increasing Reflective Writing	Assign students to examine and write about how they have changed or what they feel about concepts taught.	Provides opportunity for students to improve skills, obtain feedback about writing, and examine their own values.	The evidence clearly shows that reflective writing increases writing competence and improves personal insights.
Requiring Evidence-Based Analysis	Establish guidelines for assignments and discussions that require students to document ideas with best evidence.	Makes students aware of the need to be accountable for their recommendations, conclusions, and opinions based upon best evidence.	A growing body of research confirms that “conventional wisdom” is the cause of much organization dysfunction and failure.
Incorporating Values-Based Principles	Teach with an integration of emphasis on instrumental and normative outcomes.	Identifies the importance of examining ends and means and their consequences and impacts.	Values are often implicit and subconscious and calling out the principles implicit in decisions highlights them.
Challenging Basic Assumptions	Examine the validity of theories and identify their limits and boundary conditions.	Teaches students that the foundation for decisions must be thoughtfully examined.	Theories often have limits regarding the validity of their application.
Identifying Moral and Ethical Outcomes	Evaluate decisions based upon legal, ethical, and economic outcomes on all stakeholders.	Requires students to examine the impacts and consequences of decisions beyond the organization and its shareholders.	Examining the impacts of decisions is a moral duty of leaders and the ability to explain those impacts and the decision process builds trust.
Focusing Short-term and Long-term	Identify the need to assess results based upon short-term and long-term impacts.	Helps students to recognize that both short-term outcomes and long-term results are critical.	The deficiencies of the overemphasized Wall Street model of assessment are increasingly being recognized.
Incorporating Holistic Self-Assessment	Incorporate the physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions in one’s life.	Reminds students that their education and their careers must be viewed in a holistic context.	Business education has a moral duty to students to demonstrate a commitment to their wholeness as individuals.
Involving Community Stakeholders	Integrate business partners as class speakers and/ or as participants in teaching and research.	Creates a real world anchor for the application of ideas and builds in opportunities to bridge the school-community gap.	Expanding the opportunity for practitioners to engage with students builds that linkage and helps fulfill obligations to society.

These eight action steps not only mesh well with the leader, mentor, and learner roles but also contribute to effective learning in more traditional business school teaching models.

CONCLUSION

We conclude this paper by suggesting six important contributions that it makes to the scholarly literature discussing teaching effectiveness in a business school context, and by offering summary remarks about the important challenges facing business school faculty and the colleges and universities for which they labor.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUR PAPER

We suggest that this paper offers six meaningful contributions for business school faculty and to the scholarly literature associated with teaching and learning.

- 1) We identify the importance of the business faculty member as a leader and describe how those teaching contributions mesh with the leadership perspectives of transformative leadership.** As transformative leadership suggests, the duties and responsibilities of leaders are fraught with moral and ethical obligations which also apply to the business classroom instructor.
- 2) We describe the mentoring contributions of business faculty and compare those actions with the mentoring relationship in other organizations.** The comparison of faculty mentor roles with the roles of mentors in business, the public sector, and other organizations confirms the importance of the business faculty member in mentoring students to help them to achieve their potential and to be an advocate for their success.
- 3) We offer insights about the importance of the business faculty in the role of an ongoing learner and emphasize the importance of creating a learning culture within the business classroom.** The obligation of the faculty member to model the importance of being a lifelong learner is so important to students in an economy that is so dependent upon utilizing information effectively to compete and maintain a competitive advantage.
- 4) We identify five benefits for students which result from business faculty incorporating the roles of leader, mentor, and learner in their classrooms.** We suggest that these benefits are available with other teaching approaches but also note that the leader, mentor, and learner roles facilitate the ability of students to achieve these benefits.
- 5) We identify a framework of eight action steps which can be used by business faculty to adopt the leader, mentor, and learner roles.** These action steps have applicability to other teaching approaches as well, and are important contributors to student learning and success.
- 6) We provide a logical and potentially valuable**

explanation of the roles of faculty which can be used by business faculty members to reassess and evaluate their own teaching approach. In modeling continuous improvement, business faculty can profit by examining what they can do to become more effective. New faculty who have not received training in teaching techniques in their doctoral programs can especially benefit by identifying how the leader, mentor, learner roles can assist them to honor the duties that they owe their business schools and its students.

These six contributions help reaffirm the importance of the role of business faculty in improving the quality of business education provided to today's business students.

Summary Insights

The context which tomorrow's business graduates will work is a business climate wherein trust seems difficult to maintain and employee commitment to organizational mission is often in short supply (Pfeffer, 1998; Covey, 2004; Bennis & Nanus, 2007). For tomorrow's businesses to succeed, their leaders and organization members must have a clear understanding of their own values, the factors which are critical for achieving competitive advantage, and the personal will and dedication to go the extra mile to ensure that their businesses succeed.

Former CEO of Herman Miller, Max DePree (2004, p. 11), has informed us that "the first task of a leader is to define reality." Business faculty members must meet the challenge of defining reality about the business world, business concepts that need to be understood, and the personal qualities that need to be demonstrated for their business students to survive and thrive in a difficult economic world. DePree (2004, Chapter 1) went on to emphasize that the role of those who seek to achieve greatness is a "covenantal relationship" in which those who guide others honor a sacred set of moral duties – thereby enabling both the individual and the organization to achieve its potential.

Business faculty who take on the challenge to become leaders, mentors, and learners for their students do not take on an easy set of roles to accomplish. Those roles encompass additional work for the faculty member and require a higher level of personal commitment and investment than many business faculty have been willing to invest. Nonetheless, the opportunity is great to truly change the lives of students, and to honor the implicit set of duties owed to them, to their future employers by preparing the students, and to the business community and society at large in which those students will serve their careers. Teaching is truly a noble profession, and business faculty who are willing to become skilled leaders, mentors, and learners can help the profession to achieve that nobility.

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