

MTN Ep 12 Transcript

[00:00:00.12] ERIN HAGAR: Welcome to Moving the Needle. Casual conversations about ways, big and small to impact student learning. Brought to you by the Faculty Center for Teaching and learning at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. I'm Erin Hagar. Let's move the needle.

[00:00:18.70] ERIN HAGAR: Hi, everyone. Welcome back to Moving the Needle. Do you ever feel like you need an outside perspective on your professional life? Someone who can help you identify your goals, think about what's working well and what might need some tweaking. We should all have mentors inside our institutions to help us grow. But sometimes even they are a little too close to our environments to help us see things in a truly different way.

[00:00:40.93] Enter the professional coach. Not someone who's going to be screaming at you from the sidelines, but someone who's trained to help you get clarity on where you want to go and what might be getting in your way.

[00:00:52.00] Today we're going to meet a faculty member who feels so strongly about professional coaching that she started a program to help faculty reap the benefits of this partnership. Dr. Michelle Pearce is a clinical psychologist and Professor in the graduate school at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. Where she directs the Integrative Health and Wellness Graduate Certificate program. Her most recent book is called, Night Bloomers: 12 Principles for Thriving and Adversity.

[00:01:17.59] We're also going to meet a faculty coach pair, who worked together in this coaching program last year. So you can hear firsthand how this interaction works from both of their points of view. Laura Zauner is a certified professional development coach with a background in organizational development and human resources.

[00:01:36.01] She's certified as both a life coach and a career management coach. Dr. Melissa Mota is a professor in the Department of Neurology and Program in Trauma in the School of Medicine. In the hospital, she leads an interdisciplinary team that cares for patients with acute neurologic illness.

[00:01:52.93] As an educator and course director for the neurology clerkship, she shares her joy of learning an education with medical students, residents, and fellows. There are so many ways for us to get support in our lives.

[00:02:05.08] And I'm really excited to share today's conversation about coaching. Thanks for joining. Michele, let's start with you. Can you tell us a little bit about this phenomenon called coaching? What is coaching?

[00:02:17.72] MICHELLE PEARCE: So we can think of coaching as a working partnership and a series of guided conversations that happen between a faculty member and their coach. And basically, these conversations are designed to create self-directed changes that promote the faculties professional development.

[00:02:35.87] So you might think of like executive business coaching, but this is designed for the unique needs of faculty and academia. So in partnership, faculty are identifying what their goals are, what barriers might be getting in the way of achieving those goals, and then brainstorming what are effective strategies. And then using this supportive relationship to help them meet those goals.

[00:02:57.97] ERIN HAGAR: So what struck you about the culture here at the university that made you think coaching would be a good fit?

[00:03:04.42] MICHELLE PEARCE: So I'm a clinical psychologist. I'm also a Board Certified Coach. And I've been providing academic coaching for students here since 2012 and is a very helpful service for students. And I thought since the beginning, faculty really need to have the same resource. But the issue was, how do we do this without a budget? How do we make this free to faculty, and also not compensate the coaches? And if you're aware of executive coaching is certainly not cheap.

[00:03:32.79] So we came up with this creative idea, where we would have volunteer coaches that are trained, they've gone through an accredited coaching program. But they need coaching hours to get their national credentialing. So it's kind of a win-win. Faculty are able to have these free sessions, and coaches are able to get the hours they need for their national credentialing.

[00:03:53.94] ERIN HAGAR: So how is coaching different from other kinds of support that faculty might receive whether from professional development initiatives or mentoring or even therapy?

[00:04:04.08] MICHELLE PEARCE: Yes, so it is a really different model for faculty. I think we're used to advising like you said, mentoring, consulting, where there's usually a hierarchy or there's usually some sort of advice giving. And coaching is not any of that. It's also not therapy, because we're not addressing mental health issues.

[00:04:22.78] So basically, coaching is very present-focused, its future focused. Its skill-based, it's based on solutions and a strength-based approach. And the difference is that the client is in the driver's seat. So it's a client who's coming up with what they want to achieve, not the coach telling them what they should achieve. And that's I think the real difference between these other models.

[00:04:48.61] ERIN HAGAR: So it sounds like this is a very faculty focused and faculty led effort.

[00:04:53.08] MICHELLE PEARCE: Exactly.

[00:04:54.16] ERIN HAGAR: Can you tell us a little bit about what kind of training process these coaches go through? Who might be attracted to a field like coaching, and what kind of training do they get?

[00:05:03.91] MICHELLE PEARCE: So coaches come from all different backgrounds. They're usually interested in helping people and the coaches that we've brought on have gone through a formal training program. So there are schools out there training programs that are designed to train coaches.

[00:05:19.78] Now this is an unregulated field at the moment, meaning you don't have to be trained. You don't have to have a national credentialing. That's starting to change. And I think we'll see over the next 5 or 10 years that we will move towards having to have national certification for coaches. So that we could have best practices here at the university, I have chosen coaches that have done at least 60 hours of training. And that's what's needed for national credentialing that are volunteering with us to work with our faculty.

[00:05:49.90] ERIN HAGAR: Well, that's great let's meet one of those coaches now and hear a bit from her perspective. Laura, can you talk to us a little bit about what drew you to the field of coaching?

[00:05:59.53] LAURA ZAUNER: Sure. Yeah, so I've always worked with people. I had a long career as an HR professional before I started coaching. So some of my employers included consulting organizations and large government contracting organizations. And so I started my career as an HR generalist. And over time, I worked in various specialty roles. And the one I enjoyed the most was the position of learning and development consultant. I did this in an organizational setting for many years.

[00:06:30.74] And in that role, I was able to work with leaders at all levels of the organization on issues such as team building, strategic planning, talent development, employee engagement, succession planning, those kinds of things. And I also had the opportunity to coach leaders through 360 evaluations. Through that process, I realized I really preferred working with leaders in a more intimate and individualized manner. And this experience motivated me to explore coaching as a profession. And it was very new at the time.

[00:07:02.44] So this was around 2008 when the discipline was very new, and it's still very new but it was not even used as much as it is now. And I decided to pursue formal coach training a few years later, and I've been working with clients in both corporate and private settings. I also come from a family of helping professionals, physicians, and therapists. So that was definitely an influence as well.

[00:07:28.39] And as a psychology major in college, I always thought I would pursue clinical psychology. And throughout my career and business, there were many moments where I questioned that choice and I almost went back to school to study counseling.

[00:07:41.89] And I have a really clear recollection of a pivotal moment when I decided to pursue career counseling for myself. And I had an amazing counselor who helped me see how I could build on my psychology background, and HR, and business experience with coaching. And as it turned out, my business career led me to coaching and it all worked out for the best.

[00:08:03.47] ERIN HAGAR: So you were coached into coaching?

[00:08:05.33] LAURA ZAUNER: I was.

[00:08:08.06] ERIN HAGAR: How is working with faculty similar to or different from some of the other clients may have coached in the past?

[00:08:14.96] LAURA ZAUNER: Yeah. So through my training and experience, I've had the privilege of working with so many different types of clients. And I started working with clients primarily women in career transition, because that was the focus of my doctoral work. And I found that work to be really rewarding. But I also wanted to explore other niches.

[00:08:33.65] And I then started to work with clients on issues related to wellness and well-being and work life balance. And most of my clients were in various stages of transition in their lives. There was a lot of focus on what they wanted the next stage of their lives to look like.

[00:08:49.49] When I was coaching leaders in an organizational setting, the challenges were different but with some of the same focus on work life balance. And some of the other primary challenges for leaders in general were building relationships, building teams, managing priorities for multiple stakeholders, executive presence.

[00:09:09.98] And when I had the opportunity to start working with faculty members, I was able to draw on some of that experience. I had working with my corporate and life coaching clients. But I

found there were some really unique challenges among faculty members. And as a faculty member at a university myself, I had some firsthand experience.

[00:09:28.28] Some of these new challenges involved balancing a lot of different priorities with teaching, clinical work, research, and managing department teams. It really was a different level of working with different stakeholders and trying to balance very conflicting and demanding priorities. So that would be the main difference, the balance of clinical teaching, leadership, and research work.

[00:09:49.50] ERIN HAGAR: Well, let's hear now from one of the faculty members that you supported in this dynamic. Melissa, welcome. Can you tell us a little bit about what attracted you to this coaching program? What were you hoping to get out of it?

[00:10:00.99] MELLISA MOTA: Yeah. I first received a notice that the UMB faculty center for teaching and learning was offering this to faculty when it first started. And it was just at a moment in transition in my career from junior faculty to mid-career.

[00:10:15.90] I had just prepared and completed my packet for promotion. And as a result of that, I've done a real assessment of what I'd accomplished in the seven years prior. And I recognized that there were things that I should be doing that more often sort of looking at the big picture, the bird's eye view.

[00:10:33.12] And that there were things that could have done differently and things that I wanted to moving forward do differently in various spheres of my job. And I'd also been asked to take on a new responsibility as a clerkship director for a course in the School of Medicine. So as of course director, that was a new task for me.

[00:10:53.02] And so when I first saw this notice I thought, well, this is a great opportunity for me to get help to gain some clarity on what I'm doing, where my priorities are, and what are my goals, where do I need to focus?

[00:11:06.69] And that's how I initially used the resources from the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. I really found it very useful to talk to someone, to get a different perspective. I think as Michelle pointed out, I have mentors within my department and my division and peer mentors.

[00:11:27.60] But this was a different experience in that I was really led to really think about and question where I was putting my efforts, and what were my big picture goals, and how to set priorities and then sort of drill down to one specific thing and really figure out what the steps to take to work to make progress on that thing. And so I really wish I'd done it sooner, because I found it incredibly helpful.

[00:11:57.85] ERIN HAGAR: Yeah. I really appreciate what you're saying about that. That we don't need a major milestone like a new position or promotion to really take a bird's eye view about what's going on in our careers. So Laura, can you walk us through the coaching process? When you work with a faculty member, how do you get started? How frequently do you meet? Who does what in the dynamic? Can you just paint us a picture?

[00:12:22.05] LAURA ZAUNER: Sure. The process starts with a welcome email to the faculty clients, which explains what coaching is and how the process works. And that email would also include a coaching agreement that the client would sign before we get started. And also there's a series of questions to answer so that as coaches, we can get a general sense of the client's background, their current situation, some of the areas that he or she may want to work on through coaching.

[00:12:50.04] As a coach, I would oftentimes I'm available to meet. We would set up the first session. They can be over the phone or on Zoom, depending on the client's preference. The first session is usually an hour. And I would take some time to explain coaching, give an overview of my background and answer any questions. We'd also discuss confidentiality. That's really important.

[00:13:13.86] So we would discuss that and make sure that client is comfortable with that. I would then focus the rest of the session on exploring and discussing the answers to questions that were completed in the welcome packet. And after the first session, the remaining sessions could be either 30 or 60 minutes in length, depending on the client's preference or schedule.

[00:13:35.00] For each session, the client would fill out a prerecession form. It's not required, but it's helpful that they fill out sort of a preparation form if they can. And that would allow me to see what they want to focus on in that session.

[00:13:50.90] And the session would start with me checking in to see what actions they completed or what insights they had since the last session. What did they learn or what have they implemented. And we'd spend some time exploring that topic or issue and I would use skills such as active listening and reframing or powerful questioning to facilitate forward movement or a change in perspective.

[00:14:16.61] The session would end with some actions the client agrees to take or move forward toward a goal they've set. Each session is different, and each client is different in terms of what kinds of goals and actions they want to set for themselves, and what they prefer in terms of accountability.

[00:14:32.58] ERIN HAGAR: Well, let's hear about this now from the faculty members point of view. Melissa, can you walk us through how these sessions worked for you. Maybe what you did in between sessions as you were preparing to meet with Laura?

[00:14:44.48] MELLISA MOTA: Yeah. So the initial as Laura mentioned, questionnaire that faculty receive is very helpful to start to think about what we're hoping to get out of the coaching session. And it also prompts you to think about what are your significant commitments, and what things are working well in your professional life, what parts are not working so well, and then where there might be pinch points that you might want to think about more. And so they're very general questions, but it sort of prompt you to start thinking about those things.

[00:15:31.20] And then once I met with Laura as she mentioned, that first session was very open-ended, and we talked a lot about me and where I was dividing my time, and then identified or gained some clarity on what my goals were for that particular coaching session. And it helped me develop.

[00:15:54.41] I thought I had a vision of what I was hoping to get out of the coaching session. So I imagined the end result but it wasn't quite clear. So the first part was that Laura helped me with was just gaining clarity on what exactly was my goal. For instance, as I mentioned, I'm the course director for this course. And I was facing some challenges around online engagement for the students in the course.

[00:16:21.59] And I was trying to tackle this problem, and I envisioned for-- the first part was just gaining clarity on what it is that I was hoping to accomplish. And then the next step after we developed that in the previous-- in the next session, we talked a little bit about how we could tackle it. What resources would I need? What tools I would need? How would I go about doing this?

[00:16:51.96] And so what I first did was collect data. So in between the sessions, I developed a survey and administered it to students, obtain some information about why or not, how they wish to

engage with the course and then sort of came back and chatted with and brainstorm about how do I use that information, and what are the next steps.

[00:17:19.14] And so that's the kind of instance that really helped me think through the problem initially identify what the problem was and then think through the problem, and try to come up with steps to have a solution.

[00:17:34.14] ERIN HAGAR: So Laura and Michelle, what other kinds of topics or issues might a faculty member want to discuss or think out with the help of a coach?

[00:17:42.62] MICHELLE PEARCE: You're right. And there are so many different things a faculty member could work on. I think it's important just to emphasize again, that it's always the faculty member that gets to decide the focus of the session. So I can tell you from the survey data that we collected, the top four things the faculty said they were working on in coaching.

[00:18:00.92] And that was enhancing their professional performance, they were increasing a sense of fulfillment at work, they were working on better managing their time and prioritizing tasks, and also working on improving work-life balance.

[00:18:15.95] ERIN HAGAR: Yeah, this is really interesting. Because I bet a lot of people tuning in might be thinking that coaching is something that can help us with these concrete performance-based goals. But it sounds like from this data that it's possible even just to work on how you're feeling about something, not the actual performance metrics.

[00:18:35.67] MELLISA MOTA: Yeah, the example I gave you if my work with Laura was focused on the classroom. But prior to working with Laura I had also done another session through the same Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning program.

[00:18:50.21] And that was my first session with a coach. And that was a much more broad session. And at the end of that, one example, we identified after chatting that my clinical time-- one of the things I was making me very unhappy is that when I was in my clinical time, I would have very long days.

[00:19:10.23] I show up at 6:30 in the morning and I'd get home at night at 7 o'clock at night and put my son to bed. And I'd still have to write notes, and I'd be writing notes until 10 o'clock at night. And that although I really enjoyed my clinical time, that was not making me-- that was not a happy situation for me.

[00:19:27.71] And Kerry, who's the coach I work with, she and I talked about how to address this problem and I collected some data with some tools she gave me about tracking time for my clinical time. And at the end of that session, we developed a solution where I modified my schedule and how I tackled writing my notes. I basically shifted my schedule half an hour in the morning.

[00:19:52.34] And it was a really tiny change, but it had a tremendous effect on my efficiency at work and also on my quality of life at home, because I could get home and now focus time on my family and not have to do work after hours. So yeah, so that was a tremendous improvement in a variety of areas as a result of the coaching session.

[00:20:14.90] ERIN HAGAR: Yeah, if we're not happy in our professional life, that's going to butt up against how we're doing in our personal life and vice versa. So I can see how working on each of these areas is going to have impacts in the other. Laura, do you have any other examples of faculty interactions, things that other clients of yours have wanted to address during the coaching process?

[00:20:36.59] LAURA ZAUNER: Yeah, I would definitely echo what Melissa and Michelle have already talked about in terms of some of those types of areas of focus that can come up. So definitely, some work life balance is definitely something that comes up, whether it's something intentional or it sort of emerges throughout the series of sessions but it becomes clear at some point that, that has been a very important area to address and even question as a coach for many clients. Because as I mentioned, they are they're juggling so many different priorities.

[00:21:15.89] And a lot of times their own self-care becomes the last priority. So that does come up in one way or another. And in addition to that, I would say boundaries, personal and professional boundaries, the power of being able to say no or-- what to say Yes to, what to say No to, and how to prioritize those things.

[00:21:40.91] ERIN HAGAR: So Melissa, is this an experience that you found fulfilling? Would you recommend it to other faculty members?

[00:21:47.30] MELLISA MOTA: Oh, absolutely. I think that it's a part of our professional development that's needed. I immediately after having engaged in the sessions emailed other faculty that I work with and said, I tried this and it was a really helpful experience.

[00:22:05.64] I think for faculty sometimes, we see our calendars are already booked, and we see one more activity one more commitment that we won't be able to do it. But I would advise faculty to give it a go. It's not a huge time commitment. And it's very high yield in that it really allows you to gain a different perspective on what your goals are, perhaps think about time management or your priorities on a day-to-day.

[00:22:32.04] Learn strategies to increase your productivity. And also identify things that you might be doing that you don't need to be doing or new areas that you might want to look into. And so it's really a way to really examine your professional life and your personal life, and how it's all working.

[00:22:53.49] And Michelle, for those faculty members who are interested in possibly working with a coach going forward, how can they learn more?

[00:22:59.92] MICHELLE PEARCE: Yes. So they can go to our website it's on the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. And if you go onto under the tab that says Programs, you'll see a box that says coaching. And there's a really nice description of what coaching is, what you can expect, what it's not.

[00:23:15.94] And then at the bottom, a very brief request form. So you can request a coach. I think you just enter your name and your program, what you're looking for. And then I will get that email. And within 24 hours, I assign you a coach. And within 48 hours, a coach will reach out to you.

[00:23:30.98] ERIN HAGAR: Well, this has just been great. Thank you all so much. I'm glad this program exists here at the university, and I'm really happy that this field is getting the recognition that it is. It seems like something that can add so much value to our lives as humans and employees and family members and just all of it. So thanks to all three of you so much for taking the time to speak with us today about coaching.

[00:23:55.44] LAURA ZAUNER: Thank you for having us.

[00:23:56.92] MELLISA MOTA: It's a pleasure.

[00:23:58.03] MICHELLE PEARCE: Thank you so much.

[00:24:01.68] ERIN HAGAR: Thank you for joining us today on Moving the Needle. Visit us at umaryland.edu/fctl to hear additional episodes. Leave us feedback or suggest future topics. We'd love to hear from you.