

## ACS Final Report Form Grant Cycle IX June 2021 – June 2022

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Campus: Furman University  
Project title: *Developing an ACS Mid-Career Advancement Pathways Program (ACS MAPP)*  
Today's date: August 25, 2022

### I. Project summary

As a *Collaborative Curriculum*-themed ACS Mellon grant, the Mid-career Advancement Pathways Program (MAPP) is grounded in the evidence that there are multiple pathways or ways to promote success as a mid-career faculty member (Baldwin & Chang, 2014) and provided a holistic support program for 38 faculty in 14 of 16 ACS institutions through Core Workshops, Faculty Learning Communities, and Applied Labs. For more detail on the curriculum, including core workshop topics visit the curriculum page on our recruitment site here ([link](#)). Participants were guided in exploring, articulating, and planning goals for this stage in their career.

### II. Attainment of goals

**GOAL 1: support participating faculty in exploring and choosing among the pathways available to them as they advance along their mid-career trajectory.**

- Participants were asked to reflect on their values and vision, select a track for their Faculty Learning Community (i.e., Teaching, Leadership/Service, or Research/Scholarship – significantly, none selected Teaching), and complete a Professional Development Plan.

**GOAL 2: cultivate collegial support and a sense of belonging during this often-neglected career stage.**

- Every participant was a member of a Faculty Learning Community that met once monthly, and every Core Workshop involved several opportunities for small-group activities.
- We facilitated colleague-to-colleague interactions outside of program meetings and workshops for informal connections, especially for particular decision-making moments, such as managing conflicts between colleagues and staff.
- We created opportunities for team- and work-life-balance bonding (e.g., creating and shared a playlist of participants' meaningful songs).

**GOAL 3: create effective, equitable, and sustainable access to developmental support, collegiality, and peer mentorship for mid-career faculty across ACS campuses.**

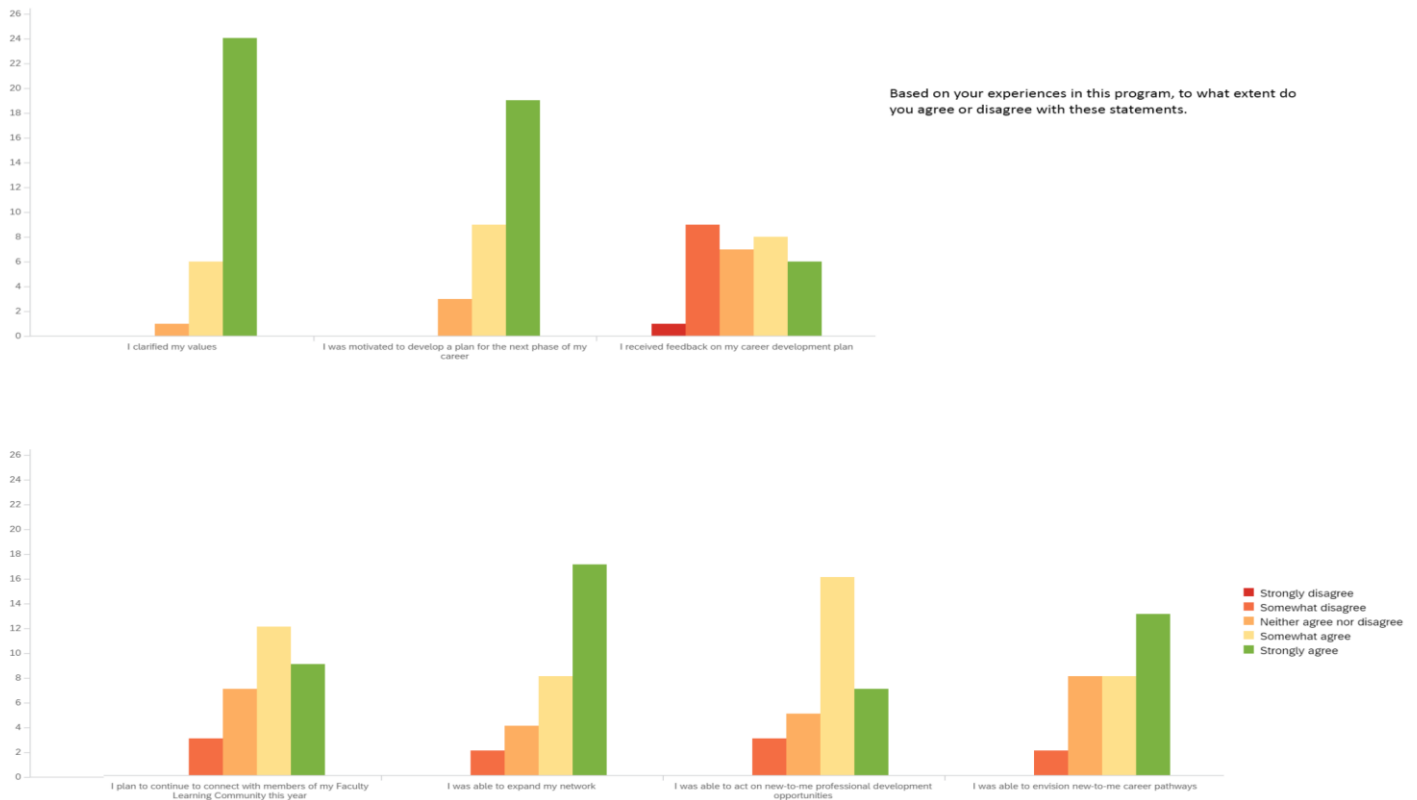
- We developed [a single page](#) with all participant resources for colleagues to revisit.
- We provided each participant with a stipend.
- We [curated a list of recommendations](#) for participants' stipends to continue their professional development and advancement after program completion.
- We created a sustainable, dynamic list of future conference travel, so participants can link up with each other at future venues.

### III. Impact of project

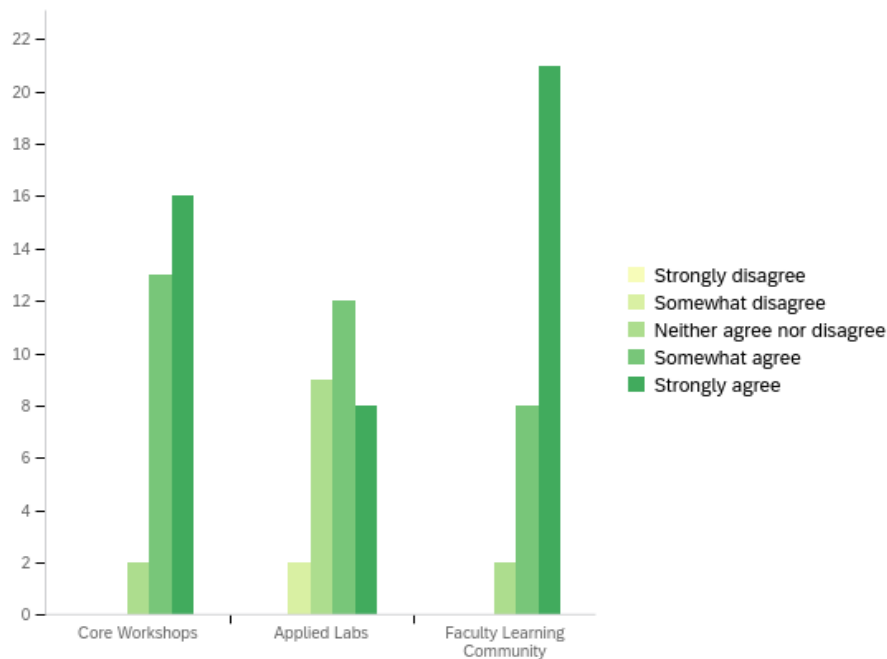
We have qualitative evidence that MAPP improved agency, vitality, sense of belonging, and community among participants. See the table below for examples. Further, the graphs indicate qualitative data that the program goals were met in terms of helping colleagues develop professional development plans and expand their networks.

<p>Agency</p>	<p>“This program helped normalize my struggles, which helped me be kinder to myself. That was then motivating to make changes. Although I have further work to do, I do feel more in control of my career path and more positive about my ability to do the work I need to do to continue my passion for scholarship and teaching, while making professional advances and not feeling completely overwhelmed all of the time.”</p> <p>“Like many, I’ve been strongly considering greener pastures, but I now realize that there are resources I haven’t been utilizing and patterns of behavior within my control that could improve my quality of life and impact.”</p> <p>“MAPP has given me not only access to resources that I didn’t even know to look for, but permission to think about questions I didn’t know I needed to ask, like -- what is thriving? What do you need?”</p>
<p>Vitality</p>	<p>“My institution’s faculty development center has not been able to meet my growing professional needs in many years, so my participation in the ACS-sponsored initiative was vital to my renewed commitment to my professional growth.”</p> <p>“I entered this program feeling unmoored and not very enthusiastic. On the other side of MAPP, I can honestly say that I have more of a sense of purpose, focus, and energy than I’ve had for a long time. I can’t be certain that the MAPP program caused this, but I think my participation in it has definitely played a role.”</p> <p>“Participating in MAPP has changed my outlook completely. Whereas before I felt stalled, disengaged, and a bit cynical about my career, I now feel more free, engaged, and optimistic. I am sure this new perspective will make me a better teacher-scholar and lead to promotion.”</p>
<p>Sense of Belonging</p>	<p>“This workshop went beyond concepts of leadership that all of us can find reading or attending talks. This workshop gave us a place free of judgment and full of vulnerability and respect.”</p> <p>“This is the first time in a long time that someone has taken the time to design a program that is aimed at someone like me. Middle of my career, unsure of next step. This program gave me space, time, and intellectual resources to engage in prioritizing and planning. This will make me a more productive resource for my institution going forward.”</p> <p>“As we come from such small institutions, the consortium model is really vital to find shared voices, concerns, and experiences, when at our home institutions we might feel like the odd-one out.”</p>

Community	<p>“I loved meeting other ACS professors and I think that this will lead to deeper relationships between the institutions, productive research collaborations, and support for faculty members. This is particularly important when people are feeling isolated after the pandemic.”</p> <p>“I think meeting people in a similar career stage at similar institutions was extremely helpful. So many of the "generic" professional development programs out there focus on R1 institutions by default, so having a liberal arts faculty with heavy service and teaching loads was actually really, really wonderful. To offer a contrast, when I participated in the FSP program through the NCFDD, I was paired with 3 other faculty members: they worked at Yale, Duke, and the University of Florida, and our careers and "issues" were really dissimilar. They were lovely folks, but we just lived in different worlds. I felt a little bit "less than" in that context, because of my institution type and career path. To have a group of true peers was a breath of fresh air.”</p> <p>“Development groups in institutions are great, but having a way to connect, commiserate, learn, and plan with people in your cohort but who are not in your institution is helpful because you can be more honest and make better progress on yourself because you aren't worried that people who might have sway over promotions or other decisions are there as you 'bare your academic soul.'”</p>
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Reflecting on the components of the program, to what extent do you agree with the components' efficacy in supporting your MAPP experience:



- 97%: the program helped them clarify their values.
- 90%: the program motivated them to develop a plan for their next career phase.
- 80%: they were able to expand their network.
- 73%: they were able to act on “new-to-me” professional development opportunities.

#### IV. Consortial (ACS-wide) value of the project

We have qualitative evidence that participants felt a renewed sense of purpose that increased both vitality and agency, and many identified working with colleagues from other ACS campuses as one of the strengths of MAPP. (See Table above.)

Further, participants remarked on their increased capacity to act as change agents as a result of the program:

- Mid-career faculty are the current and future leaders of our campuses and higher ed. They can lead the changes we desperately need and champion for higher education, for healthy boundaries, for agency and respect, for racial and social justice. They can and will innovate if given the right conditions.
- MAPP is filling a significant lack for these highly burdened, overtaxed mid-career colleagues, who need support to become the next generation of institutional leaders. I hope that this program will be formalized and offered yearly for mid-career colleagues--they need it as they address the pressures and difficulties that have led people to disengage from their jobs. This program helps some of those most vulnerable to that disengagement, given the high demands and minimal supports available in their roles.

## V. Lessons Learned

We were surprised that when prompted, colleagues did not take up our offer to organize affinity groups. It was simply too much programming. We operated at the level of participants' capacity for engagement. Although we encouraged them to find opportunities to meet up in person, most did not have the bandwidth for it.

We also invested heavily in the backward design process; as the program unfolded, however, we came to see that a different order for some of the activities would have alleviated a small group's concern about completing the Professional Development Plan.

We facilitators were challenged by the unexpected volume of work required to develop and implement an evidence-based, multi-campus program for the breadth of needs of mid-career faculty, including a great amount of emotional labor to support 39 underserved and emotionally hungry faculty members. However, we're happy to report that future facilitators have ready-to-implement resources and activity. Although the funding received allowed us to produce a pilot, we acknowledge that greater investment would be required to turn MAPP into a sustainable, ongoing program.

## VI. Next Steps

Explain what you intend to do with/how do you intend to use or build on the results of your project.

We are providing the ACS with [all of the program materials](#) for future iterations. We do have some recommendations for implementing it in the future:

- Invite MAPP graduates to co-facilitate future iterations both because they've benefited from the experience and this co-facilitation would be an excellent leadership opportunity for mid-career faculty members. Preserve Core Curriculum Webinars in Zoom format and organize other interactions in face-to-face format (see below).
- Open the application window for a Spring semester program in September to include published dates for all Core Workshops and FLCs. For scheduling ease, all FLCs should meet at the same time slot of core workshops (all facilitated via Zoom).
- Repurpose the Applied Labs into an in-person "Unconference" focused on skills participants wanted to further develop (developing SMART goals, structuring a sabbatical, learning to read budgets, how to decide if/when to go into leadership, and leadership and writing panels). Consider hosting this for three full days, in a format similar to the summer ACS Teaching Institute, with compensated, skilled facilitators on site (most likely from the faculty development community). At the Unconference, invite participants to break into affinity groups for further co-development and reflection.
- Introduce Professional Development plan templates at the Unconference (these build on all the activities of the program). Include time for one-on-one consulting of participants with facilitators who are capable of coaching them on their professional development plan. Participants' reaction to the PD plan ranged from overwhelmed, to stressed, to energized by it. Rolling it out mid-way through the program would mitigate this unnecessary chagrin.

We have submitted a panel proposal on the MAPP pilot for the January 2023 AAC&U conference.

## VII. Feedback/suggestions for the ACS grant program (optional)

N/A

## Appendix A: Further Participant End of Program Survey Comments that Support Program Longevity:

“For me personally, this program offered exactly what I needed, at exactly the right time. At a moment in my career when my institution is turning to me to mentor others and support important initiatives on campus, it's essential for me to have some support of my own from others in similar positions. As mid-career faculty, we're assumed to have "figured it out," but we are facing new challenges as we move into leadership roles and build new research plans in situations where we lack the support structures available for grad students or pre-tenure colleagues. MAPP is filling a significant lack for these highly burdened, overtaxed mid-career colleagues, who need support to become the next generation of institutional leaders. I hope that this program will be form”

“I would do this program every semester if I could.”

“MAPP is the first time I have had any formal support as an Associate-level professor. Liberal arts colleges typically have fantastic programming for Assistant-level professors, but it is almost non-existent after you obtain tenure. Therefore, investing in this type of programming for the unique challenges of this mid-level time is important and beyond valuable.”

“There was value in meeting our colleagues in the ACS and learning from each other in order to support one another as we each developed our own career plans. Ultimately, I think this may help associate professors prevent burnout and develop boundaries for themselves.”

“We don't think about mid-career goals nearly enough -- not on a personal or institutional level. By helping us with this focus, we felt both heard and like we have a path forward. Continuing to offer this path is important.”