1. Describe the past year’s accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

Concordia University’s first year mentoring for New Faculty and Staff project experienced significant number of accomplishments during the 2011-2012 academic year. A faculty mentor and new faculty member were identified as a pilot mentoring team and used as a model for future faculty mentoring relationships. A plan for faculty mentoring was established based on this model. The first component of the model was “onboarding” for new faculty as they arrive at Concordia. The purpose of onboarding is to demonstrate value for new faculty members immediately as they arrive at the university through service to them and their needs. Schedules, documents listing onboarding needs and services provided for new faculty were developed for later distribution to and use of mentors.

Faculty members were invited by their academic department chairs to serve as mentors for the 2012-2013 year. Each department invited one faculty member to serve as mentor for each new faculty member that department would be receiving. The faculty mentors were invited to attend the mentoring launch event in April of 2012. The purpose of the launch event was twofold: to provide the mentors with background information regarding the rationale for the mentoring project and for the pilot mentoring team to present their experiences with onboarding and their perspectives on the importance of the mentoring relationship.

Two faculty members attended a three-day professional development event in August of 2012. This professional development was titled “Good Start Institute” and was specifically designed for new faculty. One of the two faculty members, the leader of this AQIP project, attended the institute for the purpose of gaining insight into the needs of new faculty and how to best serve those needs.

The university welcomed a total of thirteen new faculty members in July and August of 2012. As new faculty members arrived on campus, mentors implemented the plans for onboarding that had been previously developed and presented by the pilot team. In August, the Sr. Vice President for Academics planned and hosted a day of orientation to Concordia for new faculty with a variety of presenters from across the university. At the end of this orientation day, mentors joined the new faculty for a reception. The purpose of the reception was to provide a social event to welcome new faculty and recognize the service of mentors. The pilot mentoring team also spoke to the group about their relationship and experiences with mentoring.

At the reception for new faculty and mentors, all were asked to respond to survey items regarding their needs and interests for programming in the 2012-2013 year. Eleven topics were listed on the survey and six of those topics were identified as high priority by the survey respondents. Survey data are being used to plan the topics for the Mentoring Network Seminars in 2012-2013. New faculty and their mentors will gather around specific topics of study and
professional growth at the Mentoring Network Seminars. Based on the survey data, presenters at Concordia have been identified and invited to present at the seminars. In addition, one seminar will be focused on the mission of Concordia and vocation of faculty members in fulfilling that mission.

2. *Describe how the institution involves people in work on this Action Project.*

The Sr. Vice President for Academics has been involved in planning and supporting the mentoring project. She requested that academic department chairs invite faculty members from their departments to serve as mentors. She provided guidance to the project leader as well as initial funding to support mentors’ expenses for onboarding and the reception in August, has been and remains active in demonstrating appreciation for mentors and value for new faculty.

The chairs of academic departments selected and invited faculty members to serve as mentors. Several of these chairs are serving as mentors themselves. A total of twelve faculty members from every college in the university accepted the invitation to be a mentor, one serves as mentor for two faculty members.

The two faculty members who served as the pilot mentoring team provided expertise in documenting and presenting onboarding as well as their experiences with mentoring. One additional faculty member who has published several professional articles on the topic of mentoring was consulted and provided expertise in this project throughout the 2011-2012 year.

The project leader as well as an additional faculty member attended the Good Start Institute professional development with intention of gaining deeper understanding of new faculty needs and how to serve them. The project leader also facilitated the launch for mentors and the social reception for new faculty and mentors.

3. *Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.*

The next steps for this mentoring project include plans for both faculty and staff mentoring. First of all, the Mentoring Network Seminars for faculty are in the planning process. The seminar topics will be focused on serving the needs of faculty as demonstrated in the survey data.

Second, faculty members will be invited to serve as mentors for the 2013-2014 academic year. These mentors will also be invited to attend a mentor orientation in Spring 2013 as we prepare for the following year. Third, data will be collected from new faculty and mentors regarding their perceptions of the value of the programming in 2012-2013 and their recommendations for the future on faculty mentoring.

One priority for this project is to use the progress that has been made for mentoring new faculty as a model for mentoring new staff members. The project leader will be meeting with Staff Council to discuss the development of various components of the faculty mentoring project. Staff
Council will be asked to apply and modify these components for staff and develop a plan to begin mentoring of their new members.

4. Describe any “effective practice(s)” that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

The first effective practice that resulted from our work on this project has been the use of a successful model. The mentoring pilot team led, documented and presented plans for onboarding of new faculty upon arrival to campus. They presented this plan to mentors in April of 2012. Another use of a successful model is that of applying the faculty mentoring success to the development of staff mentoring as described in the next steps above.

Funding has been provided by the Sr. Vice President for Academics to support the expenses of mentors. While this funding is minimal, it demonstrates the value of mentoring and the appreciation for mentors.

An important effective practice that has resulted from this project is the focus on developing a positive relationship between mentor and new faculty. This is relationship is initially centered on the needs of new faculty and how mentors can serve those needs.

Finally, decisions regarding mentoring will be based on data collected from the new faculty and mentors themselves. Survey data has been and will continue to be used for future decisions.

5. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

Our first challenge is to apply what has been learned in the new faculty mentoring project to mentoring for new staff. The needs of new staff are very different than those of new faculty. For example, new faculty members typically enter the university before the academic year in July or August, while new staff members may enter the university at any time throughout the year. It is believed that if the staff mentoring project focuses on the needs of and service to new staff, it will experience successes similar to the faculty mentoring project.

Another challenge will be that of providing and sustaining resources, human and financial. As the project continues and potentially expands, the question of whether faculty will continue to accept the invitation to serve as mentors will need to be answered. Also, the possibility of providing additional funds to support mentoring must be explored as the project moves forward. This funding may support stipends or load reduction for mentors. Professional development from outside the university may enrich the project in the future. This development will require funding. One additional resource that must be provided is leadership for the project. The challenge of seeking, securing and sustaining leadership for the project must also be met in the future.