Mentoring The Next Generation

“"I was always looking outside myself for strength and confidence, but it comes from within. It is there all the time."” (Anna Freud)

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Mentoring Underrepresented Students
Smith College Teaching Arts Lunch Discussion
Facilitated by C Gita Bosch

A key to student success is mentoring. This is especially true for underrepresented minority (URM) students who may not have the social structure that provides role models and intellectual and emotional supports that students need to succeed. Mentoring can provide this infrastructure and fill in gaps in knowledge and access to available resources which many URM students need. Peer mentoring is critical for student success, but it has to be supported with faculty mentoring for optimal effectiveness. Many non-minority faculty are wary about taking on the role of mentor for URM students. This is usually not because they do not want to but rather it is usually because they are concerned that they do not know how. The discussion will focus on how faculty mentors can overcome the barriers and gain awareness, insight and strategies on mentoring URM students to increase the chances for their future success professionally and personally.
Friend who Odysseus entrusted with the education of his son Telemachus when he left for the Trojan war

Mentor & Athena (who was disguised as Mentor) gave encouragement and practical advice to Telemachus

Mentoring

A dynamic process in which a mentor and mentee each learns to respect and trust the other’s commitment, expertise, and individuality, and are willing to invest time and energy to build a unique, positive and productive relationship
What is mentoring?

- Share
  - Knowledge
  - Wisdom
  - Professional skills
  - Expertise
- Foster insight
- Fueled by human capital
- Requires engagement of the faculty and the institution

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.” John Crosby

What is mentoring?

- Address personal, professional & academic needs
  - Help with mundane things
  - Help build the emotional and social fibers that some underserved students may not have
  - Help reach academic success
- Show someone cares
  - You cannot do everything
  - Point them in the right direction
  - Do not send them away

“"The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own.” Benjamin Disraeli

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Why mentor?

- Personal satisfaction from enriching the students' experience
- Service to the College
  - Developing future leaders
- Personal growth
  - Enhance your coaching, feedback and leadership skills
- Exposure to new and different perspectives and thinking styles

“Few things in the world are more powerful than a positive push. A smile. A word of optimism and hope. A "you can do it" when things are tough.” Richard M. De Vos

How do you define diversity?

- **Diversity** is a core value that embodies inclusiveness, mutual respect, and varied perspectives and serves as a catalyst for change that leads to equity

- **Inclusion** is the core element to successfully achieve diversity. This is done by nurturing the climate and culture with education, policy, and practice to create an environment that fosters belonging, respect, and value for all and encourages engagement and connection throughout the institution and community

“Honest differences are often a healthy sign of progress.” Mahatma Gandhi
How do you define diversity?
Human dimensions & Categories

- Gender & Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Race & Ethnicity
- Age
- Nationality & Culture
- Physical & mental ability
- Religion
- Socioeconomic status
- Underrepresented
- Underserved
- Underprivileged
- Disadvantaged

“Honest differences are often a healthy sign of progress.” Mahatma Gandhi

Why is diversity important?

Diversity

Innovation

Economic Growth

“So, let us not be blind to our differences - but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved.” John F. Kennedy
What is the problem?

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<th>Sci Doctorates</th>
<th>STEM Doctorates</th>
<th>All Doctorates</th>
<th>US Census</th>
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<td>American Indian/Alaska</td>
<td>0.12% 0.17%</td>
<td>0.29% 0.27%</td>
<td>0.29% 0.23%</td>
<td>0.39% 0.25%</td>
<td>1.7%*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
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<td>2.45% 2.98%</td>
<td>2.26% 2.72%</td>
<td>3.47% 4.16%</td>
<td>14%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>2.67% 3.77%</td>
<td>2.42% 3.49%</td>
<td>2.82% 3.85%</td>
<td>16%***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* NSF Data

* includes mixed race (0.95% Al/AN)

** includes mixed race (13% Black)

*** Hispanics/Latino/Spanish (Mexican, Puerto Ricans (in US), Cubans, Central & South America, & Spain)

Barriers to success

- Academic and cultural isolation
- Lack of motivation and self-esteem
- Peers/friends/family who are not emotionally supportive of academic success
- Discrimination, whether perceived or real
- Stereotype threat = self-defeating prophecy
  - Low expectations → low performance
- Inability to acknowledge that the problem exists
- Shame about where they come from

"Toward no crime have men shown themselves so cold-bloodedly cruel as in punishing differences of belief." James Russell Lowell
How does mentoring help?

- Personal and professional development
  - Communications
  - Financial obstacles
- Motivate and give courage & confidence to go on
- Removing institutional barriers
- Access to informal networks and information
- Avoids/decreases alienation
- Retention
- Diversity in disciplines

“I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.” Albert Einstein

What are the goals of mentoring?

- Academic and social integration
- Knowledge and skill development
- Nurture creativity
- Support and motivate
- Monitor and advise
- Build lifelong coping skills
- Encourage a sense of community
- Discuss class and research experiences
- Encourage high academic performance
  - Critical the first 2 years
  - Build foundation knowledge
- Encourage pursuit of academic goals
- Prepare for graduate school
- Encourage participation in academic meetings (network)

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.” Winston Churchill
**First meeting**

- Take the initiative to schedule the meeting
  - Length of the meeting
- Exchange of professional bio blurbs
  - Share professional and personal information
- Discuss
  - Confidentiality
  - General goals and focus of the relationship
  - Expectations about guidance you will offer
  - What you can offer: information, skills, experience
- Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Schedule the next meeting

"The true teacher defends his pupils against his own personal influence." *Amos Bronson Alcott*

**Second meeting**

- Discuss any questions or concerns from first meeting
- Discuss IDP
  - Long-, intermediate and short-term goals
  - Discuss training and educational needs/opportunities
- Discuss general time-frame to evaluate the relationship
- Discuss future interactions

"Trust is something that happens within people only when it is created between people." *Chip R. Bell*
Next steps

- Stay in regular/frequent contact
  - Email
  - Face-to-face
- Formal v. informal meetings
- Build trust
  - Follow through on commitments
  - Caring but honest feedback
- IDP assessment

“The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.”  
Norman Vincent Peale

Pitfalls in mentoring

- Time constraints
- Lack of expertise
- Over-dependence
- Imposing your values and perceptions
  - Lack of understanding/appreciation of cultural differences
  - Need to understand and be mindful of behaviors and attitudes and perceptions
- Inability to establish trust
- Lack of institutional recognition of mentoring

“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us. What we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.” 
Albert Pine

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Barriers to effective mentoring

- Just providing the solutions
- Assuming too much responsibility for the student’s academic or career success
- Neglecting commitments without valid reasons
- Hesitating to contact your mentee if you have not heard from her for a while
- Having unrealistic expectations
- Meeting in places that make you or your mentee uncomfortable

What to do

- Nurture & foster positive self-perception & self-worth
- Help the mentee accept and cope with the “baggage”
- Help find linkages in a foreign culture and new society
- Work together to identify solutions
- Create an atmosphere to give “permission” for the student to share feelings and aspirations, express concerns and identify problems
  - Issues are seen and unseen, need to bring them out (shame)

"Be the change you want to see in the world."  *Gandhi*

"A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could."  *Unknown*
When and how to ask probing questions

Keen observation and skilled communication to understand the mentee’s perspective

“We can help a person to be himself by our own willingness to steep ourselves temporarily in his world, in his private feelings and experiences. By our affirmation of the person as he is, we give him support and strength to take the next step in his own growth.” Clark Moustakas

Effective mentors

- Take the initiative in the relationship
- Challenge, motivate, inspire and encourage
- Committed, patient and build trust
- Open confidential communication
- Encourage self-reflection, analysis and problem solving
- Respect your mentee’s time and yours, establish boundaries with your mentee

“Any genuine teaching will result, if successful, in someone’s knowing how to bring about a better condition of things than existed earlier.” John Dewey
**Effective mentors**

- Open-minded to opportunities, new experiences and different ideas, and learn from it
- Share alternative perspectives
- Be clear you are offering advice/suggestions
- Share your coping mechanisms
- Positive feedback v. unwarranted praise/flattery
- Constructive criticism + constructive advice
- Know when and how to end the relationship

“We must give lengthy deliberation to what has to be decided once and for all.” *Publilius Syrus*

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**Strongest advocate + Strongest critic**

I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. *Maya Angelou*